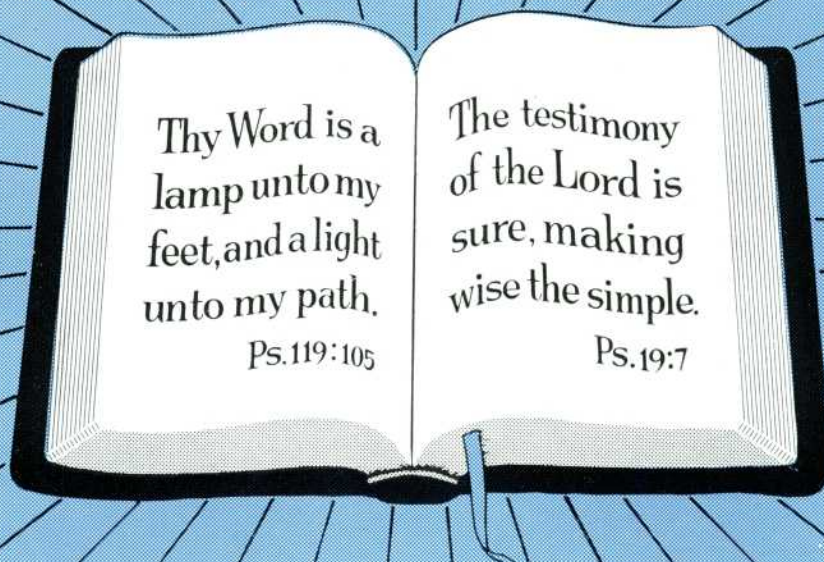


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



Christian Nonconformity

Is Christmas for Christians?

The Great Apostasy

Jonah and the Whale

EDITORIAL

What About "Gray" Things?

WE live in a world today where there are numerous "gray" things.

What makes something "gray"? As considered by the artist, "gray" is one of three neutral colors; black and white are the other two. Perhaps of the three, gray most deserves the description, for it is neutral not only in color value but also in relationship to both of its companions. It is neither white nor black.

The term "gray" has also been applied to any situation which is not clearly defined, or in which there are factors both pro and con.

In Christian circles, "gray" sometimes describes matters on which the Word of God gives no specific instruction as to whether the Christian should participate or not.

In any consideration of the grays, there are three important facts to remember:

1) There are actions and attitudes expressly forbidden by the Word of God. For example, "Lie not one to another." "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." "Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds."

2) There are actions and attitudes expressly commanded by the Word of God. For example, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." "Study to show thyself approved unto God." "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another."

3) There are issues on which the Word of God gives no specific instruction. There is no Scripture which says, "Thou shalt not watch TV," or "Thou shalt not read novels," or "Thou shalt not attend the movies," or—the list could go on almost endlessly. The Bible could not possibly include specific mention of all the issues and aspects of modern life.

Fortunately, while there are many things not covered by specific commands, we do have some very clear and definite guidelines set down by the Word of God, which the sincere believer will respect and use in judging any gray matters.

Among these principles are:

1) The Christian must "glorify God" in everything he does (I Cor. 10:31; Eph. 4 and 5).

2) The Christian must live as a separated person, as one whose true citizenship is in the world to come and whose allegiance is first and foremost to the Lord (I Cor. 6:14-18). He must "come out from" the world and be "separate" and "touch not the unclean thing." This means that he has new goals, new values, new purpose and new ambitions. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17).

3) The Christian must remember that he is not his own. He has "sold out" his all to the Lord, and must use all his energies and time and talent as God would have him. He must say what Christ would say, feel toward matters as Christ would feel, and do as Christ would do.

An honest application of these Scripture principles to any "gray" matter will usually provide the sincere Christian with sound reasons for doing, or not doing, a given thing. A few questions, honestly answered, will always be helpful: Will this hinder or help my spiritual life? Will it increase or decrease my love for God, His Word, His people, His interests and His work? Would Christ favor this? Does it appeal to the spiritual or the carnal nature?

Let us be honest in our evaluation of ourselves, for it is very easy to decide what we would *like* to do and then look for something in the Word of God to justify it, rather than sincerely seeking an honest answer from the Lord. When judging an action as right or wrong, we must eliminate the "desire" factor—what we *want* the answer to be does not enter into the matter at all.

What about gray issues then? Usually, when set beside the Scripture principles, they will turn out to be either black or white.

If we look at them honestly. ●●

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L. T. NICHOLS, *Founder*
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Megiddo Means

"a place of troops"

—Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon

"a place of God"

—Young's Analytical Concordance

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

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

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Christian NONCONFORMITY

THE lives Christians live," says a distinguished member of a large denominational church, "are no different from the lives other people live."

This statement is only too true; however, this churchman is not regretting the fact—he is commending it! He goes on to say that "Christians are not meant to be different." While believers have certain moral and ethical values, he says, non-Christians—even atheists—may have the same! If the Christian has any distinguishing marks, they are not marks of conduct. He proceeds to tell how Christians often delude themselves by thinking they are better than other people, and by so thinking they fall into the snare of what he calls spiritual pride. Hence, he concludes, the sooner we abandon any pretense of being different from others, the better.

If we are inclined to any such reasoning, the words of the apostle Paul come as a dash of ice water in our faces: We cannot conform to those around us and be right in the sight of Almighty God. "Be not conformed to this world," says Paul, "but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). Here is a command for every man or woman who would offer to God a living and holy sacrifice: "Be not conformed." No exceptions or alternatives for the easy-going or tolerant, but a plain, forceful and direct statement to all. We are not to be conformed to the world about us; we are to be transformed by continually exercising our mind in the things of God. Paul was saying, in other words: "Don't allow the world to shape and mold your ideas. Don't lose your identity as a Christian by becoming as much like the world about you as possible. Don't let yourself feel 'at home' in this world. Rather, let it be clear to all that you are 'displaced persons' here." This is the idea in the Phillips Bible: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-make you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed."

How can anyone make a sincere effort to obey this command and *not* be different from those who are making no such effort?

We might better say that the man who is not distinguishable from other men as he goes about in the arena of life is *not a Christian*. Time and again Paul wrote to his brethren using words which assumed that they were different from others. "And such were some of you" (I Cor. 6:11) follows a catalogue of sins common among the people of the community from which the Corinthian brethren had come. "But ye have not so learned Christ" follows another such listing (Eph. 4:20). Was there a difference? Positively *yes*!

Paul was continually reminding his brethren of the difference that must exist between the old way, the way of the world, and the new way, the way of Christ. He used many different similes to illustrate it. To the Corinthians he wrote: "With us therefore worldly standards have ceased to count in our estimate of any man; even if once they counted in our understanding of Christ, they do so now no longer. When anyone is united to Christ, there is a new world; the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun" (II Cor. 5:16-17, NEB). Living the Christian life is like entering a whole new world, so drastic is the change.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul illustrates the change as a complete change of clothing. One must, so to speak, put off his old clothes and put on the new, pure white robe of righteousness. In fact, the old clothes must be more than leisurely laid aside—they must be *stripped* off. "Put to death these parts of you which are earthly—fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, the desire to get more than you ought—for this is idol worship; and because of these things the wrath of God comes upon those who are disobedient. It was amongst these things that you once spent your lives, when you lived among them; but now you must divest yourselves of all these things—anger, temper, malice, slander, foul talk which issues from your mouth. Do not lie to one another. Strip off the old self with all its activities. Put on the new self, which is ever freshly renewed until it reaches fulness of knowledge, in the likeness of its creator" (Col. 3:5-10, Barclay). Can anyone

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say there is no difference between the old and the new? between the earthly and the heavenly? between the old dirty rags of sin and the clean white robe of righteousness?

Another time Paul wrote to the Ephesians about this same change in plain, blunt language that no one could mistake. "This . . . is my word to you, and I urge it upon you in the Lord's name. Give up living like pagans with their good-for-nothing notions. . . . Leaving your former way of life, you must lay aside that old human nature which, deluded by its lusts, is sinking towards death. You must be made new in mind and spirit, and put on the new nature of God's creating, which shows itself in the just and devout life called for by the truth" (Eph. 4:17, 22-24, NEB). There is a tremendous difference between the old and the new, between the pagan and the Christian.

Paul says again: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." This much is a well-stated fact. But then comes the command: "Walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). The new way differs from the old as light differs from darkness—and did anyone with eyes to see ever confuse the two?

Paul speaks also of the "time past" when "ye walked according to the course of this world" with "the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:1-3). But God, in His mercy and by His grace, called us from among them to give us a privilege, and "quickened us together with Christ, . . . and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:5-7). Is such the goal and aspiration and privilege of the multitude? Can we think for a moment there is *no difference*?

The apostle Peter related a similar contrast. He wrote: "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (I Pet. 4:1-2). Here is the difference spelled out. The man of the world lives to satisfy the lusts of men; the man of God lives to do the will of God. And this difference in direction changes the entire course of his life. The man of God is able to do His will because he has equipped himself with the mind of

Christ and is suffering the same death to his sinful nature which Christ suffered—the death by which he is able to "cease from sin."

Peter says even more about the contrast between the former way of living and the new way. He writes: "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles"—we should have had enough of that type of life long ago, he says—"when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries" (4:3). Peter also warned what those who continue to live after the manner of the world would think of the new life: "Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you" (v. 4). Can we read these words and think there is no difference—or only a minimum of difference—between the world and the Christians?

Always God wanted His people to be distinctly different. The Israelites were strictly commanded not to defile themselves by practicing any of the abominations of their heathen neighbors, nor were they to mingle or intermarry with them, lest they fall to worshiping foreign gods and adopting foreign customs. This is why we find commands like these: "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil"; and "ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine" (Ex. 23:2; Lev. 20:26, Scofield).

The same principle applied to God's people in all

"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-make you."

ages. Jesus prayed "not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine" (John 17:9). Of His disciples He could say, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16). Would we have met this qualification? *Do we meet* this qualification?

The apostles continued to teach this principle. Wrote Paul, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (II Cor. 6:17-18). *Be ye separate!* In the same connection he commanded: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," showing definitely that there is a difference—a *great* difference. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (vs.

