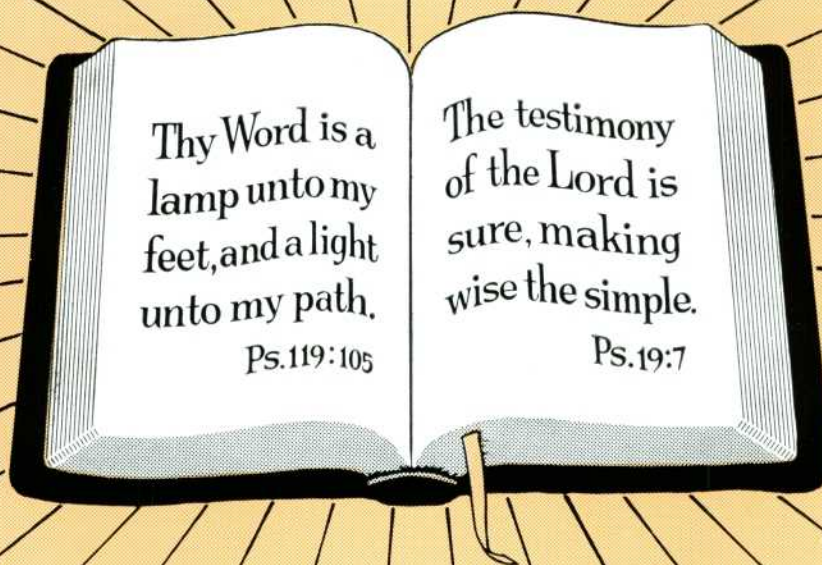


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



Engraving the Image of Christ

A Quincentennial Report

Myth, Heresy, or---?

Is God Just?

Index for 1977

EDITORIAL

Altering Our Attitudes

WILLIAM James once observed, "The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind." The Bible supports this, only in an imperative tone: Human beings *must* alter their attitudes of mind. "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). Other versions are even more direct: "By the new ideals that mold your minds . . . transform yourselves" (Williams); "let God re-make you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed" (Phillips); "let your minds be re-made and your whole nature thus transformed" (NEB).

Naturally, we have attitudes that seek to domineer, attitudes of haughtiness, spiteful attitudes when we are wronged, attitudes of pride and satisfaction with our own standards of self-righteousness. How unlike Christ are all these. How important that we change them!

Jesus said it in many of His parables. And the apostle Paul wrote it several times. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31). This includes having a right attitude toward people, things, and experiences. How we feel toward the issues of the day, the people we are with, and even toward ourselves, is tremendously important.

Many things in life affect us according to our attitude toward them. Someone has said that ninety-three percent of success is attitude; only seven percent is skill and knowledge.

We should check up on our attitudes frequently, to see that they are in line with the example Christ set, for so easily they can get off course. And *we* cannot possibly be *on* course when our attitudes are off.

Our attitudes show as we act or react to others. How easy it is to react in an ill-disposed manner when someone seems unkind to us. But when we do, we are letting an-

other determine our actions; we are yielding ourselves as bondservants to sin instead of copying Christ. If we keep an attitude of being subject to God at all times, another's ill-seasoned disposition will have no riling effect on our composed and controlled spirit.

In the area of our work we have more attitudes to watch. Are we always motivated by principles of honesty and fairness, doing to others as we would be done by, performing our tasks as to the Lord—who sees and knows all? Do we think of ourselves—first, last and always—as servants of Christ's Kingdom?

Perhaps our attitudes present the greatest problem at home, where others may be cool or indifferent to those things which mean the most to us. How do we react? What is our attitude? Are we always kind and considerate and examples of what we believe? Have we learned how to keep the fires of the spirit burning brightly even when the atmosphere is damp? It may require extra diligence; but our efforts are sure to be rewarded, and we may even see someday a reflection of our spirit in the lives of others.

Whenever we are with others, there are attitudes to watch—and alter. When our idea happens to be accepted, there is danger of feeling superior. Again, we may feel defeated when what we have recommended and supported is turned down. Both attitudes are off-center and are deadening to spiritual life. If our whole concentration is to please God, we will learn to keep *our* feelings out of the matter and think only of the long-term good of the cause. And then, we will scarcely notice whether or not the idea that carries is our own. Our attitude will be, "Thy will be done." We will trust all into the hands of God.

Mastering our attitudes is a long-term project, but it is sure to save us many hours of misery that result from hurt feelings, sour dispositions and sharp reactions.

Thank God that attitudes can be altered! ●●

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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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December, 1977

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Other versions are abbreviated as: *New International Version* (NIV); *New English Bible* (NEB); *Revised Standard Version* (RSV); *The New Testament in Modern English* (Phillips); *The Living Bible* (TLB); *New American Standard* (NAS); *The Jerusalem Bible* (JB).

Engraving the Image of Christ

by Rev. L. T. Nichols

Founder of the Megiddo Mission Church

THERE is a verse in Proverbs that says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise." I do not wonder the Lord uses the term *sluggard*. This lesson is of great importance to every one who desires to walk in obedience. God does not want us to be sluggards. "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man" (Prov. 6:6, 9-11). The Apostle says in Ephesians 5:14, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." It is time that we were awake, it is "high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we [first] believed" (Rom. 13:11). The time is near, but how little do we realize it!

I do not wonder the Lord says we should "bind them," these words of instruction, "continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck" (Prov. 6:20-21). It will not do to bind them "upon thine heart and tie them about thy neck" for a week or a month; no, but it must be a *continual* work. We are not slack to attend to the needs of the physical man. We lay up provision for the winter. But if we can get our souls interested as much in divine things, in storing up this heavenly food, so we can eat and eat, we will then be all right. The divine things should come first, instead of the temporal having first place. If we could only realize the necessity of this, could realize that we must be arrayed in a pure robe, actually be pure, it seems there would not be a sluggard among us.

There is coming a time when we will have no more time to get rid of the things which defile our characters, and to serve the Lord with joyfulness. It does seem we would begin to go to work in more earnestness now. We will tug and toil for an earthly home, but for this eternal home we lag behind and say we can never get it. It is the energetic ones who succeed in this life; and so in divine

things, we must cease to be the sluggard; we must become aroused, energetic; say "I will *do* it," and do it *today*. Say, "I will make such a contrast to my former life that everyone will see it." Say, "A new leaf is turned," and then go to work and make the growth. If you do, you will feel so good you will leave the old way behind. We do not feel as happy when not doing right. With the true Christian, the greatest happiness is in knowing he is pleasing God; this brings a joy nothing else can give.

Enter into this work and perform it with more energy, and you will have a vigorous growth and more joy and pleasure.

One of our brothers was all animated at the chance of "hooking" onto a dollar. I wondered how many of us consider the law of God more unto us "than thousands of gold and silver" (Ps. 119:72)? Our daily conduct will show. The time of our Master's coming is drawing nigh—the greatest, grandest time that ever was. And are we getting ready for it?

I was reading today of Pope Leo. They have found the most glorious topaz stone, and an Italian artist has been working on it, engraving the picture of Jesus distributing the bread and wine at the Last Supper. The engraving of this picture has required \$80,000 worth of diamond dust, besides ten years of hard labor, and it is to be presented to Pope Leo soon, to be placed in his crown.

I thought, how much are we willing to give for the sake of God and His glorious truth? Are we presenting our bodies a living sacrifice? The testimony says we are living stones, and it will take a greater and more diligent engraving to engrave this image on us.

But the difficulty is that we do not like to submit to having this engraving done; we do not like to have our rough spots taken off; we do not like the reproofs of instruction which are the "way of life" (Prov. 6:23). Yet this is the only means by which we can have the image of Christ engraved upon us. We must have His character so

engraved in us that we and all others can behold it. To do this will cost us time; but the trouble is, too often we do some engraving, then daub it over and spoil it. We want to be careful. That engraver was so careful, for one scratch would spoil his work. If he could take such care for something of this world, how we should exercise the utmost care in engraving this spiritual image! By and by one mistake will spoil it, and mar forever its beauty in us.

There are to be judges to inspect the engraving being done on that topaz stone, and it must pass inspection; every line must be correct. Do we realize that our engraving must also pass inspection? Brethren, not one mistake will pass. When we realize this, how we should awake and become kinder and better, see each day some work accomplished, some engraving done.

If at night you cannot see something done, do you think you can expect to reach that eternal home? You cannot. All this world combined cannot equal the glories of the one thousand years; and to think how that glory will roll on and on—oh, we should be so anxious that it would cause us to so work that we could actually see each day some progress, that we could say, “I am really going to get that job *done*.” If one were building a chimney and he laid up ten feet of bricks one day and the next day pulled them down, if he laid them up again the next day and again pulled them down, would he have any hope of getting the job done? So with us, if we do some work one day and the next day pull it down, do we wonder that we become discouraged? The only way to get our job done is to go to work and see that we do something for our Master each day, and then do more the next day. Then we will have every reason to be encouraged and to see that we are really going to get the job done.

The endless home in glory is just before us, all equipped with every comfort, and we can have all the room we want—endless pleasure—it seems we would be so interested in obtaining it that we would leave nothing undone. If it were for some temporal gain, we would be like a hive of bees. If you listen to a hive of bees, you can tell if there is life within, if they are making honey; so with us, if we can see life we can know we are making honey.

For such a grand future it seems it would be the height of pleasure to be laying up a store that will last through the endless ages of eternity. It will be like the widow's oil, the more we take out the more there will be. As long as there is an empty basin the oil will not cease, but will flow on and on.

To think of being the instrument in God's hand for millions and billions of years, and then He will only have just begun to use us. But we must realize that before He will use us then, this work of getting ourselves ready must be done. There is some engraving to do.

Beloved brethren, we *must* do this engraving, if it takes \$80,000 worth of diamond dust. It will take away our pride, for pride so easily comes in; it did with me, and it will with you. Engrave that picture of Christ. Such careful, minute work; and think of the care and energy and zeal needed to accomplish it. If not careful, the time will pass and we will not have it engraved.

Few, very few will accomplish it; few will engrave the image of Jesus. This is what Jesus said, “Few there be that find it.” This engraving work takes in a great many features, if Christ's likeness is to be seen in us. If we do not do it now, God will never stamp our work with approval. What we can do for ourselves, God will never do for us; but when we have done all we can mentally and morally to engrave this image, then God will step in and do His part, He will stamp us with the physical image. To engrave the moral image is our work, and when we have done this, God will do what we cannot.

We are told in Philippians 3:20-21 that Christ will come and “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” Yes, we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; He will come and bring in a peaceful government; He will come and not tarry.

