

Planet in Rebellion

By George Vandeman

1960

www.CreationismOnline.com

Contents

- 1.The Heavens Are Telling
- 2.Life on Other Worlds
- 3.Planet in Rebellion
- 4.Race in the Balance
- 5.Fallout Over Calvary
- 6.Treasures in Clay
- 7.Dead Men Do Tell Tales
- 8.Footsteps in the Sky
- 9.The Hinge of Time
- 10.Race to the Stars
- 11.Soul in Conflict
- 12.Fortress of the Mind
- 13.Taproots of the Soul
- 14.After the Wedding Bells
- 15.About Divine Healing
- 16.How Never to Be Tired
- 17.God and I Are Partners
- 18.Masquerade of the Psychic
- 19.The Other Side of Death
- 20.More Than Legend
- 21.Firefall
- 22.No Place to Hide
- 23.Destination Earth
- 24.Does Liberty Wear Chains?
- 25.Flags Make a Difference
- 26.My Confession of Faith
- 27.Wilderness Survival
- 28.Red Stairs to the Sun
- 29.Conscience
- 30.God and the Cities Acknowledgments

Introduction

Before you turn the page would you like to know what this book is all about-why it was written-what it promises to do for you personally? PLANET IN REBELLION is a cosmic approach to what has now become to all of us a cosmic crisis. For who of us is not aware that during a few short decades the planet that was once our universe has dwindled dizzily in comparative size, though not in importance, into a planet that can never again be completely isolated from its stellar neighbors?

You have not picked up this book by accident. It may be by divine appointment that you turn its pages. One thing is certain. You will never be the same after you have read it. For within its cosmic setting you personally are the center and purpose of it all. It promises to meet your needs not by any human excellence or literary uniqueness, but because it offers you a sane, sure, satisfying answer to the tightly integrated problems of mind and soul and spirit in this frightening nuclear age.

Such terrifying things are happening, in such terrifying rapidity, in such terrifying ways, that today as never before “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

1. The Heavens Are Telling

IMMEASURABLE distances! Incalculable numbers! Incomparable speeds! Incomprehensible spheres! Inconceivable power! Lurid flames of hydrogen, to us reminiscent of Bikini, of the Yucca Flats, or even Cape Kennedy, leap two-three-four hundred thousand miles out into space from the rim of our giant sun!

Spectacular adventure and living faith await the reverent man who reads what God has written in eternity’s most ancient book-the evening sky. The original edition of this mighty volume still rolls in majestic splendor above us. It can be seen on any clear night. Yet it does not look old. Its -pages are as delicately fair and sparkling as when our first parents admired them. And reading from the Creator’s pen in this pageant of glory. Above confidently, it is written!”

David said of this book of the stars, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handy work. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.” The heavens declare! The heavens are telling! But someone may be asking, ‘What are the heavens telling? What do they reveal? How can I understand them? How can the stars help me?’”

Have you ever been seated on a train that stood alongside the coaches of another train, when all at once you felt the strange sensation that one of the trains was moving-you were not sure which one? How did you adjust to the situation? “Oh “ you say “by looking through the window at some stationary object.” And of course you are right.

Millions of men and women today are about as uncertain morally and spiritually as you were uncertain on that train for those few moments. Uncertain because they are not quite sure whether the universe into which they have been thrust will prove friendly or unfriendly. Uncertain because they realize that back of the finger that launches the rocket is the unchanged nature of man. Uncertain because they are not quite sure where they are going-or why.

Uncertainty produces fear. And fear kills. The result: a host of perplexed people with strained lives and a vague sense of restless insecurity. But nothing, I believe, will better help us get our bearings and settle our confusion than to look through our giant telescopes to the stars fixed in the planned precision of their unfailing orbits-and discover who is back of it all! Little wonder that God invites us, “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things.” Isaiah 40:26. Can we be satisfied with anything less? You may remember an unusual news story that came out of Brooklyn some years ago. A mother with more doting love for her son than patriotism decided to hide him from the army. With his cooperation a cubicle was built in the attic. For some time the boy submitted to voluntary imprisonment in that confined space, and the mother fed him and took care of his needs through a small opening. Finally, however, the mother became ill, and the neighbors heard the boys cry for help. The police were summoned and the secret was out. As they opened the box like prison, a dirty, dazed, disheveled boy stepped out. After questioning him, the police asked, “What do you want to do now?” Bewildered and looking towards his familiar retreat, replied, “Get back in”. What a tragedy to become so accustomed to a wretched environment as to desire nothing better! Yet who will say that some of us are not guilty?

Could it be that God has permitted us to push back the frontiers of the universe in a last attempt to arouse us from our fatal satisfaction with this sin-tainted planet? Could it be that God is lifting the curtains of space in order to heal us of our spiritual isolationism? Could He be throwing a limitless universe across the screen of our thinking that He might lift our eyes to a Creator-and to a destiny of which we little dream?

“Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things.”

Awaiting us are wonders that even as distant whispers of light have held men spellbound with fascination for centuries. But only today, with the aid of our powerful telescopes-telescopes that look out into space six thousand billion billion miles, telescopes with a light-gathering power equal to a million human eyes-only today, with these instruments of science, have men been able to turn those distant whispers of inspiration into thunder tones.

All space invites us. But where could we better begin than with our own faithfully whirling world? Rotating gracefully every twenty four hours, suspended in space, it moves with perfect precision. “How can it be explained?” you ask. Here is a Hand that guides it. It was Job who said of God, “He ... hangs the earth upon nothing.” Job 26:7. Job, thirty-five centuries ago, spoke by inspiration what the revelations of science are now forcing us to acknowledge.