Do we realize the high honor and privilege of being truly separated for God?

14-15). In each case, there is nothing in common between the two. Hence the command, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate."

The apostle John wrote a similar directive to his brethren: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2: 15-16).

Do we realize the magnitude of the difference involved? Do we realize the high honor and privilege of being called to cross the great gulf of separation? Do we realize the incomparable blessings in store for those who will be truly *separated for God*?

The Difference

Still the question remains: What makes the difference? What divides the Christian from the non-Christian? Christians live in the same type of houses, eat the same foods, shop in the same stores, work in the same mills, travel the same highways. They pay their bills and their taxes like other men; they obey the law and live as good citizens.

All this is true. But to make this the whole story is to overlook the "high calling to which we have been called," and the "holy temple in the Lord" and the "kingdom of priests" which the New Testament Church was known as. Physical life, at least to a great extent, is the same for all. But this is about as far as the similarity goes, for the physical is only one part of living. Almost everything we do involves something of a mental, moral, emotional or spiritual aspect; and in all these the Christian is distinctly different.

In fact, we might say the differences are cosmic in dimension. Let's be specific about a few of them.

Difference in values and goals.

Mr. Average Man-of-the-World has his heart set on the things of the present cosmos which are within his reach—perhaps a certain position of responsibility, a degree of education, a fine home and family, or a field of service to humanity. The Christian has set his heart on eternal life in God's Kingdom and is seeking with all his powers to prepare himself for a place in that Kingdom.

Righteousness is his first concern, what God calls right; and if he gives himself to this highest of all attainments, he knows that all other needful things will be added unto him (Matt. 6:33). According to this one aim he evaluates every other interest of life: How will it advance or retard his preparation?

Difference in attitude toward other people.

Mr. Average-of-the-World wants to be everybody's friend, "hail-fellow-well-met," or what is often termed a "good mixer." But such a comment about one who is striving to be Christ's servant is no compliment, but rather a rebuke. The Christian will be kind and courteous and pleasant in his dealings with others, but always there will be a difference. Always he will place adherence to right principle above friendship; never will he act merely to court another's favor or goodwill. He will let the light that is in him so shine that others may see his good life and be moved to glorify God in heaven. If he is such a good mixer with the world that no one sees or knows his identity, if he is submerged in the world and the things of the world, something is wrong. The Christian must be like oil on water—always rising to the top, always showing his colors.

It's a fact. Oil just doesn't mix with water. Neither will Christianity mix with worldliness. You can't be a Christian and keep well mixed with the world. It isn't your element. You must be *in* the world, but you have no right or reason to be *of* the world. Like oil on water, you must stay on top.

Difference in appearance and dress.

The trend to conformity in the matter of physical appearance and dress is especially strong. The average woman of the world feels she must keep with the latest styles to be accepted as a part of society. The dictates of Dame Fashion are loud and compelling—and expensive—and often uncomfortable and impractical. But "the fad flogs them into conformity," with few exceptions.

The Christian woman is different. She applies the Bible principle: "Be not conformed," and refuses to adapt her styles of dress and coiffure to the changing whims of society. She selects a style of dress that is modest (a term long forgotten by the world of fashion), a style that is comfortable and becoming to her profession as a follower of Christ, and having no reason for constant change she stays with it. Her goal is not to be old-fashioned, or to be different for the sake of being different, but to obey the principle expressed by the apostle

Paul: "That women adorn themselves in modest apparel, . . . which becometh women professing godliness" (I Tim. 2:9-10). The world may scoff; but if God is pleased, what else matters?

At the present, changing styles for men are equally in vogue—so much so that the man who is clean-shaven and well-trimmed stands out in the crowd. What should the Christian do? Again comes the command: "Be not conformed to this world." He must do nothing simply to adapt to changing styles or to lessen the difference between himself and men in general. When sideburns and beards and mustaches are in style, the clean-shaven Christian will refrain from making any change in his own habits. Not that there is anything wrong with these features—God created men with the ability to grow beards, mustaches and side-burns. But the

wrong is in what prompts the desire at this specific time. The sin is in the *conformity*. The command is direct: "Be not conformed to this world." And the man who wants to represent the cause of Christ will be just as comfortable appearing in public with the same facial style and the same haircut he wore ten years ago before the style changed. He will show his loyalty to higher convictions and will be glad to identify himself as one who is *in* the world but who is not pursuing the fads and fashions of the world.

Difference in speech.

Mr. Average of the world picks up and employs the changing vocabulary of the day without considering its meaning or its source. Here again the

(Continued on Page 8)

Let Us Pray . . .

MERCIFUL Father, we reverently bow before Thee this morning thanking Thee that it is as well with us as it is, and that the shades of the evening of the day of salvation are still stretched out, giving us time to complete the work still unfinished before the end of the age.

Help us Father, not to be lulled to sleep by the unbelief, indifference and complacency in the world about us, but may we believe with all our hearts that soon Thy dear Son shall return to earth, to cleanse it of the accumulated evils of centuries of man's misrule, to rebuke men for their wickedness, and destroy all who will not submit. And may the lesson be the more deeply impressed upon us, that our only safety in that coming time depends upon our now forming righteous characters.

We know Thou art a God of justice who will neither condemn the righteous nor condone the guilty, but will repay every man according to his works. Help us then to come out from this wicked world rushing down the broad way to destruction. May we have no desire to be like them in speech, in action, in dress; may our aspirations be above theirs so we will not seek to gratify self as they do. May our whole life pattern be directed from above, Thy Word becoming a lamp to our feet and the light to our path, until we have laid everything of self on the altar, and made a complete surrender.

Grant us the wisdom not to allow ourselves as Christians to be squeezed into the world's mold, or to follow their vain and godless customs and mode of living. Thou hast commanded us not to be conformed to this world, but be transformed or made over by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is Thy good, acceptable and perfect will. May we always take Thee at Thy word, squaring our lives completely by the demands of divine law.

Alert us that as Christians we must be strong, strong enough to dare to be different from the world about us who make no effort to recognize Thy authority, but live their lives in any way that appeals to them, doing whatever looks right from their clouded point of view.

May we always abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which Thou dost call good, surrendering wholly to Thy leading. May all our interests be in winning a place in the world to come. May we not be slothful in Thy business, but fervent in spirit, serving Thee with all our mind, might and strength.

Thou hast commanded us to rejoice in hope, and hast provided us with a hope bright enough to rejoice in. Give us the wisdom not to be cast down by the trials, testings and reverses that come to us in this mortal existence, but to keep our eye focussed on the eternal reward offered us, so that whatever comes we can say, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Christian must be different. He who would follow the example of Christ is obliged to monitor carefully his words. These are his guidelines: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph. 4: 29). The newer translations are even more direct: "No bad language must pass your lips, but only what is good and helpful to the occasion" (NEB). "Let there be no more foul language, but good words instead" (Phillips).

Another admonition by the apostle Paul is even more specific: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks" (Eph. 5:3-4). Again the newer versions are more pointed: "Among you there must not be even a mention of fornication or impurity in any of its forms, or promiscuity: this would hardly become the saints! There must be no coarseness or salacious talk and jokes—all this is wrong for you" (Jerusalem Bible). Or, "No coarse, stupid, or flippant talk; these things are out of place; you should rather be thanking God" (NEB).

The Christian must scrupulously avoid all unclean or God-dishonoring talk—this includes the slang and rough vernacular of the day, also such words as are sometimes called "minced oaths." All pointless or suggestive story-telling is off limits. He must also avoid all light and foolish talk—he must be careful that he never treats with lightness anything that deserves reverence. If simple, plain and wholesome speech cannot convey what he wants to express, he will be silent.

Difference in behavior.

The free and unrestrained behavior indulged in so freely by men and women in social circles today is totally unacceptable and abhorrent to the man or woman who would live godly in Christ Jesus. Such conduct may be accepted by the standards of this sinful and adulterous generation, but the Christian is committed to purity, chastity and principle. He cannot seek any pleasure in the sensual things of earth; his total concern is with the eternal verities of the world to come. His mind is on a higher level, and is continually reaching higher. The divine injunction calls upon him to "give up ungodly living and worldly passions, and . . . live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this world" (Tit. 2:12-13, Today's English Version). His affections are centered on things above (Col. 3:1-3). He is other-worldly-minded. (Continued on page 24)

90 Christmas

NO! Christmas is NOT for Christians. December 25, with all its merriment and tradition, and now its mass commercializing, is not for anyone who wants to be a real Christian. Do you wonder why? Here are a few facts:

1) December 25 is NOT the birthday of Christ. The Bible makes no mention of a winter date, nor does it associate Christ's birth with any account or event of the winter months. (On the contrary, it says the shepherds were tending sheep on the Judean hillsides the night Jesus was born—and this is done only between March and October.)

2) December 25 was a pagan feast day centuries before Christ was born. Any good encyclopedia or history will tell how the date was observed in ancient Babylon as the birthday of the "queen of heaven," or among other ancient peoples as the birthday of the sun-god. The Romans celebrated the date as the time when the sun-god Mithras was conquering the darkness and gloom of winter, because at this time the sun reached its southernmost point.

3) The Bible says, "Learn not the way of the heathen, for the customs of the people are vain" (Jer. 10:2). And many vain customs are associated with December 25, customs which had their origin in paganism entirely apart from any connection with Christ.

4) The December 25 date was not adopted as the birthday of Christ until during the fourth century after Christ. The date was set aside in the so-called (but no longer) Christian Church to help attract more "converts." Church officials observed the deep reverence and esteem many of the pagans felt for the date; and by adopting the holiday and adding to it a "Christian" significance, they found a way of winning the loyalty of more non-Christian peoples.

5) The December 25 holiday has been so thoroughly commercialized in modern times that it bears scarcely any resemblance to a religious observance. A stranger seeing the common Christmas displays might easily conclude that it was *Santa's* birthday.

6) Jesus said, "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). The observance of December 25 is a "commandment of men."

for Christians?