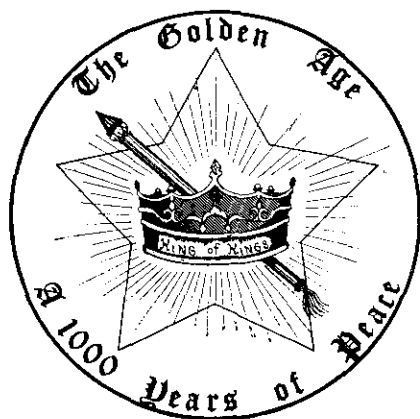
This is a consolation to me, to realize that we are living down in the era of the coming of the Lord from heaven! I look away back to the days of Paul, and think how long he has had to sleep. But we who live in this time, how we should exhort one another daily, and “so much the more as ye see the day approaching.”

I look around, and I wonder who is getting ready. What will be our standing in that day? Where will we be? Will our engraving be ready to pass inspection?

This engraving is like the washing. Hebrews 10:22 says, “Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” We have to wash, wash, wash in pure water to be cleansed; wash continually in the Word until it takes away all the evil and we stand pure, washed by the Word.

But we have need of a little more patience. “Let

(Continued on page 11)



This is the ninth in a series of articles on the coming MILLENNIUM.

*"... And the government shall be upon his shoulder: ... of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."
—Isaiah 9:6-7*

*"Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married."
—Isaiah 62:3-4*

"And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.

A Quincentennial Report

The following is entirely fantasy, but it is "realistic" fantasy based on the facts revealed in the Word of God.

This article is presented as a condensation of a report read before the World Chapter of the Inter-Planetary Education Alliance in the year of the Millennium 500. It is presented in connection with the Quincentennial Jubilee at Jerusalem, five hundred years after the inauguration of the new government under the direction of Christ and the saints.

The Report

ON THIS auspicious occasion, the five hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Kingdom of Christ on earth, I can think of no more pleasant duty than that which has fallen to me, as the historian and statistician of our Chapter, the preparation of a review of the progress and achievements of the first half of the Millennial Reign.

Our report will not deal with our own accomplishments, except as they have a bearing on the general progress and growth of the Kingdom as a whole. There is glory enough for all, and we are highly content to have done our part well, be it great or small. "All for one and one for all," is the law of the new heavens and earth. I shall deal with the various phases of the work under separate headings, beginning with

GOVERNMENT: As you who have studied pre-kingdom history may know and many of you have experienced, at the time of the coming of the prophet Elijah and the advent of the Messiah, the world was a political patchwork of a hundred or more jealous and hostile sovereignties and innumerable regional and racial groups. International morality and principle were virtually non-existent. Whole populations lived in constant tension, often deliberately created for the purpose of keeping the masses under the control of their government; for a series of bloody and destructive global wars had devastated the face of the world but had not changed its heart. At the time of the advent, while there was much talk of peace, the nations were still preparing for more wars.

After the Great King's decisive victory at Armageddon, the task was chiefly one of wiping out isolated pockets of resistance and establishing temporary military governments until the civil

power was ready to take over. All rebellion was strenuously suppressed, but without injustice or cruelty.

One of the first notable events of the New Era was the building of a new world capital on this spot, now recognized as the center and fountain-head of good government, as well as of true religion.

While 144,000 rulers were by virtue of their character ready to assume authority under the King according to the promise, it was necessary for most of them to be intensively trained in administration, since ruling a province is not exactly the same as ruling self. Classes were quickly formed, with angels as instructors and later as assistants and advisors in the actual practice of government. This schooling has never ceased, and at the present moment several hundred of our rulers are reported to be taking extension courses on other and more advanced planets.

Local administrations were entrusted, so far as possible, to the more advanced of the subjects. Ability and activity were always rewarded with promotion, and at this time many lesser posts in government are filled by members of this class.

The establishment of one universal government naturally eliminated the causes and the possibility of international wars, once the world's Number One problem, and one which for a time threatened the very existence of civilization, such as it was. Not only has this supreme evil been abolished, but all the lesser evils which always accompany bad government have disappeared. Bribery, graft, favoritism, injustice and oppression have long since ceased to exist. Anything questionable in a provincial administration brings swift investigation and appropriate action. The humblest citizen lives in safety and happiness under the protection of universal law. In short, it may be truly said of our government system that it really works, that all inhabitants enjoy it, and all are benefited.

PHYSICAL CHANGES: At the beginning of this era, the earth was rough and far from finished. In fact, things were raw and primitive to a degree unbelievable to one who has not seen it for himself. It had been a good home for man, to be sure—better than many deserved, but conditions had been trying. Only a small portion of its surface was habitable; the rest was oceans, high mountains, deserts, swamps, jungles, tundras and polar areas. To make matters worse, the very extensive desert areas seemed to be expanding. Soil fertility was being rapidly exhausted, along with other natural resources, while the pressure of population increased even more rapidly. Overcrowding in many districts produced its inevitable bad results. Famines were periodic and increasingly severe, both from natural causes and as the aftermath of war.

As a result of divine judgments, the population of the earth was reduced by two thirds. Drastic changes were then made in preparation for its repopulation. In some cases, worn-out and crowded lands were emptied and allowed to rest for a century or two, then, with old cultures and memories wiped out, were reclaimed according to plan.

The great river systems were tamed and cleansed and made friends of man. High and barren mountains were reduced by earthquakes and other means, and in many cases provided with entirely new drainage systems. Deserts have ceased to exist. In

*"And I will bring the third part
through the fire, and will
refine them as silver is refined,
and will try them as gold is tried:
they shall call on my name,
and I will hear them: I will say,
It is my people:
and they shall say,
The Lord is my God."
—Zechariah 13:8-9*

*"The Lord is exalted;
for he dwelleth on high:
he hath filled Zion with
judgment and righteousness.*

*"And wisdom and knowledge
shall be the stability
of thy times,
and strength of salvation:
the fear of the Lord
is his treasure."
—Isaiah 33:5-6*

*"For the Lord is our judge,
the Lord is our lawgiver,
the Lord is our king;
he will save us."
—Isaiah 33:22*

*"Drop down, ye heavens,
from above, and let the skies
pour down righteousness:
let the earth open,
and let them bring
forth salvation,
and let righteousness
spring up together;
I the Lord have created it."
—Isaiah 45:8*

*"In righteousness
shalt thou be established,
thou shalt be far
from oppression;
for thou shalt not fear;
and from terror; for
it shall not come near thee.*

*"This is the heritage of the
servants of the Lord,
and their righteousness is of me,
saith the Lord."
—Isaiah 54:14, 17*

most cases, very small climatic and topographic changes served to make these barren regions fertile and habitable.

The same changes have also reclaimed the vast tropical jungles, the northern tundras and barren grounds, and the polar areas. One such operation, the removal of the Greenland ice cap, deserves special mention. From 2000 to 8000 feet of solid ice were melted, a soil developed, and now, after a few years of preparation, this huge subcontinent is ready to receive twenty or more million immigrants in the next few years.

In the shallow areas, and also in the vast empty spaces of the south Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, new continents have been raised by pressure of the earth's interior. The water surface of the globe has been reduced until there is enough for the physical and esthetic needs of the planet, and no more, while the habitable area has increased many fold.

The oath of the Eternal is rapidly being fulfilled, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with my glory." Fortunate indeed are we who are permitted to live in mid-current of this mighty stream of progress.

EDUCATION: Ever since the first visible manifestation of power was made to the nations, the primary accent, as we may call it, of the New Order has been education. It is eternally and unchangeably true that "wisdom is the principal thing." Even before the judgments were well under way, teachers' training classes had been formed, with angelic instructors, and the schools thus founded have functioned continuously, making our organization the oldest existing agency of progress, older in fact than the Kingdom itself. It is a high honor which we have, to instruct and guide the world in the ways of the Lord.

The dream of universal and equal educational opportunities has at last been realized, and each individual may receive training in the activity for which he is best adapted and in which he will find the greatest happiness. As poverty has been abolished, there has been sufficient leisure to cultivate the higher and better things of life. One of the earliest and most spectacularly successful branches of our work has been the education of parents for the rearing of children. In the old days this was done rather haphazardly, often by persons grossly ignorant of the first principles of successful living; and the natural result was a haphazard, undisciplined and unhappy society. The present course, with faculties in every community the world over, is compulsory for all prospective parents, and strict enforcement has paid splendid dividends in the

building of a new and better race. There are no more mental and physical defectives born into the world, thanks to increased knowledge of the laws of nature, and every child is assured of equal opportunity physically as well as socially and economically. The family, with its integrity and happiness safeguarded by Divine Law, is the unit and cornerstone of society among the nations.

Education in the laws of health has resulted in the complete elimination of disease and the lengthening of the life span of the mortal nations to a minimum of 100 years. Infant mortality was reduced to the vanishing point very early in our history, and at the other end of the scale the rule is a healthy, vigorous old age, with death coming peacefully and painlessly when the individual's work is done. The rulers have, of course, been made immortal, and are progressing toward higher goals of knowledge in higher schools. They have learned not only how to prolong life but to create it.

Scientific and technical research is going forward rapidly in every corner of the world, and the resulting benefits are being immediately applied to raise the standard of living. It would be a mistake to think that infinite knowledge and the blessings thereof are given to man without effort on his part. Incentive has been preserved and strengthened, and while the goal is set and help given, the final results are obtained only by study and application. In other words, the answers are there and the sooner we find them, the sooner we shall be able to enjoy the benefits.

The fine arts, especially music, architecture, landscaping and decorating, have hundreds of thousands of eager students; and as a result, our world grows more beautiful year by year.

Of late years, interplanetary exchange of students and teachers has vastly broadened our horizons and increased our store of knowledge. This privilege opens endless fields of opportunity before us, limited only by man's capacity to receive. We who are gathered here today have the honor and privilege of developing these receptive capacities in men and women, so that the blessings of the Kingdom may come more rapidly.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GAINS: No society can be better than the individuals which compose it. Disregard of this axiom was the ruin of all movements for social reform in the bad old days. Churches and political parties alike sought to attain an ideal social state without insisting upon individual righteousness. In the Kingdom, our work has been with and through the individual. Impartial and inevitable justice has eliminated crime, and minor infractions of law are becoming

increasingly rare. Since the minds of the people are an open book to their rulers, transgression can be stopped before it starts. With no debasing amusements, no commercialized vice, and none of the crime-breeding conditions of the old world, widespread evil poses not the slightest threat. The rewards of virtue are so much more attractive than those of disobedience. Interest in the wholesome has long since replaced the old fascination with evil.

Improved economic conditions have wiped out poverty. Freedom from want and freedom from fear of the future have been fully achieved.

In the Kingdom of Christ the government has vastly more power than in any previous age, but it is not an ordinary government. It can be trusted not to abuse its power. Now, as in the past, ambition and industry bring their sure rewards, and he who labors most reaps most, both in joy of achievement and in material benefits. Genius in any field is recognized, and provision made for its development. Free enterprise is encouraged, but shorn of its former abuses.