I stood on the rolling lawns of Greenwich Observatory, overlooking England’s naval academy, with Frank Jeffries, a personal friend who for forty-six years was one of England’s time determinators. I listened in respectful silence as that great mind described the mystery behind the perfect rotation of our earth. He spoke of its spinning, of its hurtling through space at unbelievable speed. And then he explained the terrific gravitational pull of passing planets as they approach and recede from us, creating considerable bounce and irregularity in the motion of our globe. Yet in spite of all this-and he spoke with the deep feeling that only an astronomer can

know-our earth rides majestically in space, giving us an unerring day and night with a loss of only a fraction of a second in a millennium!

But still more spectacularly accurate than the perfect precision rotation of our earth is its movement through space, which creates our year. Our earth, in its huge elliptical orbit around the sun, moves about 588,000,000 miles. Yet, riding in perfect poise at 67,000 miles an hour, our earth closes its yearly voyage without the loss of a thousandth of a second in thousands of years! Think of it. Could such a clock like precision, balance, and harmony be the result of blind chance, chaos, or cosmic accident? Hardly! And this marvelous balance extends into our still more complicated solar system. Here we discover that regardless of size, speed, weight, or distance, not only our nine planets but also their thirty one moons are in perfect balance. Each obeys the laws laid down by the Creator. Each respects the Power that guides it.

What a tragedy that only a few decades ago the faith of millions was shaken by certain theories of the origin of our world and of our solar system! De Laplace, for example, had explained that our sun in its rotation threw out various pieces of matter which became the present system of orderly worlds that we have been describing. Of course few, if any, today believe in his nebular hypothesis, which once was so proudly paraded as fact.

Then came Chamberlin and Moulton, who refined the idea by suggesting that a neighboring sun, such as giant Arcturus, passing in close proximity to ours, formed great tides on our sun. Since the sun was in a gaseous state, portions of its mass supposedly flew off to form our system of worlds. Yet daily revelations from the skies are merciless to old theories and superstitions. They are revealing a precision and balance in our universe that simply cannot be dismissed as mere blind chance. Suppose I should tell you that a locomotive with its train of cars could blow up into thousands of pieces and that these pieces might fly off into space and come down again in the form of little trains complete with locomotive, baggage car, passenger cars, and diner even tracks-ready for business. Would you not conclude that I was a little "off the track" myself?

Behind order and design there must be a mind and a designer, just as behind the orderly movement of my watch is the mind that planned it. If man puts forty thousand delicate parts into a satellite that he sends into orbit, can anyone even suggest that the perfect, undeviating orbit of this earth-or of the stars-just happened? Said David, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." "For he spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Psalm 33:6, 9. Belief in words like these was never more reasonable than now. For the more thoroughly the human mind probes the mystery of the heavens and the mystery of life, the more it sees a plan, not simply chance or chaos.

In agreement with the words of David are those of Edwin Conklin, Princeton University biologist: "The probability of life originating from accident is comparable to the probability of the unabridged dictionary resulting from an explosion in a printing factory." Simple but profound words! Crossing the first frontiers of space, the edges of our own solar system, we discover clusters of giant suns-Hercules, for instance, with its one hundred thousand blazing orbs. Viewing it through a telescope is a pleasure never to be forgotten. These suns appear like sparkling diamonds arrayed against a velvet background. Moving closer, with the aid of a larger telescope, we realize that every point of light is in reality a giant sun like our own. We might hastily conclude that there is no room for planets to revolve around them. But moving closer still, and measuring with the finest of present-day instruments, we discover that the average distance between each of these suns is seven trillion miles.

Think of it this way: The lights of our cities are made up of individual lights-street lights, neon signs, the lights of buildings and homes, the headlights of moving automobiles. But from the window of an approaching airplane these individual lights blend with thousands of others until a great city center appears to be but one mass of light. So it is with Hercules. Being 34,000 light-years away, it creates the illusion of a cluster, a mass of light scarcely suggesting the vast distances between its suns. These clusters in the heavens, unnumbered as the sand of the sea, make up the giant constellations or island universe systems, such as our own Milky Way-or the galaxy in Andromeda - or the cluster of galaxies in Virgo, twenty million light-years away-or Orion, the majesty of the heavens. The appearance of the Orion nebula is that of light shining and glowing behind Herculean walls of ivory or pearl"-walls "studded with millions of diamond points," every one a shining star.

And these stars are giant blazing suns, many of them dwarfing our own in size. There is Betelgeuse, for instance, whose measurements have been carefully computed. Betelgeuse is 350,000,000 miles in diameter; the diameter of our sun is only 860,000 miles. Here is a star so large that if it were as close to us as our sun, it would completely fill our horizon, making it impossible for us to see beyond its compass.

Yet Betelgeuse is only one of the stars looking down at us from the constellation of Orion. Orion! It is at this point that brilliant men stand speechless, their pens inert, helpless to describe what they see, for negatives from the giant telescopes reveal a cavern nineteen trillion miles across-a vast canyon in the skies, indescribably beautiful -a corridor fit for a King! In all the skies it is the wonder of wonders!

The vast majesty of it all staggers the human mind! Looking into God's limitless universe, we are bewildered, we are dazed, we are overwhelmed with what we see! Even a brief glimpse into space spotlights the utter littleness of man. But no! The vastness of space and the "everness" of time need not terrify us, for of one thing we can be certain: We are not specks of cosmic dust in a chaotic universe without purpose or design. We are children of the infinite God, the Creator of it all! A wise and inspired writer once said, "Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned; all things are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best."

Wouldn't this be a good time-and a good place-to get our thinking straight? A star is big. And man is little. But man is still the astronomer. It is man who can study and compute and appreciate the divine precision of the stars. Man can do what a star cannot do. He can think.