7) God never allowed His people to follow popular customs, or to take part in any worship or ceremony of any other people or religion. He expressly warned the Israelites against any involvement in the religious practices of the natives of the land they were entering: "Take care that you are not ensnared into their ways. Do not inquire about their gods and say, 'How do these nations worship their gods? I too will do the same.' You must not do for the Lord your God what they do, for all that they do for their gods is hateful . . . to the Lord" (Deut. 12:30-31, NEB).

8) God is particular. He even abhorred and despised the offerings of His *own* people when they offered them in an improper manner. "Bring no more vain oblations," He told them through His prophet Isaiah. "Incense is an abomination unto me . . . it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth" (Isa. 1:13-14). If God abhorred the *right* celebration that was offered in the *wrong manner*, how much more will He abhor the *wrong* celebration offered in the *wrong* manner, and at a season of the year appointed by pagan worshipers themselves?

Wrong origin, wrong method, wrong date, wrong occasion—there's just nothing *right* about celebrating December 25!

What Difference Does It Make?

Some people still say it doesn't make any difference what date you celebrate, so long as you know what you are doing and you are good and kind to others. What if our customs *are* borrowed from the pagans, they say? What if the date *was* originally a Roman Saturnalia—what does that matter if your *purpose* in celebrating is right?

That all depends on *whom* you are trying to please. If you're living to please all your neighbors, relatives and friends and you have only a nominal concern for what God calls right, by all means join the December celebrating.

But if you really want to honor Christ, why be part of something He abhors? Why not rather leave the December foolishness entirely alone and honor Him next spring, at the time of year God chose for His people to begin their sacred year? And honor Him then, not with pagan traditions

and folly but in a manner befitting His kingly authority and divine commission!

The Bible says, "Render . . . honour to whom honour is due," and who could be worthy of higher honor than our Saviour and King! ●●

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Kathy Kandor's Korner

(Continued from page 22)

that were not constructive, and not necessary.

Tonight as we gather for worship, I told myself, I will let the family know how very sorry I feel for the wrong I have been doing in finding so much unnecessary fault.

I bowed my head, asking God's forgiveness and for strength to overcome this dwarfing besetment. I am determined to be so critical of my own conduct that I will do nothing to make another stumble.

Yours determined to criticize herself,

Kathy

WHAT ABOUT U.F.O'S?

"What is your opinion of U. F. O's (Unidentified Flying Objects)? There are so many reports, I feel there must be something real about them. Some people say they are the work of demons, which I suppose are preparing a fresh assault upon the earth and all men. It seems to me that they might be supermen from other planets, who have learned more than we have about space travel. Or they could be piloted by angels. What do you think?"

—A Friend in New York

IT is difficult to say what people do or do not see. However, we can be sure of one fact: there is no possible connection between any U. F. O's and demons. The belief in demons sponsoring and promoting evil was an ancient superstition and does not find any support in the Bible. People who do evil are themselves devils, as Jesus called Judas (John 6:70). The Bible does not teach that there is any power of evil beyond the conniving of men's evil minds, the source of all evil (Mark 7:21-23; James 1:13-15).

We can also be sure that there are no visible U. F. O's manned or piloted by angels or supermen from other planets or worlds. If we were able to see such now, we would not be still in the "dry season," the period of time when there are no openly performed miracles or prophecies or visions or demonstrations of divine power. Paul prophesied all this would cease (I Cor. 13:8), and it did cease; and it will not be restored until Elijah the prophet arrives to "restore all things," as Jesus foretold (Matt. 17:11).

Allowing for the possibility (or probability) that at least some U. F. O's are imagined, there still are sightings which are real and which need explanation. Our local planetarium, the Strassenburgh Planetarium, has investigated many reports and studied the subject extensively. And their conclusion is that the majority of U. F. O's might better be termed "I. F. O's" (Identified Flying Objects). Strange appearing phenomena can have very identifiable causes—such as very high-flying geese, or high-flying balloons, or pieces of disintegrated spacecraft that orbit continually, or satellites which have been placed in orbit, to mention just a few possibilities. The human eye (which is actually in motion much of the time) observing any of these through atmosphere and in various degrees of light can produce effects that appear

very strange but which are not out of this world or beyond human understanding.

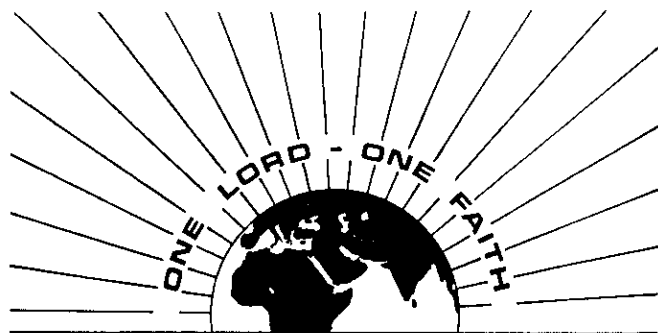
The director of the Strassenburgh Planetarium, Donald S. Hall, has supplied us with the following information. We quote:

"Of all the questions that we are asked at the Strassenburgh Planetarium, those dealing with U. F. O's are the most numerous. The most important point to remember is that U. F. O. stands for 'Unidentified Flying Object' and does not necessarily mean 'Flying Saucer' (as used in science fiction). I know for a fact that people see U. F. O's because most people are not sufficiently familiar with common objects in the night sky to be able to identify them, hence the 'U' in 'U. F. O.' If more people were familiar with the sky, the number of sightings of unidentified flying objects would drop dramatically.

"However, I also realize that not every sighting has been explained. Some of these unexplained happenings might be the result of uncommon events, such as marsh gas or atmospheric inversion layers, but even at that, a tiny percentage of the sightings remain a mystery. If trained observers were present, with the proper equipment, perhaps even these few unexplained sightings would lose their mysterious nature.

"After a study of the Universe, the stars in it, those stars which might have planets around them, those planets that might have life, that life which might be intelligent, that intelligent life that might be capable of building a craft capable of traversing the almost unimaginable distances between populated planets, that U. F. O's are spacecraft from other worlds is the least likely explanation of what we have been experiencing here on earth. Much as it hurts my earthly ego to say so, we're just not that interesting."

The widespread belief in superstition and demons and spirits and the mystery world today does not prove that such mysterious activities are real, except in the minds of the people who believe in them. The current reversion to superstition is but a sign of the end time, when "many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:11), and "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (II Tim. 3:13). Serious Christians will place their confidence in God and not be ensnared by mystery, fiction and superstition. ●●



People God Used

Part 5

God has worked with people through many ages, but all ages have not been equally productive. That is, all ages have not brought the same amount of fruit to perfection.

The period of the Judges, which we have been studying, produced some very high quality people; but the nation as a whole was not of one mind to serve the Lord. God never has had a time when whole nations—or even a whole family—would choose to serve Him. It is the same today. Only a very few have the vision to give up what they can see in hope of obtaining what they cannot see.

Let us learn from their failures and successes that we may succeed in our great quest of salvation.

The End of the Judges

The time the Judges ruled Israel was not a time of strong unity as the nation had experienced under Moses and Joshua. Nor was it a time of great spiritual life. Israel was a nation established by God, but the people were not responsive to God's leadership as a nation.

As time passed, the people grew more and more dissatisfied with the government God had given them. They looked at the nations around them and longed to be more and more like them. If only they could have a king—!

Human nature is much the same today. To be like others is more important naturally than to be right, or to obey God.

The rule of the Judges had not resulted in a time of prosperity and steady peace. But this was in no way God's fault, or the fault of the judges He raised up. Had Israel been living in obedience to the commands God had given to Moses, all the oppression and trouble could have been avoided. The adversities were actually God's way of chastising them for their waywardness.

But Israel would not learn.

The lesson is recorded for us. Let us seize it, and know for a certainty that "righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).

At last Israel demanded a king. The prophet Samuel was their judge, and they came to him with their complaints. He was ruling well, and in the fear of God. But the people were not content. "Make us a king," they cried.

Samuel was a man of God, and he took the problem to God. He was hesitant about doing or saying anything to alter the pattern the Lord had set up for the people. But Samuel inquired of the Lord; and the Lord told Samuel to warn the people of the problems they would have with a king, but to let them have their wish. So Samuel anointed the first king over Israel—Saul.

This incident shows the godly character of Samuel. He was the judge, and he could have objected strongly to Israel's wish for a king—and also to God's intent to allow it. But Samuel was above all this. Whatever the Lord said to do, Samuel was ready to support it; even if it was contrary to what he thought best. "I will teach you the good and the right way," he told them (I Sam. 12:23), and he went about helping them to be a better nation under their new king.

Saul

The first king of Israel, Saul, started out a humble, obscure, little-known man, though he looked the part of a king—he was head and shoulders above most of the people of his kingdom. This pleased Israel. His humble attitude pleased God.

But it was not long before his attitude changed.

Saul's first task as king was to unite the people so they could present a solid front against their foes. These foes were mainly the Philistines, who lived on the southwest of Israel and who were a courageous and persistent folk. During Saul's reign the great war with the Philistines took place, in which David so dramatically defeated Goliath—"in the strength of the Lord."

For the moment Saul was the victorious king, and victorious kings are always popular. But in the midst of his successes—which were actually the Lord's credit and not Saul's—Saul allowed his disposition to grow worse and worse, until he became so evil-minded that he even sought to take the life of his successor David. God had told Saul that the kingdom could not remain in his family because he had disobeyed God (read about this in I Samuel 15). God is severe, and He means just what He says. Saul disobeyed, and lost the great heritage

he could have had to pass on to his son.

Thus David was heir-apparent to the throne during most of Saul's reign. But Saul was jealous of David, and the hatred within him grew worse and worse. Many times David had to flee for his life. Finally the end came for the hardened king when, in battle with his old foes the Philistines, Saul and his sons fell.

Saul had ruled about forty years, but it was a sad instance of a man who began well and who had a superb counselor in Samuel, but who, through self-will and disobedience and uncontrolled jealousy, perished at last most miserably. God gave Saul great opportunity, but Saul did not use it well.