In the world of industry, we look in vain for the filthy, smoky, squalid factory districts of the old days. Our industrial section would never be recognized as such by a visitor of that world. This transformation is due to the increasing use of atomic and solar energy in industry, and the harnessing of cosmic rays and atmospheric electricity. A crude beginning in nuclear power had been made before, but imperfect man could never be trusted with perfect knowledge of these principles; that was reserved for the Kingdom of peace.

Hours of labor have been greatly reduced; drudgery and physical hazards eliminated, and production so nicely balanced with consumption that the complicated, unwieldy and treacherous financial systems of the past have disappeared as unnecessary.

Agriculture, while no longer a matter of life and death in view of the increased knowledge of our age, is still held in high repute and universally practiced. While foodstuffs could be and often are produced in laboratories, the older and slower methods as a way of life have their attraction for billions of our citizens, and the activity is wholesome. Food and clothing are more appreciated when they represent labor, and after all, there is plenty of time for pleasant activities of every kind, work as well as recreation.

One of the greatest steps in speeding up the civilization of our world was the compulsory introduction, early in the first century of a universal language, supplanting the approximately 5700 tongues which formerly made the world a house

divided by misunderstanding and suspicion. The speech of the universe is that of every glorified world, so that the immortal, no matter where he goes, need never meet a stranger.

The ultimate test of any social system is the results that it achieves in terms of human worth and happiness. To our most skeptical critic, could he but visit us from the dark past, we would fearlessly submit our society, with its just administration, its overflowing schools and universities, the flourishing state of the arts and sciences, its extensive provision for wholesome recreation, its accomplishments to date and its vast projects for the future, and above all the happiness of its citizens who live without fear under their own vines and fig trees, laboring usefully and with vision to build a still better future. Many of us have experienced both systems, and know whereof we speak when we testify that the new is infinitely better.

POPULATION: When the judgments of the Eternal had cleansed the land, the survivors numbered more than one billion. In just five hundred years there has been a tenfold increase. The rate of increase is, of course, accelerating year by year, but not faster than the living space. By the end of the Millennium, when birth and death have ceased to be and our population level is stabilized, the number of immortal subjects will be many times the present world population. We shall not venture an estimate, but we know that the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord, a righteous people, according to the promise. Filled, but comfortably filled. Overcrowding is not and never will be tolerated in the Kingdom of God.

LOOKING FORWARD: Knowledge is a wonderful thing, but in a sense ignorance is bliss. In the bad old days, we used to give thanks that the possible troubles of the future were mercifully concealed. Now we are thankful that we do not and cannot know in detail the pleasures of our future, the tremendous advances which our civilization is sure to make. After five hundred years we still are getting used to the idea of eternity. It is better that our horizons, however bright, should still be horizons beyond which we cannot see. It is better that our blessings should come to us little by little, with an element of surprise, so to speak, as we are able to receive and appreciate them.

It is a matter of common knowledge that at the end of the Millennium, immortality will be given to the faithful subjects of the Kingdom, and ETERNITY will begin.

The earth will roll forth from the hand of its Maker and His faithful helpers a finished product, and yet far from finished. In fact, so far as we can

now comprehend, the work will never be completed, for the progress is eternal. Improvements which were once considered the last word have already become obsolete through our own research, and increasing travel to other and older worlds is sure to bring to view more and more glorious creations.

But our efforts will not be confined to domestic improvement, for there are in space numberless dark worlds undergoing our former travail; many

not yet ready for habitation; others yet to be created and set in motion to fulfill the Creator's eternal plan and purpose. These infant worlds are the responsibility of those more advanced and fortunate.

With so much to do and so much to care for and so much to enjoy, ETERNITY will be none too long. ●●

I am solid as a rock. Stiff as a rod of iron. I have the endurance of steel. Change? Never!

Who am I? I like to call myself Determination. Better yet, Perseverance. But alas! others choose to call me by my real name, Stubbornness.

Stubborn or STEADFAST?

NO professing Christian would ever boast of his stubbornness, yet strong will is an essential quality of good character. God does not call men who are weak-minded and wishy-washy. He wants men who have *will* power and *won't* power, men who have determination, conviction, an unwillingness to be swayed by every breeze that blows. Without this tenacious obstinacy no one could survive the process of becoming godlike.

However, strong will, like every other human quality, must be controlled, disciplined, formed and reshaped. Human perversity must be softened; strong will must be directed, taught to bend and yield in the hand of God. Stubbornness thus transformed becomes steadfastness, resolution, determination to do right. And this is virtue.

"Be ye steadfast," wrote the apostle Paul, "unmoveable" (I Cor. 15:58). But he did not mean that we should be stubborn and unyielding. He meant that steadfastness that clings tenaciously to the faith. He longed for the time when human stubbornness would be transformed into steadfast Christian faith in the lives of his brethren. When that would happen, their tough-spiritedness would be for the church as "life from the dead" (Rom. 11:15). They would be "unmoveable" from the hope of Christ, and could then be sure that their labor for God would never be in vain.

A certain doctor once called this virtuous unmoveableness "backbone." He commented: "I have a backbone, but I also hope that it has some joints in it so that I may be able to bend. If it hasn't, then it isn't a backbone, but a crowbar."

He continued: "A great many people mistake their prejudices for convictions, and take credit for being very strong-minded when in reality they are just plain stubborn. They proceed on the assumption that to see one's mistakes and acknowledge them is a sign of weakness. Nothing of the sort! Strength of mind and sweetness of spirit generally go hand in hand. It is the small being who refuses to give in. They who boast that they never change their minds love themselves more than they love truth. By all means let us have backbones, but backbones with joints in them."

The children of Israel are an example of a strong-willed people. God made no mistake in selecting the seed of Israel. He needed a tough-spirited people to perform His work, men and women who had the potential for great achievement and great endurance. Yet this tough-spiritedness was the cause of many a rebellion and many a fall. In all their wanderings through the wilderness, it was not weakness that kept them from entering the Land of Promise but unrestrained willfulness. This quality could have been controlled, as Caleb and Joshua ably proved. These two men were also of Israel and possessed a full measure of Israelite determination; but they let God direct their will power. When God through Moses gave command, Caleb and Joshua used their will power to obey, and continued to obey. That essential quality of tough-spiritedness, directed and disciplined in them by God, became their outstanding virtue and their ultimate success. They had the perseverance to keep taking steps toward God;

and for every step they took toward Him, God took two steps toward them, keeping them alive all through the wilderness and seeing them safely settled in the Promised Land, each with his own special inheritance.

This same tough-spiritedness is a quality necessary in every one of us today. How could we hold to our convictions or keep in the narrow way to life without it? There is danger, however, of being too set in our own ways, of being blinded to our shortcomings; we tend to justify ourselves and spurn the opportunities we encounter for growth. There is danger of our being like those people of old who "refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone" (Zech. 7:11-12). The same stubborn, unyielding spirit is seen in Jesus' parable of the Pounds, when "the citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). "We will not," they said; who is he to tell us what to do? We shall do as we please; we are very capable of managing our own affairs.

Let us never allow this spirit to hinder our spiritual progress. Rather, let us make our strong wills our means of success. The stronger our determination, the more we should be able to accomplish in the way to life.

*Laid on Thy altar, O my Lord divine,
Accept my gift this day for Jesus' sake.
I have no jewels to adorn Thy shrine,
Nor any world-famed sacrifice to make;*

*But here I bring within my trembling hand
This will of mine—a thing that seemeth small—
And only Thou, dear Lord, canst understand
How, when I yield Thee this, I yield my all.*

*It has been wet with tears and dimmed with sighs,
Clenched in my grasp till beauty it had none;
Now from Thy footstool, where it vanquished lies,
The prayer ascendeth: May Thy will be done.*

*Take it, O Father, ere my courage fail,
And merge it so in Thine own will that e'en
If in some desperate hour my cry prevail
And Thou give back my gift, it may have been*

*So changed, so purified, so fair have grown—
So one with Thee—so filled with peace divine,
I may not know or feel it as my own,
But gaining back my will may find it Thine!*

Only then will our stubbornness have been converted into God-like steadfastness to see us through. ●●

December, 1977

They Were Tested

I wonder if I could have endured the persecutions in the early days of Christianity.

The lessons God has given us in His Word are the real experiences of actual persons. We can profit from them in their victories, yes and even in their failures.

The lives of those "sent" ones are but demonstrations of God's power in the lives of His people.

We can see the triumph of Abraham's faith as he struggled with the call of God to leave all behind him and go to a strange land.

We see Moses' life surrendered to God from the burning bush to his last glimpse of the Promised Land from Mount Nebo.

The story of Ruth is more than a romance between a young widow and middle-aged bachelor. It is the story of the love between Christ and His faithful, worthy bride. How beautiful!

To those who find the Bible "a bore," we could suggest they read Bible biographies. The Bible abounds with accounts of the lives of people upon whom God laid His hand.

There is pleasure and spiritual reward for those who find lessons for their own life and circumstances. They soon find out that others have been tested even as we are.

— From A Reader in Wisconsin

Engraving the Image of Christ

(Continued from page 5)

us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)."

We should appreciate what God is doing for us. Look at Jesus at the Last Supper, how John leaned upon His breast and how Jesus loved him. See also in the case of Lazarus; Jesus demonstrated His love so much that the Jews said, "Behold how he loved him!" See Mary whom He loved washing Jesus' feet with her tears and wiping them with the hairs of her head. We must show our appreciation; we do it by engraving the image of Christ upon us.

May these words of life make an impression upon us, a deep and lasting impression, that we may be enabled to engrave more carefully. May we realize that His image is *His acts, His conduct, His feelings, His words*. We have to engrave His moral image upon us, and we must do it now. May the Lord help us to bear His image unto the end. ●●

Why Not Christmas?

Christmas is NOT Christ's birthday. Bible evidence rules out any possibility of a winter date. At the time Jesus was born, shepherds were keeping their flocks outdoors (Luke 2:8) and watching them at night. This does not fit the nights in the month of December, even in the moderate climate of Palestine. With the latter part of October a rainy season begins, and the flocks are taken indoors, where they remain until sometime in March.

Christmas is NOT a Christian festival. The English name, derived from "Christ's Mass," suggests some Christian association. But the celebration of December 25 did not originate among the followers of Christ; it came from the heathens of Babylon, the ancient Celtic and German tribes, and the ancient Romans.

The *Encyclopedia Americana* (1959 edition, Vol. 6, p. 622) tells us, "The celebration was not observed in the first centuries of the Christian church. . . . In the fifth century the Western church ordered the feast to be celebrated on the

day of the Mithraic rites of the birth of the sun and at the close of the Saturnalia, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed. Among the German and Celtic tribes the winter solstice was considered an important point of the year and to commemorate the return of the sun they held their chief festival of yule, which, like the other pagan celebrations, became adapted to Christmas."