In our little world a mountain is big. It is vast. Compared to a baby it is gigantic. But a baby is more than a mountain. A baby can love. Man is more than a star. For a man can worship. He miracle of miracles-the wonder of wonders-is God's masterpiece of creation -you-me! I like to think of it this way. I like to think of God with His universe about Him-the worlds hanging securely in space, the giant suns speeding in unerring pathways through the skies. Not a star disobedient! Not a sun deviating from its appointed course! But wouldn't you think that God might be lonely? Obedient stars were not enough. Stars could not think. The heart of a loving Creator could never be satisfied with only blazing, unswerving suns that could not commune with Him. And so there were creatures made perhaps many millions throughout the universe. And He made man! And the heart of God and the heart of man walked together in happy, satisfying fellowship. And then man failed. And God was lonely again.

Man-out on his tiny planet-was lost. And however great the host of created beings in the skies, none could take man's place in the affection of his Creator. The Son of God offered to go out and find him, to bring him back. And the Father, in indescribable love for a lost race on a planet too insignificant, it seems, to notice, agreed to the decision of His Son. He agreed to Calvary!

Do you see? The cross was the expression of the loneliness of God-a God who could not be satisfied until man was brought back. The cross was to reach across the gulf of separation between God and man, across the loneliness of God and the restlessness of man-and heal it all! The heavens are telling! What do the stars say to you? The heavens speak. They tell. They declare that the God who rules the speeding spheres will rule in every restless, willing heart!

‘World, O world of muddled men,
Seek the peace of God again;
In the humble faith that kneels,
In the hallowed Word that heals;

In the hope that answers doubt,
Love that drives the darkness out.
Frantic, frightened, foolish men,
Take God by the hand again!’
Author Unknown.

2. Life on Other Worlds

MYSTERIES in our skies! Flashes of silver in the sunlight! Elusive disks of light over the desert evening! Flying saucers-as real as rainbows, they say, but as hard to catch! Are these natural phenomena-lights or reflections or ice crystals? balloons, kites, or practical jokes? Are they fantastic craft from interplanetary space, manned by strange little men from Mars or Venus or Saturn-veering and accelerating at tremendous speed, always just out of reach?

A Harvard professor received this letter: I wish that one of those spaceships would land on top of Observatory Hill, and that a squad of the little men would seize you, put you in their ship, and take you away to Venus. Then maybe you'd believe!" And he said, "Well maybe I would!" Are other worlds inhabited? Could ours be an empty universe? Do only the mystics and the saucer clubs believe that life exists on other worlds? The possibility has fascinated men for centuries. And in this generation of research, as we sit on the exciting edge of discovery, scientists, looking into the skies, have been able to verify certain intriguing information in the Scriptures.

No, I do not suggest that flying saucers give evidence that our planet neighbors are inhabited. just what time may reveal about these strange appearances, I do not know. But I do know what the Scriptures say concerning life on other worlds. We open the Word of God, then on this fascinating subject. And I promise you there may be some surprises in store. Let us look first at Isaiah 4:18: "For thus says the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited." Therefore, if this world were not the abode of life, its creation would have been in vain-useless. Would it not naturally follow that if such be true of this little speck of cosmic dust, then much if not all of God's creation would likewise be in vain if not put to some intelligent use?

Think with me for a moment. Is it reasonable to restrict life to this planet alone? Are all the many whirling worlds without inhabitants? Did God make many houses and put inhabitants in only one? Is this beautiful, orderly, intelligent universe a desert of infinite loneliness? On the contrary, there is quite convincing evidence, both in the sky above us and in the Scriptures, that other worlds are inhabited.

In fact, the late Sir James Jeans, one of Britain's foremost scientists, concluded that there must be millions of worlds capable of supporting life as we know it here. One of the most striking statements ever made on the subject is by Bernard DeFontenelle: "To think that there may be more worlds than one is neither against reason nor Scripture. If God be glorified by making one world, the more worlds He made, the greater must be His glory." Interesting statement? But Please notice that he says such a conception is "neither against reason nor Scripture." So first we shall ask, What reason do astronomers give for the supposition that life does exist on other worlds?

The simplest and strongest reason is that some planets are definitely wrapped in a garment of atmosphere. Atmosphere is vital to life. And astronomers, by the aid of the telescope and spectroscope, are able to detect atmosphere on some of the planets. There is no life, of course, on the moon. The chief purpose of this familiar friend seems to be to brighten our dark nights by reflected sunlight. There is not a drop of water or a breath of air on the moon. Ranger VII and Ranger VIII have sent back thousands of photographs, and they are clearly defined, with each crater distinct. There is not a cloud or a trace of atmosphere to blur the outlines of the lunar surface.

The planet Venus, however, often called the twin sister of the earth, when poised between us and the sun shows a beautiful ring of light. This ring of light and blurred haze is evidence of atmosphere. No telescope has ever been able to pierce the thick clouds that cover its surface.

But now to Mars, about which we have heard so many fantastic and intriguing tales. Only half the size of the earth, it is blessed by the reflected light of two moons, Deimos and Phobos, the one only seven and a half miles in diameter, and the other fifteen. Mars is definitely wrapped in atmosphere, for one look through the telescope reveals this chemical mixture which is so vital to sustain life. Time-lapse motion pictures in my possession, taken through the telescope over many months, have shown the actual melting of the polar caps in the Martian summer. Thinking it through, one can only agree with the late Sir Harold Spencer Jones, for many years the Astronomer Royal of England, who said that "with the universe constructed on so vast a scale, it would seem inherently improbable that our small earth could be the only home of life."