Opportunity is the gift of God; but it is every man's responsibility to grasp it and use it. Only by grasping our opportunities can we be worth anything to ourselves, our people, and our God.

David

After the death of Saul, David the son of Jesse was crowned, and he ruled over Israel for the next forty years. His remarkable character and executive ability soon became apparent. He had much of what Saul lacked. His reign was politically successful—David enlarged the bounds of the kingdom to their farthest extent. The kingdom now extended from the Red Sea and Egypt to the Euphrates, as God had promised it would (Josh. 1:4). David captured Jerusalem and made it the politi-

cal and religious capital of the nation. There he established the worship of God and organized regular worship services, complete with music and choirs of singers. He brought order out of chaos in the nation, and made Israel great. His success was due to one fact: David trusted in the Lord.

David's career, however, was not without its faults. He was a man and subject to temptation as all of us are. At times David was weak. And he erred grievously. But each time he was willing to face God for the consequences of his sin, repent and try again. The Lord accepted his true repentance. As David himself wrote, "God's sacrifice is a soul with its evil crushed: a heart broken with penitence, O God, never wilt thou despise" (Ps. 51:17, Moffatt). This is the sacrifice that took away David's sin, and it will remove ours also.

When David died, his son Solomon ascended the throne. Solomon began his reign well. When God gave him a choice between riches and wisdom, Solomon chose wisdom. His was the royal privilege of building the magnificent temple in Jerusalem—which had been David's plan and dream, but which the Lord had not permitted him to fulfill. Solomon's temple, as it was called, was the most splendid temple the world had ever seen.

Solomon's kingdom prospered, and his fame spread throughout the world. But alas! Solomon did not have the solid character to withstand the temptations of prosperity. And he did not continue as he had begun. To enhance his glory and extend his political power, Solomon made alliances with other nations, whose people served idols. He even married the daughters of some of these nations to secure his nation's friendship with their leaders; but his bad company was his downfall. His multitude of wives led him astray from the true God. Solomon's end was disastrous—both personally and politically. He wrote his own sad epitaph: "an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished" (Eccl. 4:13).

Solomon's court life was most luxurious, and the demands of his wives for all manner of indulgences were continuous. In this way, though there was much outward prosperity, the seeds of decay were being sown, and the king in his mad search after power and luxury failed to see the approaching storm. However wise he may have been, as his proverbs show, he lacked the practical wisdom which begins in the fear of God. He went steadily downhill, and only his fame and his reputation as the son of David saved him from political overthrow. Immediately on his death the consequences of his misrule showed themselves in the disruption of the kingdom. ●●

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

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THE COMING OF JESUS AND ELIJAH
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?

GOD'S SPIRITUAL CREATION

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THE GREAT APOSTASY

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THE HOLY SPIRIT

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UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Resurrection and Judgment

HE is not here! He is risen!" With these words, spoken by two men "dressed in dazzling white," standing by the empty tomb, the hope of a resurrection became more than a vague probability; it became an established fact. Here was proof that there is hope beyond the grave, that the God of Moses' day is still God in heaven and that He is able to overrule and contradict the thoughts of men on earth. Wicked men had sought to put to silence the One who dared to speak out against their injustice, but their plan did not fit into God's plan and it was overturned.

The loyal Jews knew from the prophets that God had promised to raise some from the grave. Had not their father, Abraham, willingly placed his beloved son Isaac on the altar knowing "that God had the power even to raise the dead" (Heb. 11:19, JB)? They knew that speaking through Hosea, God had said, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction" (Hos. 13:14). They knew also that the prophet Isaiah expected to be among those who would be raised, for he had written, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise... and the earth shall cast out the dead" (Isa. 26:19).

Their favorite son Daniel, who had been among the captives in Babylon but remained faithful to his God, had told of the future resurrection after receiving instruction from the angel Gabriel. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2), at the time that "Michael . . . the great prince [Christ]" should "stand up [return]." They were well acquainted also with the words of the Psalmist who had looked forward to the time when God would release him "from the power of the grave" (Ps. 49:15). The same David had also said that he would "rest in hope," knowing that God would not leave him in the grave (Ps. 16:9-10), and the ancient

prophet Job had also envisioned the time when he would see his Redeemer with his own eyes (Job 19:23-27).

These prophecies did not meet their fulfillment in the resurrection of Christ; they were only confirmed by its absolute proof of the certainty of a resurrection. Jesus' resurrection served to strengthen the hope of the living that they too might be raised at that great Day.

The Judgment at this time is only prophecy, but with the coming of Elijah and Christ and the Resurrection, it will become a reality. Because these events follow in sequence after the Second Advent, we have chosen to study them at this time.

How many resurrections are there to be?

Who will be raised?

Who will do the resurrecting and when?

Do they come forth from the grave immortal?

Who will stand before the Judgment seat of Christ?

What is the purpose of the Judgment?

These are some of the questions we will answer in this study as we compare the false teachings of man with the unerring word of our textbook, the Word of God, removing the web of mystery and misunderstanding that theology has woven around these doctrines through the centuries.

I. THE RESURRECTION

"Why is it considered incredible among you that God should raise dead men to life?" asked Paul of the unbelieving King Agrippa and his entourage. Paul did not think it incredible. He knew it had happened. Not only had Christ been raised from the dead, but he had seen and talked with the risen Christ. And since that meeting on the Damascus road, the resurrection had been his hope and the theme of his preaching. It was the hope of the Apostolic Church and it has been the hope of every true Christian from that time forward.

Resurrection means "a rising again from the

dead," or in other words, a return from the state of death to the state of the living. Theology has attached a meaning to **Resurrection** that differs from that of the dictionary. To the majority of the nominal churches, resurrection means a "re-union of the soul and body of man after their separation in death"—a necessary act if indeed man does have a soul that leaves the body at death.

Widespread belief in an "immortal soul" has led to this accepted resurrection theory.

But before we accept the theory as gospel, let us trace its origin. Is it Scriptural? No! The theory of the immortal soul is a product of Greek thought, originating with the Greek philosopher Plato and his predecessor Socrates. It was Plato who wrote of the immortality of the soul—not the inspired writers of the Bible. Plato and other Greek philosophers saw death as a friend, since it freed the soul from its prison and sent it heavenward to its eternal home.

Such teaching is not according to Scripture. Death is described as an enemy, the "last enemy to be destroyed" (I Cor. 15:26). Jesus, facing death, was not looking forward to it. Rather, He was greatly troubled and distressed. He made no mention of His soul or spirit about to be set free from its prison, but pleaded with His Father to free Him from the ordeal, if it were possible. And when He submitted with the words: "Yet not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Mark 14:36), it was only in obedience to His Father's will.

To say that one has an immortal soul that lives on is to say there is no such thing as death, another thought contrary to Scripture.

There is nothing immortal about man in his natural state. There is no part of him that survives death. Man does not have a soul; he is a soul. Belief in an "immortal soul" was adopted from the pagans and not from the Bible. Some concept of a life after death can be found in the annals of even the most primitive peoples. Their ideas varied, but most ancient civilizations believed in some sort of afterlife. In general it was thought of as a survival of the soul or spirit of man (believed to be his personality or some mysterious life-principle), a blissful existence in a heavenly land—a belief little different than the accepted theory of the immortal soul.

The word **Resurrection** is used more than three dozen times in the New Testament, proving beyond doubt that it was a subject of much import and a cardinal doctrine of the Christian Church. It was in fact the basis of the apostles' preaching in the Acts. They were living witnesses of the risen

Christ and they spoke boldly: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. . . . And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:20, 33).

Even before Christ's death and resurrection, the subject was a point of contention between two rival sects of the Jews, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The latter held to the belief in a resurrection, while the Sadducees denied it. Jesus sought to settle the argument, telling them, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God," and explaining to them the glorified state of immortals (Matt. 22:29; Luke 20:27-38).

The Sadducees were not convinced, for it was they who were instrumental in bringing Peter and John before the council because "they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2).

It was for his hope in the Resurrection that Paul was called in question before the Roman officers, first before Felix the governor, then before Festus his successor and still later before King Agrippa.

Defending himself before Felix, Paul said, "I have the same hope in God which they themselves [the Pharisees] hold, that there is to be a resurrection of both good men and bad. With this hope before me I also do my utmost to live my whole life with a clear conscience before God and man. . . . It is about the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day" (Acts 24:15-16, 21, Phillips).

Writing from his Roman prison, Paul again spoke buoyantly of his hope: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:10-11). "If by any means"—Paul was willing to suffer the loss of all things if he could but be sure of a resurrection in the last Day!

We as Christians share this same hope. Some living may never have to die; but not knowing the day nor the hour our life might end, we must use all our means to be worthy of a resurrection, because there is no other avenue of escape from the tomb. Our hope is every bit as real to us today who have but the written Word as it was to those who had witnessed the death and resurrection of Christ. We know that the Bible is the Word of God by its own testimony and by fulfilled prophecy, hence we do not hesitate to stake our all on it. Without it we would have no hope of a future life.

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A. The Resurrection—Why?

Why do we need a resurrection? If the theory of the nominal churches were true, that at death the soul wings its way to glory, there would be no need of a resurrection. If the souls of departed ones were rejoicing around the throne of God, it would mean suffering to return them to an earthly body. The belief of a "reunion of soul and body" cannot be found in the Bible; it is but pagan folklore.

Why do we need a resurrection? Because all hope of a future life depends upon it. When in the death state, a person knows nothing. The Psalmist states it well: "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (146:4). The only thing that leaves the body at death is the breath, and until that breath is restored that person sleeps in death. Without a resurrection, the grave will be his eternal resting place. Any future life is dependent upon a restoration of life to the body.

Paul points out the importance of the resurrection in I Corinthians 15, citing the resurrection of Christ as proof of God's power to raise the dead: "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you [the Sadducees] that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. . . . Then they also which are fallen asleep [in death] in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. . . . But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. . . . But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (vs. 12-14; 18-20, 23).