December 25 is NOT Christ's birthday. Why was it adopted by the church during the early centuries? "The members of the early church were recruited from among pagans, and by the establishment of a festival at this time the energy and attention of the proselytes could be focused thus in a Christian festival" (*Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, Vol. 1, p. 229). And this was not done until sometime during the third and fourth centuries! Chrysostom wrote about 380 A. D., "It is not yet ten years since this day was made known to us" (*Moniturn in Hom. de Natal. Christi*, Vol. II, p. 352).

What about the pleasant customs associated with December 25? "Most of the customs now associated with Christmas were not originally Christmas customs but rather were pre-Christian and non-Christian customs taken up by the Christian church. Saturnalia, a Roman feast celebrated in mid-December, provided the model for many of the merry-making customs of Christmas. From this celebration, for example, were derived the elaborate feasting, the giving of gifts, and the burning of candles" (*The Encyclopedia Americana*, 1959 Edition, Vol. 6, p. 622).

"The custom of decorating homes and churches with evergreens began in ancient times. The Romans exchanged green tree branches for good luck on the calends of January" (*The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1973, Vol. 3, p. 415).

By taking any part in the celebrating of "Christmas," do we not perpetuate the memory of ancient paganism? Is there any glory to God in it? There is none, and no true Christian will find any joy or pleasure in the December 25 holiday.

Christmas—more correctly X-mas—is NOT for Christians. ••

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Amid a storm of protest, what shall we call it—

Myth, Heresy, or—?

The Myth of God Incarnate

Edited by John Hick

Reviewed by Newton H. Payne,
assistant pastor of the
Megiddo Mission Church

PROBABLY the most controversial religious book to be published in recent years is *The Myth of God Incarnate*. Published this year in the United States by Westminster Press, edited by John Hick, the book consists of ten essays by seven prominent English theologians and educators.

The book bears an intriguing title, for our founder over seventy years ago discovered that the doctrine of the incarnation of God (that Jesus Christ is God in human form) belongs among the myths of human fabrication, being wholly unscriptural and pagan in conception; Jesus Himself did not profess to be God Incarnate, and not once did He call Himself God the Son. Hopeful that the writers of the book would use their eloquence to challenge the traditions of much creed-bound Christianity, I looked forward to reading a strong defense of the true teaching of the Word of God.

My expectations were disappointed. While the writers of the book make a strong case for the pagan origin of the doctrine that Christ is God, many of their statements on basic Bible teachings are no less than ruinous to Christian faith.

At the very onset, the editor of the book presents what he calls "two major new adjustments" which the churches of Christendom have made in recent years as a result of "important enlargements of human knowledge." First, they accepted that man came about through the processes of evolution; and second, they accepted that the Bible was "written by a variety of human beings" and that it therefore "cannot be accorded a verbal divine authority."

Unfortunately, the authors of *The Myth of God*

Incarnate are making here the same mistakes as their liberal predecessors. Instead of studying to harmonize the scriptures and comparing one portion of Scripture with another portion on the same subject to learn the thoughts of the divine Mind, they conclude that all is literal; failing in this, they fail to see the beauty of the divine revelation or the plan of God behind it. This is especially true of the creation allegory in Genesis, which is so often misunderstood as being the account of a literal creation of the earth and heavens in six literal days six thousand years ago. They judge it either as a myth with little or no significance, or they say it must be all understood literally and thereby make a travesty of the message the Bible writers were trying to convey. While the Bible is silent about the circumstances that brought about the physical creation of the earth and its flora and fauna, it is definite that God is the Creator. While evolution may be involved in some small way within the various species, it is wholly untenable as an overall theory. Even some of its ardent supporters are having serious doubts about its validity.

The prophet Isaiah stated his confidence in God the Creator in these words: "Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein" (Isa. 42:5). What intelligent person could seriously propound the idea that all the incredibly complex human and animal creation we see around us evolved from a small amount of primordial protoplasm, even given ages upon ages of time?

The second major adjustment noted by Mr. Hick is this: that the Bible was written by a "variety of human beings" and that it "cannot be accorded a verbal divine authority." This statement needs clarification. It is true that God Himself did not write the Bible; it was written by human beings. As human beings they recorded many details of

history and circumstance which any man could have observed and written down. But much of their writings reveal the plan of God, which they were able to write only "as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:21). Sometimes they received information through an angel, or a vision or a dream. When a writer used the phrase, "Thus saith the Lord" or "the Lord commanded" or "this is the word of the Lord," he was writing the message of God, and his words carry the authority of God speaking. There are many evidences in Scripture that the words written were the revealed word of God to His prophets, apostles, and His Son—and, through the written Record, to us. For example, the many prophetic utterances which have been fulfilled over the years could not possibly have been given without divine revelation. And the fact that the thoughts contained in the Bible are not man's thoughts is sure evidence that the Book is from a higher source than the mind of man. If the Bible were only the sayings of man himself, we would find man's thoughts upon its pages. But the thoughts upon its pages are *not* the thoughts of men. Just because we do not understand everything in the Bible or know why it is there is no reason to discard the Book. It was intended to serve as a guide to salvation, and it is a "thorough furnisher unto all good works." It is one thing to free the Bible from the superstitions which men have clung to for so many years, and quite another to try to discredit (if even in an oblique way) its authority.

I would like to comment briefly upon a few of the most significant points in the various essays in the book.

In the third essay, called "Jesus, the Man of Universal Destiny," Michael Goulder describes how little real belief there is in some religious circles today. He says,

Our fathers believed many things accessible to all in the Bible. We don't believe in hell (most of us) or the devil or verbal inspiration, and when such ideas are derided we join in the laughter: 'did you really think we believed that?' we say. Even when the incarnation or divine providence, or almost any view of the atonement is derided, the Christian is often found to be joining in too, perhaps rather uncomfortably: 'did you really think that we believed that?' 'Well,' says the philosopher, 'it sounds as if your faith is pretty elastic; can you get by without the resurrection, or the [historical] Jesus? Aren't you really a humanist, but without the honesty to say so?'

It is too common in theological circles today to discard myths that have been attached to Biblical doctrine and at the same time to throw out valuable truths which are clearly taught in Scripture. This we must not do. For example, we cannot

fault anyone who discards the doctrine of the incarnation, or the atonement, or the literal devil, or hellfire, or the trinity, or the immortal soul of man. But we must not throw out at the same time what the Bible does teach. We must not go too far, or we will be in the plight of the man who started tearing pages out of his Bible whenever he was told that this or that doctrine was not true until all he had left were the two covers.

Francis Young, in his essay "Two Roots or A Tangled Mass?" (chapter 5) makes a convincing case that the myth that Jesus was God originated in the "Ruler-cult" of the day. Many of the Roman emperors were considered gods, often immortal. The same was true in Greek mythology. In like manner Christ came to be considered a god. To what extent this position is true we are not able to say, but the fact remains that the immediate followers of Jesus did not claim He was divine, and Jesus never said He was God. The concept was added during the early centuries.

Leslie Houlden, in "The Creed of Experience" (chapter 6) makes the following disturbing statement: "There is not one Christology in the New Testament; there are many." In other words, the New Testament authors held different and contradictory ideas about Christ. This definitely is not true. To support his statement, Mr. Houlden cites the fact that Jesus Himself used the terms "Son of God" and "Son of Man." However, need this suggest a dual personality? Jesus was stating a fact. He was the Son of God in that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit; He was the Son of man in that He was born of the Virgin Mary. He came to do the will of God, as He said Himself, "I do always those things that please him [the Father]" (John 8:29). He lived a morally perfect life, showing how we may do the same. He was the first of our race to receive immortality, showing us how that we too, if worthy, may someday be made immortal at the Judgment seat of Christ.

When correctly understood and viewed as the product of one Divine Mind, the New Testament contains one unified concept of Christ's birth, life, work and future role as Judge, Conqueror, Saviour and King.

If the Bible is truly God's message to man—and we firmly believe that it is—then it cannot depict many roads to salvation but only one. And it is our task to find that one road.

In chapter 7, "The Christ of Christendom," Don Cupitt makes some statements which are surely not acceptable to the vast majority of religionists today, but which are nonetheless true. He says that "it is perfectly possible for an opinion to be firmly believed to be orthodox" when it is not. He sug-

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gests that "the classical doctrine of the incarnation belongs, not to the essence of Christianity but only to a certain period of church history." He realizes this statement "will certainly startle many people. Nevertheless, I believe it is true."

Mr. Cupitt also tells of the origin of the modern idea of Christ's divine nature. It apparently grew out of the ancient political concept that

As God is to the cosmos, so the king is to the state. The divine logos indwells the king, teaching him to mimic the divine virtue, to be a good shepherd of his people, to save them from sin and lead them by the path of salvation to the heavenly kingdom. The king was a kind of incarnate god, the one link between earth and heaven.

To 'Christianize' this scheme it was only necessary to declare Christ the universal cosmic Emperor, and make the earthly Emperor his servant and vicar. The entire imperial cult and ideology was refocussed on Christ, while in return Christ crowned his earthly deputy and validated his rule. Eusebius took only the first step in this direction, but others soon followed. . . .

All this . . . 'served to transform permanently the way in which the person of Jesus Christ was represented. . . . (He) began to be looked on as a ruler who . . . governed the whole of creation.'

Naturally this new idea in the church was pleasing to the Emperor of the political state, and the "new Christianity" (apostate, of course) was not long being adopted.

Mr. Cupitt says in concluding,

What we have been taught to call 'orthodoxy' was in fact merely the form of Christianity which happened to triumph over the others.

In other words, the Christ worshiped by the church was not "Jesus," nor did that Christ "reveal the one true God as Jesus did." The result of the new concept of Christ, that He was God incarnate, "had important effects on the doctrine of the atonement. . . . It became a transaction between an eternal Father and his eternal Son, a transaction which was bound in the end to occasion a moral revolt."

Indeed, the idea of the "atonement" as a transaction between "an eternal Father and His eternal Son" (fathom that, if you can!) should cause a "moral revolt" in any thinking mind.

In chapter 8, "Myth in Theology," Maurice Wiles carries the concept of "myth" too far. He classifies the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment as myths along with the misunderstandings of the Creation account in Genesis, the Fall, Christ's incarnation and the work of atonement, and this is unfair; it is unjust; it is wrong. It is our part to condemn what the Bible does not teach, and to support what it does teach; and the Bible teaches the former but does not teach any of the latter. This is the pitfall of several of the

authors of the book: they overlook the fact that the Bible should and must be the final authority in all matters of our religious belief.