But let us look beyond the frontiers of our own solar system. The powerful two-hundred-inch Palomar reflecting telescope is said to be capable of photographing forty billion suns in our own Milky Way system-the galaxy, or star city, to which our sun belongs. Now our sun has a family of nine planets revolving obediently around it. If we were to take nine as an average planet family and multiply it by forty billion suns, we would have the figure of 360 billion planets in our galaxy alone. But remember that our Milky Way system is only one of at least 200 million other such galaxies. We have no idea what may be revealed by the National Radio Astronomy Observatory under construction in West Virginia, which will have an antenna three hundred feet in diameter and which may reach out into space nineteen billion light-years or so-about ten times farther than the Palomar telescope.

We are forced to staggering conclusions, even with our present figures. If only one world out of 360 billion were inhabited-one world in each known galaxy-we would have 200 million inhabited worlds. Yet who would suggest that the Creator would place life on only one world in a vast galaxy of worlds? And astronomers remind us that we have no idea how far the universe extends beyond the two hundred million galaxies we can see. Is it any wonder that the words of DeFontenelle are echoed by prominent astronomers? He said, you remember, "To think that there may be more worlds than one is neither against reason nor Scripture."

We have looked at the reasons of the astronomers. Now what do the Scriptures say? Is there anything in the inspired pages to suggest that there is life on other worlds? In Hebrews 1:1,2 we discover that God through Christ "made the worlds!" Notice that it is plural "worlds." And Ephesians 3:14,15 says, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named!" "The whole family in heaven!" But now notice the plainest scripture of all-Nehemiah 9:6: "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou has made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host; . . . and the host of heaven worship thee."

Do not these words strongly suggest that there are millions of other inhabited worlds? And evidently they are worlds that have never fallen, for "the host of heaven worship thee." The family of heaven-the host of heaven-worships God. This world alone has disputed His claim to worship. This world alone is a planet in rebellion. Here let me draw back the curtain as we witness one of the early scenes in the moving drama of the ages, in which our earth plays a leading role. We find it in the Book of Job. God asks Job, "Where was thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" Job 38:4, 7.

Here, in God's own account of creation, we are told that the sons of God shouted as they saw the earth come from the hand of its Creator. Who were these "sons of God?" Evidently they were either the angels or some other beings created before the earth was formed. They could not be men, for these individuals were alive as the earth was being formed. Adam is called a son of God: "Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God." Luke 3:38. Son, of course, is spelled with a small s and does not refer to the same position of son ship which Christ occupies. But since Adam had no one to look to as father except God, he was called a son of God-a son by creation. And Adam, naturally, was appointed head over the newly created earth. Would it not be logical to conclude that if God created beings on other worlds, the first inhabitant of each, the head of each, might likewise be called a son of God? Does not reason suggest that such might be the case?

At any rate, we read in the first chapter of Job of a most interesting heavenly conclave at which the "sons of God" were present: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." Job 1: 6, 7. Here is a meeting of the sons of God. And surprising as it may seem, Satan, Lucifer-at least on that occasion-was among the group. It appears that he had come to represent this earth. Why was Adam not present? Adam was a son of God.

You are aware that our first parent forfeited his right to reign over this world. He deliberately, by his own choice, sold out to the enemy. And Lucifer took over the royal diadem and wore it in Adam's place. Watch him as after several thousand years lie still claims this world as his. Here he challenges Christ on a day of severe temptation. Notice what he says: "And the devil, taking him up

into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be yours." Luke 43-7.

Satan claims the right to give power to whom he chooses. And Jesus does not here dispute his claim. He challenges only his right to worship: "Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shall worship the Lord thy God, and him only shall thou serve." Verse 8. Is the picture just a little clearer now? This world had lost its original master. Adam, in that tragic conflict in Eden, had sold out. Satan had become the prince of this world.

I am well aware that the story of the fall of man-the story of Adam and Eve, our first parents, eating of the forbidden fruit and selling a world into sin-has been pushed aside by critics reluctant to believe the simple Bible account. But when archaeology is fast piecing the Genesis story solidly into history, when the story is part of a Book that claims to be inspired, a Book that must be rejected in its entirety if it is rejected at all, how can the most cautious mind continue to doubt? How can any thinking man say it never happened when war and death and suffering, the awful results of Adam's choice, shout reality on every hand?

Jesus did not question Adam's fall. He was here because of it. He did not dispute Satan's claim to ruler ship of this world. But He had come to break it. He said, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." John 12:31. Evidently, from all that we know, other worlds have never looked on the face of death. They have never known fear or pain. But one world-one member of heaven's family-was lost. And in one mighty demonstration of the ages the God of the universe would give His own Son in a heroic effort to unite the family again. "For God so loved the world, that he gave."

A world was at stake. A world was lost. And when the crucial moment of the ages should arrive, the Son of God would step down from the right hand of His Father and succeed where Adam had failed. On the enemy's ground He would give His life to buy back a world and all the people in it. That day freedom would be made available to every man. That day Satan's destiny would be sealed. That day the prince of this world would be cast out. And that day the inhabitants of the skies would rejoice: "Rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them." Revelation 12:12.

Do you see how the Scripture fits together into one complete picture? There must be other inhabited worlds. And the Scriptures strongly indicate that they are inhabited by a host unnumbered who have not failed their Lord. No, these inhabitants of other worlds are not cruising about our earth, studying it from interplanetary craft hovering in space. Rather, these sinless, perfect beings, from their untainted worlds, are watching the outcome of the age long controversy between Christ and Satan. They see it nearing completion in this old world and in your heart and mine. They wait breathlessly for the climax of it all, when Jesus Christ, whose right it is to reign, returns to this earth again in power and great glory, to wear the crown that Adam so lightly regarded.

"Rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them." Well might the inhabitants of the skies rejoice when Satan was cast out. But these words follow: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto YOU, having great wrath, because he knows that he hath but a short time." Rejoice! Heaven is clean from the infection of sin, from the dark cloud that mysteriously appeared on the horizon of eternity. But the conflict now moves to this earth. The devil is angry, for his time is short.