The resurrection of Christ was the seal of God Almighty on His promise of a future life. It gave absolute certainty to that hope, a hope that for the majority could be realized only through a resurrection from the dead.

Because Christ had been raised up from the grave, the believer who had lived the Christ-life could rest assured that he would likewise be raised from death's slumber in that Day. Without a resurrection there could be no hope beyond this life. Without Christ having been raised, there could be no assurance of a resurrection.

B. The Resurrection—When?

When will the dead be raised? Paul discusses the subject in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians:

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. . . . For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (4:13-17).

These verses mean many things to many people, but to the average church member they picture the Rapture, the return of Christ to take the righteous to heaven with Him, leaving the wicked on the earth and in the grave. We cannot agree with this interpretation.

Paul makes some important points here concerning death and the resurrection. Let us study his words.

1. **"Concerning them which are asleep."** Paul wanted to make sure they understood the state of the dead. They are asleep in the grave. There is no indication here of a "reunion of soul and body," at Christ's coming, with the soul in heaven and the body in the grave. Such a belief was no part of the Christian Church.

2. **"If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."** Jesus died and God raised Him from the dead. Just so, the covenant-makers, those who "sleep in Jesus," will God return to life.

To the believers in an immortal soul, and a "reunion of soul and body," this verse pictures Jesus bringing the souls from heaven to unite them with the bodies from the grave. Such an interpretation is not possible, for it is against the whole teaching of the Bible. Man is mortal (Job 4:17). Souls die; they do not go to heaven (Ezek. 18:20). It is but the breath that returns to God who gave it: "If he [God] gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust" (Job 34:14-15). If God takes away a man's breath, he dies.

God Himself will not return to earth, but will send His son, Jesus, whose name Emmanuel means "God with us" (Matt. 1:23). This is God's assurance that just as Jesus was raised from the dead, covenant-makers of other ages will likewise be raised at His coming.

The rendering of this verse in the New English Bible clarifies the meaning: "We believe that Jesus died and rose again; and so it will be for those who died as Christians; God will bring them to life

with Jesus." God who gives life and creates life can restore it.

3. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise." These words pinpoint the time of the resurrection as being at the time Christ returns from heaven. The "voice of the archangel" that calls the dead from the grave gives a clue to who does the resurrecting.

The Greek word translated "angel" also carries

the meaning of "messenger. The archangel refers to the "chief" angel or messenger. Malachi 4:5-6 tells us that the prophet Elijah will come before the "great and dreadful day of the Lord," and Jesus Himself taught the same in Matthew 17:11, saying "Elias [Greek for Elijah] truly shall first come, and restore all things." Restoring all things includes restoring the covenant-makers to life, and Elijah the prophet is this "chief messenger" (I Thess. 4:16), sounding the trumpet of God to call them from their graves.

His Second Advent, we learn that the angels also

From Jesus' words in Matthew 24 concerning have a part in this task: "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (v. 31). Again, to gather them "from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other," does not mean that they are literally in heaven as some would conclude, but it is figurative language to describe bringing together the band of covenant-makers from all parts of the earth. This would be a gigantic undertaking, beyond the power of man.

4. "And the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

This statement, indicating that all covenant-makers of the 6000-year Day of Salvation (the living together with the resurrected dead) meet the Lord in the air, implies that they must have been resurrected and gathered together by superhuman means prior to the Lord's appearance.

That the "dead in Christ shall rise first" does not suggest two separate resurrections, one for the faithful and one for the unfaithful, for both classes must be raised together if they would appear together before the Judgment seat of Christ to be separated (see Matt. 25:32). The "dead in Christ" rising "first" indicates that living believers will not precede or go before those who have died. The "dead in Christ" will be resurrected, brought to the level of the living, and together they will rise to "meet the Lord in the air." The "dead in Christ" includes both faithful and unfaithful covenant-makers, those who have in their lifetimes agreed to serve God and adhere to His laws. Whether or not they are faithful has yet to be determined; at this point they are only restored to the status of the living.

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THE Resurrection of truth from its seeming tomb was a part of the plan of God, and a truly great and notable accomplishment. It brought to an end the dark night of the apostasy. But it is only one in a sequence of events which are destined to bring about a worldwide awakening until "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

This greater awakening will be initiated by the return of Christ the Bridegroom from heaven to revive God's work upon earth in the midst of the years (Hab. 3:2).

God's avowed purpose is to fill the earth with His glory, as revealed in Numbers 14:21, "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." God's righteous people are His glory, or to quote His own words through Isaiah: "I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory" (Isa. 46:13). The term "Israel" is used in Scripture to represent God's righteous people: "... he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, ... whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:29). When all sin and iniquity has been forced to stop her mouth, when only righteous people live on earth, the earth will be filled with God's glory as He has promised.

The living Christ is coming in power and glory as King of kings and Lord of lords, and His coming will awaken and illuminate every corner of this earth. He will put down the rebellion of warring nations and establish God's world-ruling government of peace and equity over all. The greater awakening is the subject of the entire Bible. It is the Day toward which God's purpose has been moving steadily from the beginning of time. It is the plan of God that the earth shall be inhabited with a people worthy of the inheritance. And God has set aside seven thousand years for the selecting of that people. He wants the best, and He will be satisfied with nothing less. So while He waits, the events of the nations take their course, all contributing to and none distracting from His over-all purpose. He created this planet "not in vain: he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18). And when the time has come He will see that it is inhabited with people who deserve the honor.

In Daniel 7:27 we find the gracious pronouncement: "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." The whole hope of the true Christian is the better

The Great APOSTASY

(Book Feature: Part Six)

THE GREATER AWAKENING

resurrection to immortality, eternal life, as a co-ruler under Christ! Jesus promised, to him that "overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron"—unbreakable law (Rev. 2:26-27).

That will be a time of universal peace, the forecast is: the Lord "maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth" (Ps. 46:9). "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. ... He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish: and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. ... Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper" (Ps. 72:1, 6-8, 11-12).

The apostle John, in vision, saw a preview of the beginning of that rule and world government: "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them. ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4).

Micah the prophet also foresaw this happy turn of events; he pictures it in glowing terms: "And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. ... nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Mic. 4:1-3).

All of earth's inhabitants will be turned to the

true religion in that gladsome day when the “man-child” is caught up into heaven, into political power. Now the masses of mankind are ignorant of the knowledge of God, but in that new day “Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of [the] times, and strength of salvation” (Isa. 33:6). “And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord” (Jer. 31:34).

No one will be deceived as the vast majority of mankind is today! All will know the truth! No more religious confusion. Humans will become teachable! People will start living God’s way, the way of true values, the way of peace, of happiness, of well-being, of joy.

The Psalmist speaks sublimely of that better day, and of the blessings that will accompany it: “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven” (Ps. 85:10-11). What a day of bliss will come with that better awakening during the glorious Millennial reign upon earth, after Christ and His Bride or Church have ascended into power. What grand news is soon to take the place of the sordid reports that come with the news each morning during these decadent days of man’s age of misrule!

What a thoroughly tried and proven, qualified, perfect government that will be! At its head will be Christ, the King of kings! Perfect in character, absolute in honesty, integrity, faithfulness, loyalty and trust; filled with outgoing concern for the governed, their welfare and salvation; total knowledge, understanding, wisdom. Complete love, mercy, patience, kindness, compassion, forgiveness. Yet possessing total power, and never compromising one millionth of an inch with divine law. He will enforce God’s law—God’s government on earth. Haughty, carnal, rebellious humans will be compelled to yield in complete submission to God’s government—or be eliminated.

Crime, sickness, disease, pain and suffering will be gone! Poverty, ignorance will be banished. There will be a world filled with happiness-radiating humans, guided, helped, protected, and ruled by former mortals now made immortal, and all the humans realizing that they, too, may inherit everlasting life in supreme happiness and thrilling joy, if only they qualify.

How fervently we should pray, “Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.”

(THE END)

Jonah

AMONG the least understood books of the Bible is a small book of prophecy called Jonah. It tells of a disobedient prophet, a tempestuous sea into which he was cast, and a whale that swallowed him and spewed him out three days later. Can it be that this story, understood as a parable, is a prophetic picture of the Great Apostasy? Can such be possible? We say *yes*. In this chapter we shall tell why.

Bible scholars have puzzled over the meaning of Jonah, some attempting to place each event in history, others trying to see some over-all meaning. Fundamentalism generally has taken a very literal approach; extreme liberals have regarded the book as a myth.

The fundamentalist approach was vividly set forth at the Scopes* trial in 1925, Mr. Bryan being its mouthpiece. We will quote part of the discussion, as Mr. Darrow questioned Mr. Bryan:

Darrow: “When you read that Jonah swallowed the whale—or that the whale swallowed Jonah—excuse me please—how do you literally interpret that?”

Bryan: “When I read that a big fish swallowed Jonah—it does not say whale.”

Darrow: “Doesn’t it? Are you sure?”

Bryan: “That is my recollection of it. A big fish, and I believe it, and I believe in a God who can make a whale and can make a man and make both do what He pleases. . . .”

Darrow: “But in the New Testament it says whale, doesn’t it?”

Bryan: “That may be true; I remember in my own mind what I read about it.”

Darrow: “Now, you say, the big fish swallowed Jonah, and he there remained how long—three days—and then he spewed him upon the land. You believe that the big fish was made to swallow Jonah?”

* The commonly termed “Scopes Trial” held in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925, was actually a trial of a young Tennessee school teacher named Scopes, who was charged with teaching evolution contrary to a state law. The trial, however, became a much publicized contest between William Jennings Bryan, a famous lawyer who represented fundamentalism and literal interpretation of the Scriptures, and Clarence Darrow, a lawyer representing Scopes and modern skepticism.

and the Whale

Bryan: "I am not prepared to say that; the Bible merely says it was done. . . ."

Darrow: "You don't know whether that was fixed up specially for the purpose."

Bryan: "No, the Bible doesn't say."

Darrow: "But do you believe He made them—that He made such a fish and that it was big enough to swallow Jonah?"