Today it is popular to compare the religion of Jesus Christ with the oriental philosophies (Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.), placing them on a par, as though their founders were all prophets of God in their respective eras and areas, and as though the teachings of all of them were equally effective as a guide to eternal salvation. This is the ultimate heresy. It is grossly unfair to God, who has furnished man with one guide to salvation, the Bible, to place the thoughts of erring men on a par with His Word. God's thoughts are as much higher than man's as the heavens are higher than the earth (Isa. 55:8-9). There is just no comparison between the life and character of Jesus Christ and that of the founders of other so-called "great" religions. Other religions may be greater in numbers or influence among men, but the God of heaven measures by one unvarying standard: character. Numbers count not at all with Him who sees "all nations" outside His plan as a mere "drop of a bucket" or "the small dust of the balance" (Isa. 40:15-17).

John Hick, in his chapter, "Jesus and the World Religions," has some weighty arguments against the incarnation theory. For instance, he says that in studying the development of the traditional church, one observes how the spokesmen came "to speak of him in terms which he himself did not use, and to understand him by means of a complex of beliefs which was only gradually formed by later generations."

Apparently some of the church fathers thought that because Jesus was resurrected from the dead, He had to have been God. But as Mr. Hick observes,

the resurrection did not automatically put him in a quite unique category. It indicated that he had a special place within God's providence; but this was not equivalent to seeing him as literally divine. For Jesus is not said to have risen in virtue of a divine nature which he himself possessed but to have been raised by God. Accordingly the first Christian preachers did not draw the conclusion that he was himself God but that he was a man chosen by God for a special role and declared by his resurrection to be Messiah and Lord (Acts 2:22 and 36).

Mr. Hick also comments meaningfully upon "the theories—which were well-meant attempts to give meaning to the God-Man formula." He says "orthodoxy insisted upon the two natures, human and divine," existing in the same Jesus at the same time. But,

orthodoxy has never been able to give this idea any content. It remains a form of words without assignable meaning, for to say without explanation that the historical Jesus of Nazareth was also God is as devoid of meaning as to say that this circle drawn with a pencil on paper is also a square.

He maintains that every attempt to explain how this can be thus far has had to be repudiated. Even the formula written up by the Council of Chalcedon, which made the doctrine official, merely stated "that Jesus was both God and man"—it "made no attempt to interpret the formula."

In summary, I would say that the authors of *The Myth of the Incarnation* have built a strong case for concluding that the doctrine of the incarnation is a myth; the concept came from the cultural atmosphere of the time, from pagan mythology, and was affirmed by the Council of Chalcedon. What is disappointing in the book is that the writers maintain that the New Testament authors were influenced by contemporary thought—a situation which the All-wise and Superintending God would never have allowed.

If the writers of the book had spent as much time and effort in trying to understand the scriptural writers as they spent in researching the origins of the incarnation outside the Bible, they would have found that the Bible does not teach the divinity of Christ and would have done the Christian community a great service. But as it is, while getting rid of the dead wood in the foundation of traditional Christian doctrines, they have tried to knock out several foundation stones upon which the true religion of Christ and the apostles stands.

A "Final Comment" by Don Cupitt at the conclusion of the book contains a thought I would like to quote in summary:

The core of a religion does not lie in the biography or personality of the founder, but in the specially religious values to which he bore witness. By these values I mean possible determinations of the human spirit whereby it relates itself to the ultimate goal of existence, such as are embodied in the injunction to 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.'

This cluster of 'principles of Spirit' is at the center of the religion, and I believe it to be contingently the case that Jesus proclaimed them. . . . Precisely because they command us to die to the self, to the world which is passing away and so on, they assert the possibility of transcending relativity.

This is precisely the teaching Jesus left us: that we must "die to self, to the world which is passing away." In this way we will be able to transcend the present order and someday merit immortal life in the glorious, eternal Kingdom of Christ, the Son of God. ●●

JESUS IS NOT GOD INCARNATE The Incarnation IS A Myth

Jesus was "raised up" from among his brethren, not "sent down" from heaven (Deut. 18:15, 18).

Jesus was "made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:4)—surely no one thinks God Almighty and Omnipotent was "made of a woman."

Jesus "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:25)—was He increasing in favor with Himself? Or should we think God Almighty needed to "increase in wisdom"? (See Isa. 46:9-10).

Jesus was "made like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:17)—does this seem appropriate to an incarnation of God?

Jesus serves as our "High Priest in things pertaining to" Himself? (Heb. 2:17).

Jesus "suffered, being tempted" (Heb. 2:18)—can God be tempted? (See Jas. 1:13).

Jesus was "of the seed of Abraham" (Heb. 2:16)—do we suppose God sprang from that seed?

Jesus had to "learn obedience by the things which he suffered"—a strange thing to say of the Great, All-wise Creator (Heb. 5:8-9).

Jesus was "a man approved of God" (Acts 2:22)—did He approve Himself?

Jesus said He was going "to the Father" (John 16:16)—was He on His way to finding Himself?

Jesus said "I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29)—and Paul said plainly that Christ "pleased not himself" (Rom. 15:3), so how could He have been God?

Jesus testified that His Father was greater than He—was Jesus confused? (John 14:28).

Jesus prayed to Himself—if He was the Father (see John 17).

Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17)—had He been God He should have said that He Himself had been working through an eternity past.

Jesus suffered crucifixion and died and was buried (Matthew 27)—can we possibly imagine the creation was without God during that time?

What shall we conclude? Jesus is NOT God Incarnate. We have no alternative but to discard the myth and accept the facts proclaimed in the unerring Word of God.

Is God Just?

“I KNOW a lot of the Bible is symbolic, but what about the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22? I know this is a story of obedience, but it is hard for me to imagine our loving God, our Creator, even suggesting that Abraham should use Isaac as a burnt offering.

“I also realize that God provided a ram instead, but the mere thought that God would ask Abraham to sacrifice Isaac is hard for me to understand.”

—R. G., Sacramento, California

IT IS very evident from the end of the account in Genesis that God never intended Abraham to actually slay his son. God never required human sacrifice from His people; on the contrary, the practice was vigorously condemned (see Jer. 19: 4-5; Lev. 18:21; Mic. 6:6-7).

Genesis 22:1 in the King James Version reads, “And it came to pass . . . that God did tempt Abraham.” The word “tempt” gives us the wrong impression, for James informs us that “God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” The newer versions use the term “test,” which is more in keeping with the wisdom of an all-wise Béing (see the Revised Version, NAS, NEB, Jerusalem Bible, American Bible, Moffatt). God was testing Abraham’s faith in asking him to sacrifice the object nearest his heart, his own son.

God’s wisdom being so far above our wisdom—even as far as the heavens are above the earth (Isa. 55:8-9)—it is difficult for us to fathom. But let us consider the following: We have been conditioned by centuries of preaching that salvation requires little or no effort; hence it is almost unthinkable that God would require so severe a test from Abraham. But when we understand God’s plan, that during these six thousand years He is selecting the best material He can find to be rulers in His future Kingdom, is it any wonder that He requires each one to pass a severe test? In spite of all the centuries of preaching to the contrary, salvation *does* require effort on our part. If we pass the final test at Judgment, we shall be “in” forever; if we fail, we shall be forever “out.”

Was Abraham’s test unreasonably severe? This is not ours to judge, but we can know that God rewards every man according to his work, and Abraham is destined to fill a place of high honor. To him belongs the title “Father of the Faithful,”

and this high honor was not his by birthright. Abraham was a man of great faith. He trusted God completely. He had God’s promise that He would establish an everlasting covenant with him through Isaac, and with his seed after him. And then came the test: With such a promise from God, would Abraham be willing to sacrifice the son God had given to be the means of fulfilling the promise? In other words, which meant more to Abraham—the son, or the God who would stand behind His promise?

It was a supreme test of faith, but Abraham knew that if God’s promise was to be fulfilled, He would not abrogate it by destroying Isaac. If God did allow Isaac’s life to be taken, Abraham’s faith still would not fail, for Abraham “was confident that God had the power even to raise the dead” (Heb. 11:19, JB). Trusting God to this extent required more faith on the part of Abraham than it would even of us, for as far as we can know, Abraham had never heard or so much as read of anyone being raised from the dead. By obeying God’s command and going right up to the very limit, Abraham demonstrated his complete faith in God and earned for all time the esteemed title, “Father of the Faithful.”

But Abraham was not alone in being tested. Jesus made the supreme sacrifice in submitting to crucifixion, for a person’s life is his most valuable possession. Many martyrs of the early centuries did the same rather than deny the faith. Jesus set the standard when He said that one must be willing to suffer the loss of father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, should such be required of him (see Luke 14:26). The apostle Paul was convinced of this necessity of being willing to offer the supreme sacrifice, for he said, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39).

Now it could be argued that it would have been easier for Abraham to have sacrificed his own life rather than to take the life of his son. There have been examples where a person unselfishly gave his own life to protect the life of a loved one. But the purpose of this discussion is not to minimize Abra-

ham's trial and deed. It was great by any standard. We simply want to place it in the context of the sacrifice which all Christians must make to be worthy of eternal life. We must be willing and ready to give our all, whatever that "all" may be.

"The story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-11) has bothered me. I realize that the wages of sin is death, but considering all the facts presented, it seems to have been very harsh punishment for a very just and unchanging God to mete out—that is, when you consider what some other Bible characters did—and got by with (David, for example).

"There is an explanation, I know, but my present knowledge is not sufficient. Of course, none of us can fully understand God with our finite minds; but I would like a better understanding."

We certainly agree that "None of us can fully understand God with our finite minds," however the Bible is so written that we are given some valuable clues to help us toward understanding.

As you say, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Ananias and Sapphira sinned, and God's judgment upon them was swift and immediate. They lied to the Holy Spirit; they kept back part of the money which they were feigning to give to the work of the Church; and lying to God is a grievous sin. Peter, having the power of the Holy Spirit from God, could read their thoughts and intentions; hence, he had the power to judge them justly. He knew their hearts were not right. If they would have repented of their sins and lived a life worthy of salvation, they most certainly would have been spared. Others in the Bible found mercy of God when they sinned and were granted time to repent and reform. King David is surely an example of this; he sinned grievously, but God knew David's heart and knew he would repent and turn if given time and opportunity; and David did turn.

In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, the Lord knew they would not turn, and used them as a lesson to others. Their death was no doubt a grave lesson to others who might be tempted to sin against God. It had a decided effect on the young Church, for we are told that "Great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (Acts 5:11). Their fate should also be a serious lesson to us. While judgment in our day is not swift, the end result of transgression will be the same, eternal death. In our present society, the idea of punishment for crime to serve as a deterrent to other would-be criminals is no longer considered valid; but such is not God's idea.

Ananias and Sapphira suffered the penalty they justly deserved, and God was not cruel. Death

came instantaneously; God did not ask them to suffer a long, lingering death. Many people have suffered worse from natural causes or accident or disease, totally apart from God's judgments.

We may not always understand, but it is not our part to question the wisdom of an all-wise, all-knowing God who is just and righteous in all His ways (Ps. 89:14; 145:17; Rev. 15:3). He will give opportunity to all who will use it, for He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). The trouble is, the majority will not repent.