What will God do with this planet in rebellion? What will God do with sin? Calvary-Calvary alone-is the answer! BATTLES in the sky! Planet in rebellion! Intrigue and suspicion in high places! The spotlight now turns to the theater of rebellion-to a conflict involving the universe, particularly this planet, and especially you! The rising curtain reveals a breathtaking drama more filled with surprises than science fiction and more real than your morning newspaper. The unfolding scenes hold the only answers to life's most insistent question, Why?

That one word expresses what is to many people the greatest obstacle to Christian belief and faith-the problem of pain, the problem of evil, the problem of suffering. Never has a generation been called upon to experience suffering and heartache more intense than ours: war with its devastating scars, fear with its paralyzing pain with its benumbing pessimism, death with its martyred hopes. Every where hearts burn with the unanswered question, "Why, Lord, did You do this to me?" If God is all-powerful, why does He permitted sin and suffering and death?

3. Planet in Rebellion

Battles in the sky. Planet in rebellion. Intrigue and suspicion in high places. These hold the answer. Would it not be wise at the outset to discover just who is responsible for all that disrupts life and happiness? It would only be fair to put the 'blame where it belongs. For could it be that here is a case of mistaken identity? There are at least two sources from which trouble comes. One is our own poor judgment. If we sow health, we will reap health. If we sow illness, we will reap illness. And if we sow trouble, we will reap trouble.

A visitor was walking through the workshop of a state prison. He passed an inmate who was sewing canvas mailbags for the government. Their eyes met for a brief moment, and the visitor, wishing to be friendly, simply asked, "Sewing?" "No, reaping," was the sullen reply. Yes, it works that way. It never works any other way. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." Galatians 6:7. The other source to which we can charge our troubles is the enemy of God-Satan. The Scriptures leave us in no doubt whatever as to who is the real author of trouble-in spite of the fact that Satan tries desperately to confuse the issue and pin the blame upon God.

You remember the experience of Job. Satan had charged God with placing a hedge about Job to protect him from trouble. And then he challenged, "But put forth your hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." Job 1:11. Do you see the subtle implication? "Put forth your hand now" -as if God were the author of trouble. But God did not accept the charge. He

turned it back immediately upon Satan, where it belongs. "And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth your hand." Verse 12.

Whose hand was it that took away job's family, his possessions, and his health? Whose hand is it that brings trouble? Do not let anyone ever confuse you on that point! It is an enemy who is responsible for trouble-an enemy described by Paul in Ephesians 6:12: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high Places." Fighting an enemy that you can see is bad enough. But fighting an enemy that can hide himself from view is another thing. You begin to see that the curtain actually rises upon the realm of the unseen -yet the very real.

The idea is widespread that evil is simply a state of mind, a figment of the imagination. Sin is said to be imaginary. But the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation teach that there is a personal devil-that there is in progress a real battle with a real enemy. And the same Scriptures strongly indicate that the battle is not going to get easier as time goes on. The enemy, according to 1 Peter 5:8, is like "a roaring lion" who "walks about, seeking whom he may devour." Why his fury? "Because he knows that he hath but a short time." Revelation 12:12. You begin to realize what we may expect as the awful controversy reaches its climax.

We fight a real enemy, though he is not the great monster with fiery eyes, red skin, and a pitchfork traditionally pictured. A wild imagination playing upon the superstitious fears of a poorly educated populace during the Middle Ages is largely responsible for this grotesque image. And nothing has served the purpose of the enemy to better advantage. For as a result of this wild, distorted picture, many reasonable people have cast aside the whole idea of a devil, considering it to be only absurd folklore. But listen to this amazing revelation from the lips of Jesus: I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Luke 10: 18. Jesus names him. He saw him fall from heaven. It is evident that we are dealing not with a two-horned demon of mysterious origin, but with a highly intelligent being who was once in heaven.

Listen as Isaiah the prophet describes him: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations! For thou has said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." Isaiah 14:12-14.

Now watch as the picture of the origin of rebellion unfolds: "Thou has been in Eden the garden of God. . . . Thou art the anointed cherub that covers; and I have set thee so: thou was upon the holy mountain of God; thou has walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou was perfect in thy ways from the day that thou was created, till iniquity was found in thee." Ezekiel 28:13-15. And now to the crisis hour. War in heaven! Battles in the sky! "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Revelation 12:7-9. Not alone did this beautiful being fall from his perfect state. Revelation 12:4 suggests that a third of the angels of heaven were involved in his rebellion against God.

Think of it! Lucifer, son of the morning, has become the devil, and his angels-all brilliant intellects, powerful spirits of light-are turned into demons of darkness. Little wonder that Paul said, 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.' And no wonder that he spoke of "spiritual wickedness in high places." The idea that Satan is only a myth-or only a lone demon escaped from beneath-leaves us totally unprepared to confront the intelligent being he actually is. No, Scripture makes it plain that the enemy of God has great power and that his activities have now been whipped into fury because he knows that his time is short. No doubt someone is asking, If Satan is a created being, is not God indirectly responsible for evil? Did He not create a devil?"

At first thought it might seem so. However, the answer can only be, Certainly not. God created Lucifer a magnificent angel. It was Lucifer who made a devil out of himself. If you should see an unfortunate specimen of humanity in the gutter, would you accuse his mother of giving birth to a derelict of society? Of course not. When that man was a baby, he was as sure and sweet as any other baby. As he grew to manhood, he chose to do evil. He made a derelict out of himself. So it was with Lucifer. Created perfect in beauty, his character reflecting that of his Maker, he allowed the mysterious contamination of sin to creep into his heart. He did not recognize it at first. Then he deliberately cherished the strange spirit within, allowed it to grow until he found himself in open rebellion. He determined to undermine the very throne of God. I will be like the most High!" That was his blasphemous boast.