Bryan: "Yes, sir. Let me add: One miracle is just as easy to believe as another. . . ."

Darrow: "Perfectly easy to believe that Jonah swallowed the whale?"

Bryan: "If the Bible said so."

The weakness and unreasonableness of this approach is as pathetic as it is ridiculous. Such discussion only makes us feel like repeating the words of the Almighty: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?"

Modern thinking on the subject of Jonah is generally not so extreme, but no definite solution to the problem seems to exist among theologians.

History or Parable?

Our first step toward understanding the book is to decide whether we shall consider it history or parable, literal happenings or symbolic story.

The Bible uses various means to communicate its message. Psalms, proverbs, histories, allegories, parables, letters, sermons, all are used; and it is important for proper understanding that every writing be properly classified.

What is Jonah?

Our first thought, upon reading the book, is that we are reading history. But let us not conclude too quickly. Notice a few details. A storm is raised at sea to plague a boat which carries the disobedient prophet; it is calmed when the offender is pitched overboard—hardly a historical account. A great whale swallows the man—a physical impossibility as far as any whales known today. The man spends three days and three nights in the interior of the whale without any ill effects. The prophet, cast out of the whale, goes and preaches to a city of vast size, and the entire population repents and turns to God—an unheard of event in history. All these details suggest that the story is something other than mere history.

The book of Jonah fits most easily into the style of a parable, a story meant to teach a specific lesson or to reveal an important truth. Jesus used many parables when He was teaching, and so did others of God's spokesmen.

When we view the story as a parable, it becomes a masterpiece of prophetic literature, a vivid telling of the great calamity which befell the true Church as gradually they rejected God's laws, sought more liberal ideas, and thus apostatized from the true teachings of Jesus. This initial rejection was followed by the long period of dormancy, the night of the Apostasy, while the powers of evil flourished and no one upheld the truth of God. Then came a period of revival and restoration. All this is in the story of Jonah, if we take it as a parable and seek to harmonize its symbolism with prophecies of the Bible which are more plainly told.

The author of the book may easily have given his own name to the main character in his story. But when we view the book as a parable, we must see each part as representative of deeper meanings. We must see Jonah as a symbol of a class of people, not an individual. Nineveh, the city to which he is sent to preach, must also be symbolic. Likewise the whale, the sea, the dry ground, and all that happens—all must be representing deeper, hidden meanings.

Understanding the Parable

Before we can read this parable with understanding, we need a few definitions of the words used, to give breadth to our thinking.

First, who is Jonah? The author uses the name Jonah to represent all who accept God's laws and agree to live by them; they are the covenant-makers, as Jonah himself says in the parable: "I will pay that that I have vowed" (Jonah 2:9). Some members of this "Jonah" class are faithful to God; others prove unfaithful. And both divisions are included in the definitions of "Jonah," as cited in the Hebrew Lexicon: "Son of truth, my dove;" also, "excluded from the holy convocation."

What about Nineveh? This city in prophecy may signify the same as Babylon: "confusion, darkness, the forces of evil, world of the ungodly." Always

God's spokesmen have been sent to cry against prevailing wickedness. As Moses before Pharaoh, or Daniel before Belshazzar, or Paul before Agrippa, so Jonah was sent to cry against Nineveh.

With these thoughts in mind let us read the narrative in Jonah. The book begins:

"Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."

The command of God is definite. But Jonah does not obey. Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah flees in the opposite direction—toward Joppa, the sea and Tarshish. (It is significant that Tarshish was at the westernmost point of the then-known world, and the farthest removed from Nineveh in the east, illustrating how apostate Christians fled as far away as possible from their duty to God. Jonah chose his symbols well).

Always there have been disobedient covenant-makers. God has never yet found all who agreed to serve Him 100% faithful.

"Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof and went down into it" (1:3).

By boarding this ship bound for Tarshish, Jonah, symbolic of God's covenant-makers, takes a step which many of the unfaithful have taken through the ages. He made himself a willing subject of powers of evil which could do nothing but lead him away from God.

As we apply this action of Jonah to the Great Apostasy, we find it meaningful. During the time of the apostles, the Gospel had many loyal spokesmen, and many eager recipients. But as time passed and the apostles died and those who had known them passed away, the tendency to compromise with evil and disobey grew stronger. The attitude of those who professed to serve God became more and more aligned with pagan thought and pagan practices. And slowly, one by one, those committed to God began to depart from their loyalty and follow the trend of the majority of the world.

The Tempest

Jonah boards the ship bound for Tarshish; he is trying to turn away from his responsibility to God. What happens then?

"There was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken" (1:4).

Like the other terms in the parable, neither the sea nor the tempest need be literal. The "tempest" may be symbolic of serious disturbance, unrest and struggle within the "sea," which the Revelator un-

derstood as representing multitudes of people (Rev. 17:15). Among the definitions of "tempest" given by the Lexicon are: "To be violently shaken, tossed by adversity; used of an enemy who rushes upon his victims like a storm; to be dispersed as chaff; to scatter as a people."

The struggle was intense. The growing, apostate Church would not accept the gospel as taught by Jesus and His apostles, nor could the various members agree on what to believe. They debated one new idea after another; conflict followed conflict.

Deep Sleep

We read further in the parable: "Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep" (1:5).

While the struggle continued in the religious world as the apostate Church became more and more dominant, the true Christians, God's faithful servants, slowly went to sleep. This is the same sleep or spiritual insensibility which Jesus indicated in Matthew 25, in the parable of the Ten Virgins. Like Jonah, who represented both faithful and unfaithful covenant-makers, some of the virgins were wise, and some were foolish. But the time came when they "all slumbered and slept." No one remained to hold aloft the true faith, or to live by its principles.

But the sea continued to rage. So the men of the ship finally "took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging" (1:15). The shipmen, representative of the papal and church authorities, were unwilling to do this at first; they wished to retain at least an *outward* connection with Christ and His apostles; they wanted some linkage with the early Church and its founders, if only in name; they wanted to be able to claim the Bible as some part of their heritage. But when the whole system went overboard, the totally apostate Church could "progress" more smoothly. No longer did they have to listen to the discomforting words of the Lord.

But though God allowed the "men of the ship," or the apostate Church powers at the time, to completely dominate His people and put them to silence, He also provided a means of protection—for Jonah was destined to live again upon earth someday.

"Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (1:17).

The very power that tried to swallow up the

true teachings of the Word served as its preserver. Many a monk and church authority housed and protected the written Word as sacred treasure, though totally ignorant of its true teachings.

Definitions of the word "fish" agree with this thought. They are, "covered over, made dark." Jonah, representing God's true teaching and its sponsors, lay inside this great "fish," wrapped in midnight darkness, the weeds of superstition and ignorance wrapped around his head, the intellect completely enslaved by error and evil (Jonah 2:5).

The Roman papal power was not the first to be called a "great fish" or a "whale," as Jesus referred to this "fish" in Matthew 12:40. The prophet Ezekiel used a similar figure to describe the "Pharaoh king of Egypt" (see Ezek. 29:3; 32:2). Ezekiel 32:2 reads: "Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou art as a whale in the seas: and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and troublest the waters with thy feet, and fouledst their rivers."

This whale had feet, hence could not have been literal; it is stated to be a representation of the "king of Egypt"—applied spiritually to spiritual Egypt (Rev. 11:8), the same power represented by the whale in Jonah.

But the great fish was to cover Jonah for a limited time only. "Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (1:17). True religion, enclosed in the belly of the fish, could not long remain totally inactive. God had other plans. The three days and three nights could logically represent the period of the Apostasy—the duration of which was prophesied to be 1260 years. After that time had expired, true knowledge and faith would again walk upon the earth.

And so Jonah started to make trouble inside the whale, and the "fish vomited out Jonah upon the dry land" (Jonah 2:10).

This action could represent the end of the apostasy, the end of the complete supremacy of the powers of evil; it marks the end of total darkness and ignorance as someone again dedicates himself to God and seeks to obey His laws and understand His precepts.

This great work, represented by Jonah being vomited up onto dry land, we believe to have been accomplished by our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols. Early in life he began to question what he had been taught as sacred tenets of faith, demanding always an unmistakable "Thus saith the Lord." Again and again he opposed commonly accepted doctrines, questioning and studying. "They are not reasonable," he would say. "It is not reasonable to

believe in eternal torment; not reasonable to believe in a literal devil." And as he searched in the Bible, he found his suspicions confirmed: The general teachings of Christianity were *not* the teachings of the Bible. All through life he continued his search; and the time came when he could rejoice to stand in the full light of the knowledge that God intended men to have; Jonah was once again standing on dry ground.

The most vital question for which he found an answer was "What must I do to be saved?" When in 1880 Mr. Nichols recognized the Scriptural demand for moral perfection, and proclaimed to his followers that no man could be saved apart from knowing and keeping every command of God, this brought a final cleavage with established religions. In the language of Jonah he was saying, "I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed." And what was the result? "The Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land" (Jonah 2:9-10).

Go—Preach!

Next in the parable is a command delivered to Jonah:

"And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:1-4).

When God again had living witnesses to deliver His message after the long night of the apostasy, the message to teach was clear: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The number "forty" is a sacred or round number, used to specify a time of unrevealed duration. Its purpose is to communicate *urgency*. Soon, very soon, God's judgments will come. Prepare, prepare, *prepare!*

It should be our earnest aim to be a faithful part of the class represented by Jonah which heeds the message, as well as delivers it. We must hearken; we must escape from "Nineveh"; we must prepare for the day of Judgment that is sure to come. ●●

The more you say, the less we remember of what you say.

We die by living to ourselves; we live by dying to ourselves.

Kathy
Kandor's
Korner

Finding Unnecessary Fault

I was troubled. As I washed the breakfast dishes, Neal's words kept probing me.

"Kathy," he had asked in his kindly manner, "have you read Romans 14, verses 12 and 13, from the Phillips Bible recently?"

I had given him an offhand answer, for at that moment I had been too busy preparing breakfast and lunches to think of anything else.

But when Keith was ready for school and Neal and the older children were off to work, I paused to read the verses in my Bible.