The person who knows not God, or—worse—who refuses to serve Him after knowing of His requirements, will never become an eternal part of God's family and will never partake of the blessings promised. In spite of what we might like to believe, God has no interest in such. Mankind at large, who have never agreed to serve God, simply live and die and, in the words of the prophet Obadiah, "they shall be as though they had not been" (v. 16). Even honorable people who lack the understanding of God and His laws and ways are "like the beasts that perish" (Ps. 49:19-20).

Those who agree to serve the Lord and then are not faithful to their agreement will receive according to their works, eternal death (Jude 14-15; Matt. 7:13-14).

At least part of our problem in understanding God's justice lies in our familiarity with the popular concept of much of Christendom, i. e., that all mankind are members of the family of God and that every living human being is precious to Him, that God hates sin but still loves the sinner. In order to come even close to understanding God's judgments and dealings with men, we must discard these ideas, for they are not Scriptural. Isaiah the prophet spoke God's mind when he said concerning the value of the human race in the sight of God, "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. . . . All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity" (Isa. 40:15, 17).

If whole nations are less than nothing, how does a single individual rate? But if that individual is striving to keep God's law and to become a member of God's family, he is counted as a "jewel," a "stone most precious," a "sheep of his pasture" who will be safely kept (Mal. 3:17; I Pet. 2:4, 9; Psalm 100). Such will someday be adopted into God's family and will become His forever and ever, with all the glory and riches and honor which He has promised to lavish upon the members of His family (II Cor. 6:17-18; II Pet. 1:3-4). ●●

A Misunderstanding

"I WISH I had something to do," Molly sighed.

She sat alone in the schoolroom, with no one to hear her wish and the sigh that followed it; no one but Sambo, the black cat, who lay on the window seat beside her.

Molly was nine years old, small and thin, with short dark hair, and freckles. Her face wore a decidedly discontented expression, and she swung one brown-stockinged leg with a rather impatient motion.

The window was open, and just then the sound of voices outside attracted her attention—boys' voices, loud and decided. There was no mistaking the words that fell on Molly's ears.

"No, we won't take her. She's only a little nuisance. She snaps at you so, too. I suppose it is the hot weather. She shall not come anyway. I am getting tired of always having her with us."

Molly's face grew scarlet.

"I hate Dick," she exclaimed, half aloud. "They are going to the lake, I know, and they promised to take me with them the next time they went."

She hung her head, and winked very hard to keep back the tears which Dick's words had called forth.

"If I was cross this morning," she said plaintively, "it was because Tom laughed at my drawing of Sambo. It is horrid of Dick to call me snappy; and I did want to go to the lake."

Just then she heard Dick calling her. "Molly, Molly! Come here!"

"They have changed their minds," said Molly to herself. For a moment her face brightened; then it clouded over again.

"I won't go when they really do not want me," she said, as she walked over to the door. "I will never go anywhere with the boys again, now that I know they hate having me with them."

Molly was proud, and her pride had been wounded. She did not reply to Dick's cheery call. Instead, she ran softly along the corridor, and up a flight of stairs; up into a large dusty attic full of empty boxes and various old toys that belonged to the boys. She shut the door after her, turning the key in the lock, and sat down on an old tin box, trying not to hear the shouts of "Molly! Molly!" that still came from downstairs. At last they died away, and Molly wiped a few tears from

her eyes and began to take a survey of her surroundings.

Presently something caught her eye; it was a large canvas which leaned against the wall, near the door. With some curiosity she turned it around. What she saw was a half-finished painting in oils of a tree, with some very blue hills in the background.

"So that is what Dick has been working at all the time! That is the secret, then, that Tom and he were always whispering about when they went out together on their last two half-holidays. I wondered what Dick was smuggling up into the attic this morning when I passed him on the stairs."

Molly nodded wisely as she came to this conclusion. Dick was something of an artist in his way. He was the proud possessor of some old paints and brushes of his father's, and he sometimes produced some very promising paintings, in spite of his deficient tools and small experience. Molly, who was three years his junior, shared his artistic talents in a lesser degree, and it was with not a little interest that she studied the painting, which was still wet.

Then an idea came into Molly's head. She had heard her father speak of an Exhibition of Arts and Crafts that was to be held in the Town Hall next week, in connection with which there was a competition open to amateur artists; prizes were to be given for the best study from Nature and the best Still Life. This must be Dick's picture for the competition, thought Molly.

Suddenly her brother's words rang in her ears with cruel distinctness: "No, we won't take her. She is only a little nuisance. She shall not come, anyway."

"I will pay him for that!" fired Molly.

But how? she wondered. She still stared blankly at the picture, and she found herself thinking how wet the paint was. She touched it with the tip of her finger. The temptation grew stronger with the touch. She picked up a brush from the floor, and smeared it across the canvas from right to left, then across again. The fresh green foliage of the tree grew blurred and indistinct, the trunk melted into the background, and lost all shape and form.

"I have paid him all right!" Molly muttered, half frightened at what she had done. She placed

the canvas against the wall, exactly where she had found it.

Returning to the schoolroom, she took a book from the shelf and passed the rest of the afternoon reading, curled up on the window seat.

.....

"Molly, old girl, where were you all this afternoon?"

Dick burst into the schoolroom, flushed and breathless, followed closely by ten-year-old Tom.

Molly stretched her long thin arms, and laid down her book. She slipped off the window seat and stood there facing her brothers, with a sullen look in her dark eyes.

"I was here part of the time," she answered softly.

"We were calling you, Molly; didn't you hear us?" asked Tom surprised.

"Yes, I heard you," answered Molly.

Tom's thoughts flew to an episode of the morning.

"Look here, Molly," he said good-naturedly, "I should not have laughed at your picture of Sambo this morning. I am awfully sorry. Don't be cross with me. I don't know anything about drawing, you know."

"It isn't that," Molly could feel the color rushing into her face. "I don't really mind that. But you didn't want me this afternoon. You *know* you didn't. You said so. The window was open and I heard you. You are both very unkind."

She advanced towards them, and Tom and Dick did not try to stop her as she passed them and made a dash out of the room and along the corridor, in all eagerness, now, to hide her tears. Up into the attic she went, to have her cry-out there.

Dick and Tom stood facing one another, half puzzled, half vexed. Dick was the first to speak.

"What can she mean, Tom?" he asked.

Tom only shook his head.

There was a scratching on the door and a little whining sound. Dick opened the door, and a little fox-terrier ran in, rubbing itself against his legs, and looking up wistfully into the faces of both boys.

Tom bent to pat the dog.

"Poor Nan, good old girl," he said. "Have you been looking for us all the afternoon?"

"Look here, Tom," said Dick suddenly. "Do you suppose Molly could have heard what we said about not taking *Nan* with us when we started out to the lake?"

Tom gave a low whistle. "Why, she probably did. And she thought we meant *her*!" he exclaimed.

Dick was out of the room in a minute, and half

way along the corridor he started calling "Molly! Molly!" He stood at the foot of the attic stairs and listened; he thought he heard a sound from above. Up he went, four steps at a time, and found Molly seated on the floor, furtively drying her eyes on her pinafore.

"Molly, look here," he burst out. "It was *Nan* you heard us talking about this morning, not *you*. Why, we especially wanted you to come with us. But we didn't want *Nan*. She follows so badly, and she nearly bit Father yesterday. . . . You just misunderstood."

Molly stood up and stared at him in surprise.

"You were talking about *Nan*?" she repeated, slowly. Then her face grew very red, and she glanced nervously at the canvas which leaned against the wall.

"So you see, it's all right, Molly," said her brother, heaving a sigh of relief. "Come along down and have some cookies and lemonade with us. Afterwards we shall go over to the pond and perhaps collect a few cattails. Then we can stop by and see what the quails are doing."

To his surprise, Molly began to cry afresh. "I—I wish you would call me what I am," she sobbed. "You don't know what a—a—" Molly could not say it.

"Look here." Dick grew impatient. "I will call you sorry Annie if you cry," he exclaimed. "You are not generally a cry-baby, Molly."

"But your picture!" she blurted out between sobs. "Your picture!" and she fetched the smeared canvas and made her confession with many more sobs and tears.

Dick stared at it in dismay; then, his face brightened, and throwing his arms around his sister's neck, he gave her a rough hug.

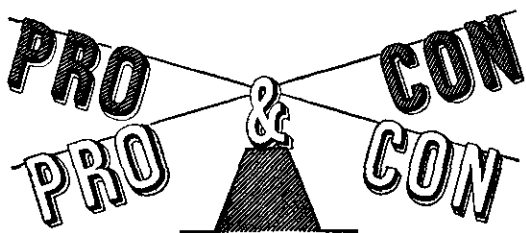
"Cheer up, old girl," he said. "It isn't so bad after all. Father said it wanted losing into the background a bit, and you have done it for me. I can easily touch it up to look better than ever. And if I get the prize, you shall have half, for you've improved it, you dear old dauber."

"Oh! Dick! Dick! You are too good!" cried Molly, breathlessly. "And I am the horriblest, meanest sister that ever was. I would not touch a penny of your prize for anything. I'm just so glad to know you still want me!"

And when Dick won the second prize the following week, she would not withdraw what she had said. ●●

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*With God's strength behind you, you are more than sufficient for the task ahead of you.*



### *A Column for Open Discussion*

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

#### • New Testament verses that teach the Atonement?

**"Jesus Himself stated the atonement on Calvary in Matthew 26:28 and in Mark 10:45."**

**Matthew 26:28 reads:**

**"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."**  
*T. B. C., Blackstock, S. C.*

We know that the whole passover service, recorded in Matthew 26:17-20, was symbolic. Jesus was instituting the Lord's Supper, and was serving His disciples. But He was not serving them His blood or His literal body. The grape juice and the bread He was serving were symbols.

The question is, What did they symbolize?

For a clue we go to John 6, where the Jews were questioning Jesus regarding His flesh and blood. "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. . . . As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. . . . Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" (John 6:53, 57, 58, 60). To clarify His statement, Jesus said in verse 63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

Here we have it right from the Master Himself: His literal flesh or blood could **profit them nothing**. His **words** are His flesh and blood, the life-giving

element which can avail for the remission of sins. It is just as Jesus said in John 4:34, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." I am sure our readers would rather believe Jesus than any theologian.

**Mark 10:45 reads:**

**"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."**

This verse says nothing about the atonement, nor would it suggest such an idea if we had never thought of it before. It clearly states that Jesus gave His life a ransom for many. His whole life was devoted to the deliverance from sin of as many as would observe His example and heed His message. Why should we think He was speaking of His literal death? People today give their lives to a cause without dying for it; in fact, their death is often a loss to the cause because it means they can give no more.