And Lucifer-unlike God-could use lying propaganda and subtle innuendo. He suggested to the angels of heaven that law and order were unnecessary-that if they would rid themselves of the shackles of obedience, they would find true freedom. He planted in their minds the suggestion that the God they had worshiped and loved through the ages was, after all, a tyrannical being without self-denial or love for His subjects. What a charge to hurl at the heart in which Calvary lay hidden! But some of the angels-a third of them-believed it! The charge had been made. And now it was necessary that the case be given a full hearing.

Sometimes Americans have been chagrined to find it necessary to conduct long and tedious investigations of character and conduct in high places. The airing of soiled linen in Washington has kept thousands before their TV sets, watching hour after hour in captive fascination. Why make such an issue over guilt or innocence? Because the integrity of an individual in high position has been questioned. A national figure is involved. He cannot be dealt with like a derelict in some crossroads village. America wants to know what goes on in the high places of its elected government.

So it was with Lucifer. Heaven's highest angel officer was in rebellion against God, charging God with tyranny. It was necessary to be thoroughly investigated, with ample opportunity to demonstrate their truth or falsity. The charges were heard. The

angels formed their opinions. War followed. Lucifer was cast out from his high position and banished from his celestial home. But the God who had been called a tyrant decreed that His accuser must be granted time-time sufficient to demonstrate before all the universe the true nature of his character and claims. And so the universe looked on in wonder and amazement as this world became the stage in the theater of rebellion!

If we are to understand the plot in this spectacular drama that so vitally affects us, three facts must be clear in our minds. First, all God's universe operates upon natural law. And natural law is fixed and consistent, except when God Himself chooses to intercept it. It simply must be so. In all the universe we see order, design, precision, balance. Not only the worlds above, but our planet and every element in it-all operate upon natural laws. To disobey any of these laws brings a degree of destruction. To obey them means life. The second fact to remember is that the laws of the universe are for our good, for our protection. And they affect good and bad alike. We find an example in the familiar traffic light. However restless you may be to reach your destination, you know that the red light not there to hinder your progress. It is there for your benefit.

Suppose that a man does reason, "I don't believe in traffic lights. They restrict my freedom." He disregards the red light and collides with a man who entered the intersection on the green. The traffic violator brings harm to himself, but you can also see that both good and evil may suffer under the impact of disobedience. There is another law that operates in your state and mine-the law of gravity. Suppose that a bad man falls from a window high in the Empire State Building. He will die. If a good man falls from the Empire State Building, he will be just as dead! Gravity affects good and bad alike.

Now the third important fact. Where there is a law, there is the possibility of man's breaking it. It is only when no law exists that there can be no violation of law. "For where no law is, there is no transgression." Romans 4:15. In fact, there could be no freedom if law could not be broken. The man who cannot break the law-who is not capable of breaking it-is not free. Therefore-and this is the point-God made man with the power of choice. He made man free. Now God could have had a universe without the possibility of sin or rebellion. This could have been accomplished in one of several ways. He could have made a universe without law. That, even in the natural world, would have meant cosmic chaos-a universe in collision with itself. Or God could have left the universe uninhabited, thereby preventing the possibility of rebellion on the part of His subjects.

Or-He could have made man as He made the stars, without the capability of disobeying His laws. He could have made man a machine, an elaborate puppet of His will. But no. God wanted man free. Therefore He gave man a mind and a conscience, with the power to think things through and decide for himself. God forces no one! Do you see what I mean? When God created angels-when He created Lucifer-when He created man-He took what might seem to us a terrible chance. He took a calculated risk when He made His subjects with the power of choice. There was always the possibility of someone choosing wrong. But that risk is rewarding, for only with that risk could there be universe where love is voluntary, where obedience is not by instinct, but by choice.

Yes, God had certain alternatives. He could create a universe without law and let it destroy itself. He could leave the universe uninhabited. He could make its creatures wheels in a vast machine. Or He could take the risk and grant freedom of choice. God, back in eternity, took the risk. Someone might choose to disobey. And Lucifer did. Why did not God blot out Lucifer when he first rebelled? I think you see why. There was only one way to handle the situation. Lucifer must be given every chance-until he reached the point of no return and until the watching universe understood all the issues involved. The result of Lucifer's course of action must be demonstrated. And what a demonstration it has been!

This world, you see, has been the stage of the awful drama that all the universe has been watching. This world has been the planet in rebellion. This world is the one lost sheep in the story Jesus told. The drama is in its final act. The controversy is moving into its last showdown. You have recognized the conflict in your life. I have recognized it in mine.

4. Race in the Balance

GOD AND SIN in collision! A lost race in the balance! The scene-this planet. And two mountains. Sinai-rugged, majestic, towering above the mighty plain. Windswept mountain crags that once felt the steps of Moses and saw the face of God. And then Calvary-timeless Calvary. Another visit from God to man. A mountain that felt the steps of its Creator-and lifted Him on a roughhewn cross between heaven and earth. Calvary-God's answer to sin! God's answer to fate! Into the focus of sincere investigation we invite you to bring Sinai and Calvary. And you may be surprised at what we find. For as old-fashioned and distant as these two mountains may seem to our modern ears, yet could it be that in them is found the key to unlock our deepest and most perplexing inner problems?