"Why, then, criticize your brother's actions, why do you try to make him look small?" *Was that what I had been doing?* "We shall all be judged one day, not by one another's standards or even by our own, but by the judgment of God. . . ."

I had caught myself at times being highly critical with the children, but I had always felt justified. But maybe—

As I looked closer, I realized I *had* judged others by *my* standards. I wanted people to do as I thought they should.

I read on: "It is to God alone that we have to answer for our actions. Let us therefore stop turning critical eyes on one another. If we must be critical, let us be critical of our own conduct, and see that we do nothing to make a brother stumble or fall."

I read the verses over several times, trying to extract their depth of meaning. Neal, I was sure, had seen some special message here for me.

Now as I scoured vigorously on the old iron skillet, I tried to recall our conversations last evening.

Suddenly a very disturbing thought struck me. The skillet slipped from my grasp, sending up a spray of soap suds as it splashed into the dishpan.

My cheeks became hot with shame as I thought about it.

The freezer had been badly in need of defrosting. Since I was busy, Karl, our eldest son, had kindly offered to do the job. It was indeed a great help, and I had thanked him gratefully.

The following morning I hurried to the freezer to get a roast of meat for dinner. The freezer was a picture of neatness but—I just couldn't find that roast of meat. There were the packages of ground meat, and the stew, and the steaks. But where, O where were the roasts? Were we *out* of roasts? I was certain we had more, but— could I find it? At last I discovered it tucked in neatly under the stew meat.

Now I had always been very careful to pack the meat in a certain order, as I thought it should be; ground meat, stew, roasts, and the steaks to one side. It was so logical.

I had made quite an issue of it with Karl, reminding him several times that "If I had done the job, I would have put"—and I explained just how I would have done it.

I could see the wrong now. I had said I was thankful, but was I? A son so willing to give his time and strength to help his mother, and I—

He had been quiet and patient through all my fault-finding. But what must he have thought of my ungrateful example?

Neal never rebukes me in front of the children, but he had said, "Mother, there is usually more than one right way of doing things. Someone else's idea *might* be just as good as ours. We should be grateful for our willing helper."

I was shocked, and shamed. Had finding unnecessary fault become such a habit with me that I had let the incident slip from my mind without realizing what I had done?

How many times had I discouraged my family by finding *unnecessary* fault?

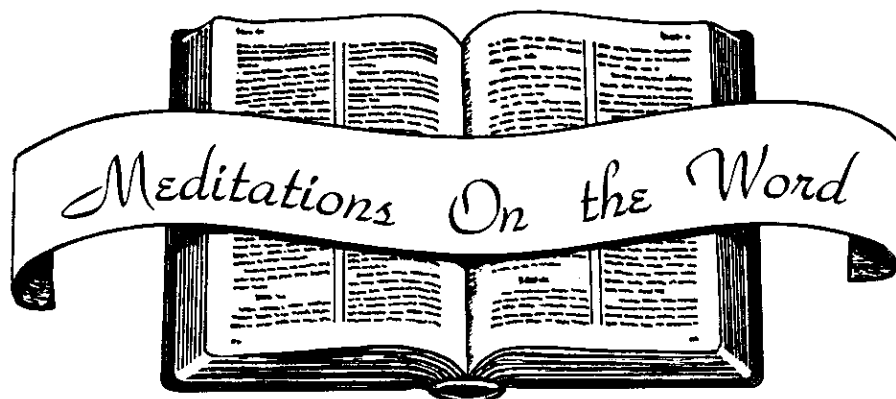
No one enjoys helping a person who is fault-finding, picky and critical. What kind of example was I setting before the children? Surely not one I could be proud of! They didn't see this fault-finding, critical attitude in their father.

Yes, I admitted to myself, Neal was right. I had been turning critical eyes on others, measuring them with *my* stick, pronouncing them "wrong" just because they didn't use *my* method.

A critical spirit is unkind and creates unnecessary divisions among God's children, whose mutual love should draw them closer together.

As I stood there by the sink, I tried to look at myself honestly. I could think of many criticisms

(Continued on page 9)



"Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God" —(Proverbs 2:3-5).

A truer saying was never uttered than that "knowledge is power." Knowledge builds and maintains our civilizations; knowledge preserves the fabric of human society; knowledge fills our lives with comforts and safeguards. Without knowledge, nothing can be done; with it, everything is possible. The fact that millions of people manage to blunder through life without much knowledge does not alter the principle; it is the applied knowledge of others which has made the comfort and safety of these "free riders" possible. In every way, so many are indebted for so much to so few.

In the world of commerce and industry, opportunities come unannounced, and it is the trained men who are ready to seize them as they pass. The young man or woman who recognizes this, and is willing to forego present pleasures for the sake of acquiring an education, is the one who is likely to succeed in the stern competition of the productive years.

A far worthier quest, however, is the search for the wisdom of God, that which is eternal. "Wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence," said the sage of old, "but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it" (Eccl 7:12). This is not natural life, but eternal life; neither is it the wisdom of this world, which in most cases is pursued only as a means of making more money—a feeble defense against the King of Terrors. It is the divine wisdom, the "grace of God" which teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live "soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12).

Throughout the Scriptures, and especially in the Book of Proverbs, no virtue is so highly praised

as Wisdom—the basis and source of all other virtues and blessings. "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom." Why? "Exalt her, and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honor when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee... She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand: and in her left hand riches and honor."

If such rewards do not attract, one will not seek for wisdom. There must first be a desire. One may lead a horse to water, but cannot make him drink. If one does not desire this saving wisdom, it will certainly not be forced on him. God will save no man against his will.

The first step is to ask. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find" (Matt. 7:7). James advises, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God... and it shall be given him." It sounds very simple, but we should never imagine that such priceless wisdom is to be had for the mere asking. Such a thing would be contrary to the laws of Nature and of God, a denial of the principle of the survival of the fittest. These statements are fully qualified by other inspired utterances. "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge" (Eph. 3:4). And again, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein" (Rev. 1:3).

This desire for knowledge must possess an intensity, an almost desperate eagerness, a straining of every nerve toward a definite goal. We cannot afford to be lackadaisical about it, for too much is at stake. It is well compared to the search for "silver and... hid treasure." The lure of precious metals has never failed to stir the pulses of adventurous man. Let a rumor of a "gold strike" be whispered ever so cautiously, and the inevitable stampede begins.

The closing years of the 19th century witnessed

the great Klondike gold rush. Thousands upon thousands of eager but inexperienced treasure seekers poured into Alaska, and despite the frantic protests of authorities and in the face of a savage winter, they poured over the bleak passes and frozen wastes, suffering incredible hardships and often death in their frenzied eagerness to stake their claims in time. What strange motive drives men to such exertions? There is always, amid the toil and drudgery, the hope of a big strike, a reward out of all proportion to the effort expended.

Likewise the seeker after divine wisdom has not only the hope but the assurance that its possession and practice (it is not really wisdom unless practiced) will yield a return that is "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20), beyond what eye hath seen or ear heard or the mind of man has conceived (I Cor. 2:9). The rewards of righteousness are infinitely out of proportion to any effort we could possibly put into it. How, for instance, could one earn eternal life in happiness in one short lifetime? The "percentage" is beyond comprehension or computation.

The last verse of our text assures us that the search for the wisdom of God never disappoints. The conclusion is stated positively—"then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." At this point, the analogy ceases, for it is a well-known fact that the prospector for gold and silver almost invariably dies poor. The vast majority of "gold-rushers" straggle back beaten. Statistics show that more, far more, has been spent in the search for gold and its production than the value of all the gold ever mined. But the divine wisdom is a sure thing, *if*. Yes, certainly there is an *if*. In what line of thought or action can we escape that fateful little word?

"And this is the confidence that we have in him," said the beloved Apostle, "that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us" (I John 5:14). All our asking and seeking must be according to His will, not according to our own ideas. And what is that Will? It is that "we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (ch. 3:22; 5:3). "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," is the promise of Jesus; and the terms of this "coming" are set forth in John 6:45, "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

The next and greatest link in this golden chain of evidence is found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:24-27), where we are assured that our hearing and learning of the Father's will, without the *doing* thereof, places our building on the sand, to be destroyed in the Day of final testing. •

Christian Nonconformity

(Continued from page 8)

Difference in manner of spending time.

The Christian is obligated to "redeem the time" (Eph. 5:15-16), even to "make the very most" of it; hence he has no time for much that Mr. and Mrs. Average may do. The Christian has no time for anything that is not constructive or edifying to his inner life or his physical well being. This rules out most TV viewing, most movies, most newspaper and magazine reading, all amusement centers, "hit" music, dancing, revelry, partying, and profitless pastimes. Dates like Halloween, Valentine's Day, April Fool's Day, and so-called Christmas do not even appear on the Christian's schedule of activities. If time is to be redeemed, it cannot be spent in frivolity or foolishness on *any* day.

Is there a difference between Mr. Average and the Christian? There *is*, a difference that is cosmic in dimension. Jesus said it this way: "Who-soever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:35). The difference is so great that it is the difference between losing one's life or saving it. Many things the world calls loss, God calls great gain. And much that the world calls gain, God calls loss. We must learn to judge by God's standards. Self-denial, self-sacrifice, humility, strict honesty and self-discipline matter little to the world; but in the sight of God they are great gain. And what the world calls gain—individualism, pride, self-assertiveness, high position—are loss in the sight of God.

Check Your Standards

We should keep a constant check on the standard by which we judge. One of the greatest dangers of living in the present world is the subtle, almost unconscious acceptance of the easy-going attitude around us. Slowly but surely we may come to think that whatever is generally approved is right.

Let us ask ourselves in all seriousness: What determines *my* standard—the world, or the Word of God? How much does the prevalence of a certain behavior excuse that behavior for *me*? For example, we are driving on the expressway, and we see most people going between 60 mph and 65 mph. Do we tell ourselves that since *they* are doing it, it is all right for *us* to do the same, even

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

though the law says 55? Do we use what *others* are doing to set the standard by which we judge *ourselves*?