**"The atonement is expressed in many texts in the Epistles, such as Romans 5:10; I Cor. 15:3; II Cor. 5:19; Gal. 3:13; I Pet. 2:24; I Pet. 3:18. A religion which dispenses with the blood atonement is not the religion of the New Testament."**

Let us read and study each of these verses.

**Romans 5:10 reads:**

**"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."**

We may have been reconciled by the death of Christ; however, we are saved—and it is salvation we are most concerned about—by His **life**, His exemplary life of obedience. As Paul himself says in the next chapter of Romans, Christ's life and death were both in our behalf. He explains how: "For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:10-12). Christ set the pattern, and we must follow.

**I Corinthians 15:3 reads: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."**

In using the phrase "according to the Scriptures" Paul would of necessity have been referring

to the Old Testament, as very little of the New Testament was in existence at that time.

It seems possible that Paul must have had in mind Christ's death as being the completion of His lifelong sacrifice of His will, the culmination of a life of total submission to God, which benefits everyone who will follow Him, making a like sacrifice of himself to God. Christ's death was evidence of His total obedience—even unto death, the death of the cross. And that total surrender, that total obedience that would result in physical death, was according to the Scriptures. We read: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; . . . burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Ps. 40:6-8). This passage is quoted in Hebrews 10, where it is definitely applied to Christ. "Lo I come," said David speaking prophetically of Christ, "to do thy will." This purpose He fully accomplished. His death at the hands of wicked men was also foretold (see Ps. 22:16).

**II Corinthians 5:19 reads: "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."**

This text points out our need to be reconciled to God—something we must **do**, not something already done by Christ for us. We must change our ways so that they are reconciled with God's—this is the only way the world will ever be reconciled to God. The next verse continues the thought: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (v. 20). So long as Christ was among men, He preached God's method of reconciliation (He never once mentioned His dying on the cross as being the means of that reconciliation), and in His absence He committed the message to His apostles, that they should preach "repentance and remission of sins" (Luke 24:47). This is how men may become reconciled to God.

**Galatians 3:13 reads: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."**

Paul here confirms the thought that Christ, from the viewpoint of the old law, was "accursed," for "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Such was the opinion of those who held to the old Jewish law. But as Paul explains, Christ was not really accursed, as He had done nothing worthy

of the curse: "I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed" (I Cor. 12:3).

Christ did indeed redeem men from the "curse of the law," for the outmoded law of Moses came to an end with Christ's crucifixion, as Paul wrote, "Christ is the end of the law . . . to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 10:4). Also, he wrote, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2:14), referring to the removing of the old Jewish law. The law was given for a specific purpose, for the molding of the Israelite people into a nation of God-fearing civilians. But when Israel was no longer a nation, the law no longer could serve any useful purpose, and so it was removed.

**I Peter 2:24 reads: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."**

In verse 21, Peter had stated that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Then Peter followed with this statement, telling how exemplary Christ's suffering was: "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (vs. 22-23).

Christ bore all the taunts and torture of the sinners who crucified Him, and bore them patiently. It seems likely that Peter was speaking of this fact when he said, Christ "bare our sins," meaning the sins of the Jewish people who crucified Him. Hence, "when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." We must learn to bear suffering with the same patience, "that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." This last phrase shows that there is something yet to do, that Christ's death does not take care of all our sins; we yet must "live unto righteousness."

**I Peter 3:18 reads: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."**

The same thought applies here as in I Peter 2:24. Christ being just, suffered the sins of the unjust; He bore the "treatment of a sinner," though He Himself was sinless—"that he might bring us to God." Again it is His flawless example of obedi-

ence. Thus, men put Him to death, but God quickened Him.

We know that God has always condemned human sacrifice. This being the case, by what logic could we assume that God would sacrifice His own Son for our sins?

Please consider the following also:

Probably ninety-nine and nine-tenths percent of the churches of Christendom consider the doctrine of the atonement to be the most important in the Bible and the central theme of the church. To them, nothing else even comes close in importance. If they are right, why then is there not at least one forthright statement of it in the four Gospels—which contain the words of Jesus? Why are not the Gospels filled with texts which support this theory? Why did Jesus go everywhere “preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom of God” (Luke 8:1) if His atoning death was most important? And why did Jesus in all His preaching lay such stress on **doing** something (“Blessed are the meek,” “Blessed are the pure in heart,” “Watch ye therefore,” etc., etc.)? If the theologians are right, surely Jesus had His priorities confused. ●●

## Our Readers Write...

### The Little Things

I try to imagine in the morning what the day's testings will be, and it does help me to be more prepared. I have been having many testings recently, but I thank God for them and pray for the wisdom to learn to use all that comes into my life for the purpose of growing into the character that He wants me to become.

This makes all the tasks, chores, trials, and blessings worthwhile. If I didn't have this great hope and something so wonderful to work for, I don't think I could go on sometimes. I try to keep my mind on the grand Age to come and to make every move count toward preparing to be worthy to live in that wonderful world. The little things of everyday living can help me, I know, if I approach them in the proper manner. I know that how I take the little things that make up every day will decide whether I will have a place in God's coming Kingdom.

*Knoxville, Maryland*

J. B.

### Time for Study

We cannot be thankful enough for God's Word, and having it made clear removes doubts from our minds. And your letters make me feel close to the church.

I have learned I can have time for study if I make up my mind to do so. And I still have time to keep my daily chores done.

*Williamsville, New York*

Mrs. J. K.

### Something Is Required of Us

So many people fail to realize that God promised a hundredfold in this life and in the world to come life without end, with no sickness, sorrow, pain or death; and that to obtain all this, service must be given; all that we have and are must be given in the service of the Lord. The first step required is to realize thoroughly that the doctrines and teachings of the so-called teachers in the world are vain. The true and living way must be sought, the living water that flows so freely and bountifully from the hand of God. The second step consists in performing the work required in this service. This means giving up our naturally evil thoughts, ways, and notions, coming out of the world, and being a separate and peculiar people zealous of good works.

We really want to work for the Lord; therefore we are not so anxious to affiliate with any groups here in our country. We do not want people to feel resentment to us, but we realize what we must do.

So many people are looking for money instead of teaching the words of God.

*Monrovia, Liberia*

J. D.

### Hold Fast

Here is something that seems so helpful, I want to send it to you.

Our work is:

Hold fast patience by letting patience have her perfect work.

Hold fast self-control by ceasing from anger.

Hold fast humility by not allowing pride to rule.

Hold fast brotherly kindness by overcoming all jealousy.

Hold fast sobriety by giving no place to foolishness.

Hold the banner of God's Word high by being Christian examples before a world of darkness.

*Crawford, Nebraska*

M. M.

### Appreciative

I have enclosed payment for my subscription. I thank you for the MESSAGE being so easy to understand, yet so full of meaning. Unlike most magazines, it is not full of beating around the bush.

A special thanks to “Kathy Kander's Korner” and “Parent to Parent.” Their articles are full of good lessons.

*Cherryfield, Maine*

S. S.

### You Learn By Overcoming

We need to keep re-examining ourselves and the many things we naturally take for granted. We only deceive ourselves if our behavior is not elevated above that of the world.

The gate to life is very, very narrow and the way is quite straitened for us. There are so many things that are available to the world that are denied to us. Our thoughts and actions must all be weighed carefully. On the other hand, if we did not have problems then we would be unable to grow spiritually, and I sincerely doubt that the Father wishes to have small immature babes in His Kingdom. You learn by overcoming and each small victory sets the stage for a larger one.

I have found that it is a daily battle with trifles and small petty items that aggravate and annoy. However, if you stop and examine each one and take the extra few minutes, they can be handled and then dismissed and not permitted to become a thorn.

*Baton Rouge, Louisiana*

D. K.



# ***We Have But One Goal***

**W**HAT does life mean to us? What are we doing with it?

Humankind are much like a great river flowing endlessly through the world, on and out into oblivion. They are born, they eat, they breathe, sleep, suffer, enjoy, grow old and die. Is this all there is to it? Is this the best God has to offer?

Thank God, the answer is No! Those who will take the time and trouble to seek the Lord know that God has offered far more than this meager share of existence to all who will put forth the necessary labor to become worthy of it. He has promised unending life in a Kingdom on this earth renewed to such beauty and glory that mortal minds have never dreamed of its perfection; a world where death shall be unknown, sickness unheard of, pain never experienced, worry and sorrow forgotten, while peace and pleasure increase age after age. "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11). This, then, is our goal. Is any other worth considering?

It is hard to understand how anyone could be satisfied with any objective of any less value than this. Yet how often we find ourselves feeling just this way and selling our glorious birthright for a mess of pottage, giving back the beauty and choosing ashes!

Like a child who delights in a bright balloon, we instinctively reach for the things of here and now. They look so nice. But the beautiful balloon will surely burst, sooner or later, as balloons always do, and we shall be left gazing in dismay at the tiny twisted fragments of our folly.

We must always consider the final end of the matter and never let the natural mind divert our attention from the one perfect goal upon which we have set our heart. To reach it will require the supreme effort of every fiber of our being. It will take labor and endurance and constant vigilance to habitually direct all our powers toward that one objective. Temptation will assert itself in a thousand different forms; it will subtly and

convincingly attempt to draw our hearts toward other and lesser purposes.

Jesus warned that the cares and pleasures of this life can so easily divert our thoughts and energies from serving God that the great majority would fail to reach the goal. And we find the danger ever-present. In busy lives like ours there is much work to be done, and we often find ourselves pursuing our temporal duties and worries so diligently that we forget that we have but *one goal*. In today's world the desire for nice "things" can so easily become the dominating center of our attentions. Everywhere we turn our eyes and ears we are urged to satisfy this vain craving, and it will take a mighty strength to hold fast our aim for our one great goal. In a world so materially advanced as ours, a vast selection of pleasures is constantly before us; but with our desires riveted upon that one goal, we can remember that while others must get all they can out of life (for they shall soon pass away to be no more), we can have all eternity in which to enjoy ourselves; so we can afford to spend this part of our life in something more worthwhile.

Jesus told the story of a man who found something that he wanted more than anything else in the world—a treasure hid in a field—and for joy he went and sold everything he had and bought that field. His mind was on that one objective and immediately everything else became subservient to that end. The treasure was worth more to him than everything else he possessed.

If we would possess that treasure, the one thing we desire above all else, nothing will be able to draw us away from our purpose. Pride will be powerless to sway us, for good looks is not the goal we seek. The praise of man will not move us, for the esteem of those around us is not our goal. Envy will have no effect upon us, for to have great talent or possessions is not our goal. We will be immune to all forms of foolishness, for our goal is not passing pleasure. When things go wrong, when impatience and anger would rise, we will recall that these present circumstances are not that important; they are not our goal. We can walk serenely through the petty events of *now*, for our goal is *tomorrow*.