You see, in spite of all our material progress and all our scientific advance, the props that once held up our souls have been swept away. With all our boasted solutions, we have not solved the basic problems of the human race-the problem of sin, the problem of pain, the problem of trouble, the problem of death-until in surprised humility we turn to the Book. All these defy explanation until we come back to the Book and inspect Sinai and Calvary. When we understand what happened on these two mountains, we shall know what God did about fate. Fate. Seldom does a day pass without the horror of collision automobiles, ships, airplanes. Lives are snuffed out. Fate, we say. Authorities investigate. Fate, they say. It seems that we can do nothing more than investigate-and pay insurance-and mourn.

But nothing takes God by surprise. When sin, uninvited, stepped as an intruder into a universe of right, God was not unprepared for the collision. He did something about it. Sinai and Calvary are two vitally related acts in God's plan to save man. And to understand one, we must understand the other. Come with me, then, to Sinai. It was not long ago that I climbed to the top of

those rocks where Moses met his God. And there, standing on the windswept heights of its rugged peak, I looked out, as did Moses thirty-five hundred years ago, across the vast plain. Stretching out before me was the scene of God's desert passion play, where a miniature drama of salvation was enacted daily. There on that same plain had stood the tabernacle that God had instructed the people to build. There had been the altar-the burning sacrifice -the lamb.

Why this prelude to Calvary? Why this demonstration of the cross before it happened? There must be a reason. Have you ever wondered what people did about their sins before the Son of God gave His life on Calvary? What provision was made for their forgiveness? Today we can pray, "Lord, I have sinned, but You died for me. I accept that sacrifice and claim forgiveness." All well and good-for us. But what about the people who lived before Jesus died? Was there one plan of forgiveness for them and another for us? We look back to the cross. But they did not have a cross to look back to. How, then, were they forgiven? In the moving spectacle of God's passion play in the desert we discover the answers to these vital questions.

It was back in Eden that God had first demonstrated Calvary. An altar had been built, upon which a lamb, representing Christ, was slain. Thus all through those early centuries BC had kept before the people the fact that the innocent Son of God would one day die for guilty man. But now, as a race of slaves led out by the hand of God from Egyptian bondage was about to become a nation, God said to Moses, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." Exodus 25:8. In other words, God set up a judicial department on earth in temporary quarters to meet the emergency until Jesus could come to fulfill His part in the saving of man. God took a little bit of heaven" and brought it down into temporary quarters to care for the sins of mankind until Jesus could die on Calvary.

To watch it in operation, we must move back over the centuries to a day some fifteen hundred years before Christ. On the vast plain rolling out before majestic Mount Sinai is the tent city of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. In the midst of the camp is a courtyard. And nestled in the western end of the courtyard is the little bit of heaven" in temporary quarters. As we enter the courtyard, the first article to meet our eyes is the huge altar of burnt offering. It is made of brass. Beyond, but still in the open courtyard, stands the laver, where the priests wash before carrying out their sacred duties. The tabernacle itself is a beautiful portable building made of upright boards overlaid with pure gold, covered with various materials to protect it from the weather. At the far end of the first apartment, called the holy place, hangs a door of gorgeous curtains, beyond which lies the holy of holies.

As the priest steps into the first room, he faces on one side the table of show bread. To the other side stands the magnificent seven branched candle stick, beaten from one piece of solid gold. Beyond the candlestick is the altar of burnt incense. Stepping into the most holy place, we discover only one article of furniture-the ark, a chest overlaid with gold, where the Ten Commandment law written by the finger of God on two tables of stone was placed. And just outside the ark on a shelf, in a place of secondary importance, is a scroll containing the ceremonial law and the civil code for the camp of Israel. But someone is saying, "Why was all this necessary?"

That question takes us straight to the heart of the gospel of Christ. Without that heart there can be no redemption, no forgiveness, no moral power. Without it, religion becomes cold and formal, a mere outward display that mocks the soul with its emptiness. But to touch the heart of the gospel we touch life-the life of the Son of God. On the cross Jesus poured out His life-His blood for us. Gruesome? Unlovely? Yes, the cross that brought salvation for the human heart was not lovely. It was the ugliest, most devilish contrivance of the ages. On that gruesome cross the Son of God died. Yet that death was necessary if we are to escape eternal death, for us without shedding of blood is no remission!" (Hebrews 9:22.) And every man has sinned.

But again you ask, "What were these people who lived before the cross to do? Are they forever lost?" No. God provided that these people bring a lamb, or some other sacrifice, and take its life. In other words, an innocent substitute was to be offered to show the faith of the sinner in the coming death of the Son of God-the Lamb of God-who would die as man's innocent Substitute.

For a moment shall we slip down one of the central streets of the tent city surrounding the sanctuary to the home of a little shepherd family. The father has sinned. With a heavy heart he makes his way to the courtyard of the sanctuary. When finally the priest is ready to assist him, the shepherd places his own hand on the head of the innocent animal he has brought and confesses his sin. The shepherd himself takes the knife and slays it, graphically playing the part of every sinner, whose sin would actually take the life of the Son of God. The priest then quickly catches a little of the blood and sprinkles it upon the horns of the altar.

Each day, in the morning and in the afternoon, the priest offers a sacrifice for all the people and for himself. He repeats the procedure followed by the shepherd, but he carries it a step further. He takes the blood into the sanctuary. Passing the table of show bread on one side and the candlestick on the other, he stands before the curtain, beyond which is the presence of God. He sprinkles the blood before the curtain, thus in illustration bringing the sins of the people, and of himself, to the mercy seat, to the law that has been broken and that can be healed only by the blood of Christ.

This service continued through the long centuries until one day some nineteen hundred years ago. That afternoon, as usual, a lamb had been brought, and the priest was about to take its life. But at that crucial moment, on a lonely spot just outside the city, the Lamb of God was giving His life to save a world. Notice what happened: "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent!" Matthew 27:50, 51.