A minister once illustrated this point from his own experience. He was about to go across the street when a woman pulled him by the arm. "Look at the red light!" she said sharply. The minister replied rather weakly, "But look at the people going across," to which the woman remonstrated: "Don't look at the people. Look up at the light!"

Where are we getting our walking signals—from the crowd, or from the "light," the Word of God? Are we guilty of the sin of conformity? Do we look to what *others* are doing for *our* standards in things of the spiritual life? or do we always look to see what *God* thinks?

The words of Paul become more meaningful as our experience widens: "Be not conformed to this world." It is a command with a thousand applications.

The difference between what the world calls right and what God calls right is tremendous—and continually increasing as the world's standards drop and God's remain the same.

Is It Necessary?

But the question arises: Is it really necessary to maintain our standards on the same level as in former times? Are not the extremes of difference between us and the world, when carried to their full extent, a barrier against others? Ought we not to minimize the difference so that others will feel more *comfortable* with us and so be more open to listen to the truths of God's Word and the way of life He requires? Isn't there danger that we may cut ourselves off from those who might accept the way of God if their first impressions were not so severe?

In considering this, let us ask ourselves another question: Did God ever command us to do something and then turn directly around and tell us *not* to? Did He ever say, "Be not conformed to this world" and then in another place tell us we should conform to a limited extent? In other words, did He ever tell us to do evil that good might come? The answer resounds in the negative: Never. "Why not do evil that good may come"? queried Paul. And then he added, "Of course, such an argument is quite properly condemned" (Rom. 3:8-9, Phillips). The principle is plain: Never do evil that good may come.

Second, what evidence have we that others will be more impressed by our message if they are more comfortable in our presence? Are we supposed to be careful that what we tell others about our faith

is not too disturbing to their complacency, or too upsetting to their present beliefs or manner of life? Did Jesus go about being careful not to make anyone uncomfortable? What about His words to the man who wanted to follow Him but who wanted first to go and bury his father: "Let the dead bury their dead"? (Matt. 8:22). What about Jesus' placing of the divine family ahead of the closest earthly ties, even His own mother and brothers? "Who is my mother," He said, "and who are my brethren? For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. 12:48-50). Were these statements intended to make men comfortable—or to speak and teach *the truth*!

Jesus compared His disciples to "salt"—"Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13). Was salt ever considered a *comforting* agent? The ancient world used salt to promote healing in a wound (but it never promoted comfort). Salt was a preservative; salt was a seasoning. Wherever it was, its presence was known and felt. So Jesus said to His disciples, You must let men know that you are different. You must make them *feel* it. Then He added a warning: If salt "loses its saltiness, it can't season anything. So don't lose your flavor!" (Mark 9:50, Living Bible).

Jesus also told His disciples to be lights: "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). Light reveals; light penetrates; light explores; light purifies. So Jesus sent them out to be lights in the world—not to make men comfortable but to expose their evil and penetrate their darkened consciousness.

This does not mean that Jesus meant us to carry a holier-than-thou attitude—never! But we must not be ashamed to own and display the cause we support, even if we do make others uncomfortable. Said Jesus: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

We should rejoice that we have been entrusted with the knowledge of a way of life so distinctive. A man or woman truly seeking a higher type of life is not going to be impressed by what he or she is accustomed to. If we are no different from others, then our message is vain and powerless. If we would advertise something superior, we must show in our lives what it can do, else who will be attracted to it?

If our religion and our life fit so comfortably into the cultural background of our day that one scarcely knows it is there, it is not genuine. It is

not the flaming hope of the apostle Peter. It is not the all-consuming gospel of Paul. It is not the glorious hope of life proclaimed by Jesus. Anyone hearing and seeing these men knew of a certainty that there *was* a difference—a tremendous difference both in present and future values. These men were not submerging themselves in conformity; they were not taking up permanent residence *here*. They were thinking and planning and straining *ahead*, and they were viewing everything here as against the background of the larger world of eternity.

Can we do less—and expect to share in the reality of their hope?

The Difference—But

There is, however, one shocking fact about all this: It is possible to realize the difference between the things of this world and the things of God; it is possible to weigh the transient pleasure against eternal happiness; it is possible to compare eternal oblivion with eternal bliss—and still in some unguarded, thoughtless moment to go after the things of this world, to pursue some vain ambition or gratify some wayward desire or give way to some inborn lust of our lower nature. It is possible to sell our glorious birthright for a mess of temporal pottage. It has happened before, in greater lives than ours; it can happen to us. Let us beware!

This is why Jesus put the question to each of us to ponder: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). What will you gain, He asks, if you should get everything the world can offer—if in the getting you destroy your prospects of the real, the abundant—*eternal life*?

But something in us still protests. "Lord, I don't want the *whole* world—just a part of it!" But who can say *what* part should be allowed to *whom*? You would have this part, I would take another part, someone else would take another part, and soon the whole world would be in and God would be crowded out.

No, if we want the ways of God and the rewards He offers, we must let the world go—*all* of it. There is no half-way point. It is *all* or *none*. It is either God's way, or the way of the world.

Resisting the trend to conformity is a gigantic task for every one of us, whatever our age or station in life. The world is born in our very hearts; we are by nature a part of it. And coming out from it requires strong spiritual muscles and super long-range vision. But it *can* be done. It *has* been done. It *is being* done!

The outside world today is especially threatening. No one is immune. The world cajoles, or belittles, or even threatens those who do not acquiesce to its wishes and ways. Its godless culture is the very atmosphere of our daily existence; its Christless philosophy is sung to us on all sides. It seeps in through the smallest cracks; and without hardly being aware of it, we find ourselves adopting *some* of its ways in some degree.

The greatest danger, however, is not in outward conformity. It is the inner world of our minds that we must guard most closely. Worldliness is a way of thinking, an attitude toward life, an underlying philosophy that the opinion of the majority has merit. Somehow the voice of the majority penetrates our inner ear and we are impressed in some small way with the thoughts and values around us. It tells us to settle down in the present system and take things easy. Why be so different? The inborn desire is to conform, to be like everyone else, and that desire encompasses the inner life and heartbeat of man.

Worldliness, in short, is preferring the earthly to the heavenly. It is the almost subconscious weighing of the favor of God against the favor of men and deciding in favor of men.

But in making such a decision, we forget. We forget the difference. We forget that to choose the world is to reject God; that the "carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). We forget that there can be *no mixing* of the two, that "whosoever... will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jas. 4:4). We forget that in choosing one we automatically reject the other.

Let us beware! "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:16-17).

The world, and all that belong to it, are passing away. God, and all who belong to Him, will abide forever.

Which will we choose—the passing, or the abiding? the world, or the will of God? conformity, or Christian nonconformity?

The choice is ours. ●●

*"Love not the world" nor aught that is in it,
'Tis not of the Father, but passeth away;
And he that doth love it shall perish, forgotten;
But he that will leave it abideth for aye.*

DON'T BE COCK-SURE



DID you ever hear of the rooster who thought the sun came up every morning just to hear him crow?

We are all inclined to be too self-confident, too aware of and pleased with our own abilities and successes. We like to feel we know, and to have others know that we know. This is why Paul wrote "to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3).

It is not always wise or advisable to have a ready answer for every question and an eagerness to express it.

It is not always wise to believe so much in ourselves and our opinions that we feel no one else could possibly be as right.

It is not wise to be too confident of our own ability to meet a certain temptation successfully—we could fall.

It is not wise to be too sure of what we have seen or heard or understood, especially when someone else criticizes or disagrees with our position—we could be wrong.

To hold our tongue, when we are eager to be heard, is good Christian discipline. It is difficult, but it can be done. There are many occasions when we should not give a ready answer. Self-probing, deep thought, calm concentration and study are needed more often than we realize in a moment's judgment. And our quick answer may cut short the response of one who has given the matter the consideration it deserves.

Self-confidence is vital to a point, but cocksureness should be reserved for the birds. It is not a trait that is ornamental to any professing Chris-

tian. It is closely allied with braggadocio, and everyone abhors a loud-mouthed braggart. It is said that he who knows the most on a given subject generally has the least to say. The man who enjoys talking merely for the sake of hearing himself is of little value. Most often, what he says is either false or greatly exaggerated; thus he cannot be believed all the time and people soon forget to listen to what he has to say.

"A little learning is a dangerous thing," and it is true that a little learning often gives one a false concept of his knowledge or ability. For the person who has learned more has learned also how much more lies yet beyond him.

Shyness, timidity, fear of speaking before others, however, or being afraid to voice one's opinion when it could be useful, is neither virtue nor humility. Every one needs the right amount of self-confidence balanced with the right amount of reserve. Paul did not say we should think nothing of ourselves, but that we should beware lest we think *too much* of ourselves—we should "think soberly" according to the measure God has allotted us.

God gave each of us two eyes, two ears, and one mouth. Is it not logical, then, as someone has observed, that perhaps He intended us to see and hear twice as much as we speak?

Before we speak, we should learn to think, consider, contemplate. And when we speak, let us "speak as the oracles of God," as God's mouthpiece, saying what He would want us to say. If we do this, we shall have no fear of the self-confidence which is cocksure.

Blessed is the man who is not too sure of himself; for the self-assured fall into many temptations. ••

*We are living, we are dwelling
In a grand and awful time,
In an age on ages telling;
To be living is sublime.
Hark! the waking up of nations,
Gog and Magog to the fray;
Hark! what soundeth is creation
Groaning for its latter day.*

The Present Age

*Will ye play, then, will ye dally
With your music and your wine?
Up! it is Jehovah's rally!
God's own arm hath need of thine.
Hark! the onset! will ye fold your
Faith-clad arms in lazy lock?
Up! Oh, up thou drowsy soldier!
Worlds are charging to the shock.*

*Worlds are charging--heaven beholding;
Thou hast but an hour to fight;
Now the blazoned truth unfolding,
On--right onward for the right!
On! let all the soul within you
For the truth's sake go abroad!
Strike! let every nerve and sinew
Tell on ages--tell for God!*

-Selected