If we are content with this short and unsatisfactory sample of life, we should get the most out of it. But if we want something better, we will say with Paul, "This one thing I do: forgetting what is behind me, and straining toward what lies ahead, with my eyes fixed on the goal, I push on to secure the prize of God's heavenward call in Christ Jesus." ●●

## Choose Christ's Way!

Christ has pointed out to us a straight and narrow path. It is a treacherous way, for it is a path of self-destruction. But follow it to the end, and we will realize that it was the right way, for it is a glorious path of the new-self construction.

If we want our own way, we are in the wrong way. And though we may think it is the right course, we will soon discover that having our own way is a multi-lane highway—everyone is in it.

Or perhaps we could say that we do not want our own way, but we want the way of John the bookworm, or Ed the big sports fan, or Ted who saves all his money in an effort to gain the position of the tenth richest man in the world. These paths are actually much more restricting than the narrow way to life, for they end in eternal oblivion.

Peter said, "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." And he referred to Jesus Christ. He leads us on in the glorious path to life. For it was and is His path, the narrow path.

Jesus tells us that we cannot expect to have our own way—even He did not please Himself.

Are we seeking our own way, or are we choosing His way?

Let's make sure *we* choose Christ's way!

—From a Reader in Canada

## Only A Few

It is truly a fallacy for the masses to believe, as they do, that this fair land—your country, our country, or any country—was made for a degenerate people such as so many are today.

When God's appointed time came for the light of His wonderful knowledge to shine again after the apostasy, obviously the time was ripe and conditions favorable for the "second embracing," and whosoever would do God's will, whatever their nationality, color or tongue, would have opportunity to learn how they might really live forever in God's Kingdom, the wonderful world of joy and peace and righteousness, that is coming.

God's plan is to take out a people for His name, and how fortunate are the applicants—"the you and the me"—who through God's Word are aware of the great work which is involved in becoming perfect and worthy to bear that wonderful Name. The command is: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

December, 1977

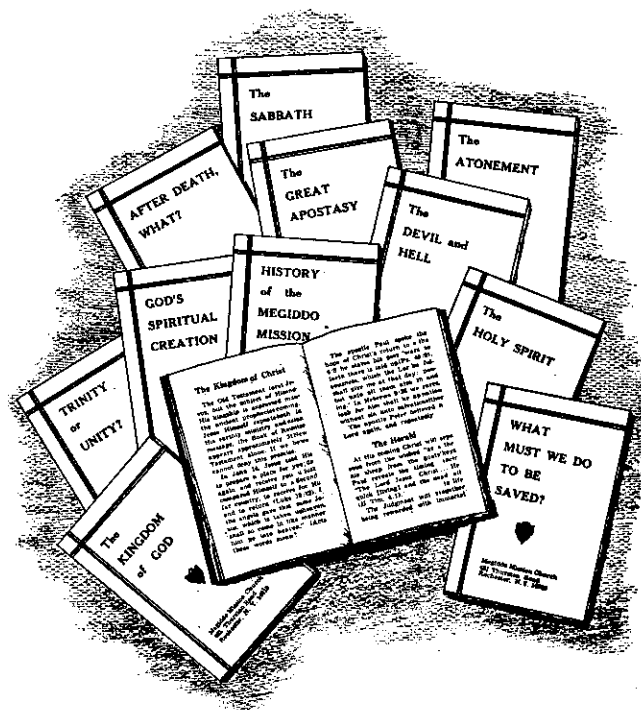
"Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" does not sound like everyone, indiscriminately, will enter into the Kingdom of God. On the contrary, everyone of us shall have to give an account to God and only those who have done God's will and made themselves pure and spotless shall enter.

Many who have failed in their covenant to serve God will cry, "Lord, Lord, open unto us," only to hear the dreadful answer, "Depart, I know you not."

How this should alert us to watch, knowing "that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we [first] believed." ••

—From a Reader in England

## GOOD READING

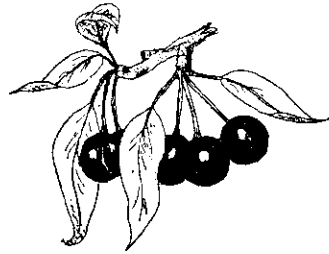


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# Fruitful Fragments



**Prejudice is a poor substitute for thinking.**

***Failure is not the end—it's the time for a new start.***

**Take time out for reflection—to see if you are as reasonable as you expect others to be.**

***Nothing is so hard to do gracefully as getting down off your high horse.***

**He who has a *why* to live for can bear almost any how.**

***When we put ourselves in the other person's place, we're less likely to want to put him in his place.***

**A day of worry is more exhausting than a week of work.**

***A good example is the best sermon.***

**A clean conscience is a soft pillow.**

***Rivers become crooked by following the path of least resistance; so do people.***

**How to never make a mistake: Never do anything.**

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## Scriptural Spotlight

*(Continued from page 27)*

peace. It is in mind control. If we have given ourselves over to God, we can have peace because we can know that all that comes our way will be working for our good. It is then that we will be able to prove the sincerity of our consecration and the singleness of our heart. If we truly desire His favor above all else, we will turn away from every distracting thought and look steadily in one direction.

How many times we have desired the gratification of our impulses more than God; we have yielded to the passionate word, the frivolous thought, or gone after the sinful diversion, only to come back and find our peace has departed. Do we wonder why? It is because our mind was not stayed upon God.

In nine cases out of every ten, our failures come not because we could not reach the top of a great high mountain, but because we stumbled over a straw.

What is the real secret of perfect composure, that undisturbed and undisturbable calm? It is to be zealously, habitually occupied with our obedience to Christ, to be consciously thinking what we should be thinking about, what we should be doing, where our interest should be, what our motivation should be, where our strongest affection should be centered. As we practice this, we shall find after a while that there are ten thousand things we do not need to think about at all, and that our opinions, views and reasonings need a minimum of reviewing—all combined they cannot add one cubit to our stature; they serve only to distract us from what we should be thinking about and exhaust the powers God has given us to use for Him.

God wants people who are willing to have their own heads taken off, so to speak, and then to be reheaded with Christ. He wants those who no longer think their own thoughts or pursue their own pleasures. We naturally do far too much thinking of our own, too much worrying about our own problems; we dwell too much on our own ideas, fretting about what isn't the way we think it should be. We forget that the whole world is God's; it was His before we arrived upon the scene; and shouldn't we be willing to trust Him with the ruling of it during the little while we are here?

Staying our minds on God may seem unreal. How do we do it and at the same time perform the necessary duties of life? Staying on God is an activity that can blend naturally with any lawful thought. It becomes a consciousness behind our business plans; it purifies our social converse, elevates our heart's affections, directs our manual toil, reconstructs our whole life. When we have perfected the habit it will be ever with us, exhilarating all, blending all, consecrating all and not hindering in the least any worthy occupation of hands and brain.

How beautiful the activities of one whose established habit is of unceasing communion and dependence upon God amid and above all of life's lesser thoughts and occupations.

Let us be stayed on Him. Let us grow into Him with all the roots and fibers of our being. Let us be that soul "rooted and grounded in love, . . . strengthened with might . . . in the inner man" (Eph. 3:17, 16). Let us get so interlocked like the banyan tree by thousands of rooting branches of dependence, help and experience, that we shall not even shake with the rough winds of stress. Then we shall experience the beauty of perfect peace in being kept by the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength. ●●





# SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

*"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" —Isaiah 26:3*

**S**TARTING is one thing, staying is another. Multitudes are willing to serve by fits and flurries, but rare is he who is ready to endure unto the end.

The mind stayed on God has this special quality of endurance. In such a mind, spiritual devotion has become a habit. Sound spiritual habits are of immeasurable value in the Christian life. They are like the banks of rivers and the tracks on railroads. They are both a restriction and a guide, combining purposeful direction with safety measures. He who makes a habit of right thinking is sure of God's richest blessing—perfect peace. And underneath that right thinking is a complete confidence in God—he thinks right "because he trusteth in thee." Such a man is pronounced "blessed" by the Word of God: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is."

A mind stayed on God suggests an intellect whose activities are controlled and directed; it is not the wandering mind that deviseth wicked imaginations, nor is it the idle mind that harbors vanities. The stayed mind loves the region where God reigns, the realm that is high and holy and noble. Such a mind takes delight in reposing in the arms of the Infinite; it depends upon God for the subject of all its secret thoughts.

Though he erred at times, David knew the happiness of directed thinking. "I hate vain thoughts," he cried, "but thy law do I love. . . . How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! . . . Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart" (Ps. 119: 113, 103, 111).

Learning to stay our minds on the high and heavenly means making a habit of mental self-denial, until all the throbbing thoughts are captured and brought into obedience to Christ. This is no small task, but the benefits are sure: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace." A literal rendering would be "peace, peace"; it is the superla-

tive form, meaning the greatest possible peace. It is inward peace, outward peace, peace with God, peace with ourselves; peace at all times, under all events, in all places; God's own peace. It is the peace which Christ left as His legacy to His disciples: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (John 14:27). It is a peace which can confront any trial unafraid.

As we face the daily battle within ourselves and our own lower nature, is such peace possible? Can we who experience so much of struggle and conflict know peace? The answer is yes, if we can meet the conditions of our text; if through all our ups and downs we can keep our mind stayed on God and His greatness, His goodness, His kindness to us in setting before us a means to a better life, can we not have peace?

Nothing can disturb the peace of him who always does right. Peace and righteousness go hand in hand. They live together, work together, strive together and shall arrive together. If we supply the righteousness according to God's standards, He will supply the peace. He stands above, seeing all, knowing all; He is not in the conflict we know, He stands above it, calm in the vision of the meaning of it all. His is that peace "which passeth all understanding" which "shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7).

In our stark world of daily reality, how can we frail, anxious, feverish beings *stay* our minds on God and find His perfect peace? There is only one thing that we need to be occupied with at all times, and that is our duty to God. "Whose mind is stayed on thee," says the Word. It is not possible to hold the mind on nothing, but we must keep it from darting among forty things of no importance. This is possible only by making a conscious effort to hold it on God and all that He has promised. That will stay us.

And here lies the secret of abiding peace, God's  
*(Continued on page 26)*





# *The BED of OG*

*While reading in the Bible once  
I ran across the queerest thing:  
A Bashanite of giant height  
Upon his nation's throne was king.  
His name was Og.*

*There is no record whether he  
Was dull or smart, or sour or gay.  
He had a bedstead made of iron--  
That's all the Bible has to say  
About this Og.*

*He must have used a lot of room--  
They laid a tapeline on his bed,  
From side to side 'twas six feet wide  
And fourteen feet from foot to head.  
Some man, this Og!*

*I wonder, was he cruel or kind?  
A gentleman or stubbornly?  
And did he wear a smile, or frown?  
A bedstead made of iron had he--  
That's all we know.*

*I'd rather be remembered for  
An upright life, a kind word said,  
A smile I wore, a good deed done,  
Than by a fourteen-foot iron bed  
Like poor old Og!*