Remember that prior to this not one of the ordinary people had ever looked into the holy of holies, where the presence of God dwelt. But now, suddenly, that curtain was torn from top to bottom by an unseen hand, leaving the most holy place open to the gaze of all. The knife dropped from the hand of the trembling priest. The lamb escaped. The glory of the Lord had departed from the Temple. "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Do you see the significance of it all? No longer did men need to bring lambs to the altar,

for the Son of God had made the supreme sacrifice. I think now you are beginning to understand Sinai-to understand something of the meaning of the miniature passion play enacted daily in the desert.

Why a lamb? Why death? Why this gruesome, unlovely practice in a temple of worship ordered by God? Unnecessary, you say? A cruel waste of lifeblood? Was God making a mistake at Sinai-a mistake He would have to correct at Calvary? No. Here was no mistake! To many minds the mention of Sinai suggests only the giving of law, attended by fiery demonstrations of power. Do you see now that it was more than that? Please don't misunderstand me! Don't misunderstand the Book! Don't misunderstand the gospel! Don't misunderstand Sinai! God did more at Sinai than to reveal His law. The law of God, however holy, however just, however good, does not save, cannot save. Christ alone can save-would save-at Calvary!

But Calvary had not yet come. And a loving God could not give His law without a demonstration of forgiveness. Therefore the lamb, you see. Every time a repentant sinner lifted the knife to take the life of an innocent substitute, he graphically demonstrated the meaning of Calvary. And he did it at the foot of Sinai! Do you see how the two fit together? There was the law on Sinai. But there was the cross in the valley. There at Sinai it was all dramatized. God did not give His law and demand obedience without revealing the way. Calvary was there too-in the miniature passion play in the desert. Yet the sacrifices in the desert were only the shadow of a greater demonstration to come -only a stopgap to reveal the message of the cross to the men and women who lived before it. Shall we come down through the centuries, then, to a spot just outside the city of Jerusalem. It was called Golgotha, the place of the skull. We call it Calvary.

But first: Jerusalem was in an uproar. The Antonia fortress was the scene. The courtyard was the place. Roman soldiers had carved their games of sport into the stones of the Lithostrotos-which have been discovered only in the past thirty-five years. I stood reverently on these stones and felt unworthy of the privilege that was mine, for I stood on the very pavement where Christ had stood, beneath the arch that once rang with Pilate's words, "Behold the man!" It was here that the Son of the living God bore the indignity of a common criminal. We dare not call it a trial. It was the greatest legal farce in all history. It was the most serious crime ever chargeable to the human race. But it was more than the pain of human suffering, more than the cruel taunts of little men, that made that last night before the crucifixion what it was. The crushing weight of the sins of the world. Your sins and my sins-rested on those shoulders.

Out there in the garden, beneath the olive trees, He had prayed in the cold, damp night, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." The awful moment had come! All heaven looked on in amazement as the forces of Satan, those fallen angels, pressed in desperately upon Jesus. If only He would now sin with His lips! If only He would surrender the struggle! A lost race hung in the balance during those moments. "The wages of sin is death." God had decreed it. Must all humanity perish?

No! The Son of God walked out of that garden and permitted wicked men to nail Him to a cross. He dipped His pen in crimson ink and wrote pardon across your record and mine. Calvary is a demonstration of forgiveness that the limited spiritual insight of a Bernard Shaw could not understand. "Forgiveness," he said, "is a coward's refuge. We must pay our debts." But what Shaw could not see, and thousands like him, is that God did not deal lightly with sin when He chose to forgive it. He bore it Himself!

Weakness? No! The strongest thing that man has ever witnessed is God paying the price for a broken law. Paying the price so that weak men can become strong. Away, then, with the sentimentalism that would abolish God's law! The pillars of justice in any society would crumble without law and order. The thoughtlessness of any Christianity that would nail the Ten Commandments to the cross and I say it reverently, I say it kindly-makes mockery out of the death of Jesus.

A strong indictment, you say? Yes. But never forget it. Jesus would not have needed to die could the law have been set aside. In that indisputable fact is the vindication of the law-and the strength of the cross. It was to satisfy the claims of a broken law that Christ died in our place. If that law could have been set aside, if the commandments could have been abolished, then Calvary was unnecessary and only a meaningless drama.

A lost race in the balance. The Son of God taking man's place. That is what happened at Calvary. It was the broken law, proclaimed in Ten Commandments at Sinai, that made Calvary necessary. You need not choose between Sinai's law and Calvary's grace. The gospel blends them into one. Both speak one message. Law and love-and you and I-meet at Calvary.

A number of years ago a lighthouse was being built on the rockbound coast of Wales. When the building was nearly completed, one of the workmen stumbled and fell back through the scaffolding to the rocks below.

The other workmen, shocked at what had taken place, did not dare to look down for fear of being unnerved at the sight. Heavyhearted, they backed down the ladders. But to their surprise and joy they saw their fellow workman lying upon a patch of grass, shaken and shocked, bruised to be sure, but not seriously harmed. Beside him lay a dead lamb. A flock of sheep had been wandering by, and a lamb had broken his fall. A Lamb broke your fall! A Lamb broke mine-the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!

5. Fallout Over Calvary

IT WAS May 21, 1946. The place-Los Alamos. A young and daring scientist was carrying out a necessary experiment in preparation for the atomic test to be conducted in the waters of the South Pacific atoll at Bikini. He had successfully performed such an experiment many times before. In his effort to determine the amount of U235 necessary for a chain reaction-scientists call it the critical mass-he would push two hemispheres of uranium toward each other. Then, just as the mass became critical, he would push them apart with his screwdriver, thus instantly stopping the chain reaction.

But that day, just as the material became critical, the screwdriver slipped! The hemispheres of uranium came too close together. Instantly the room was filled with a dazzling bluish haze. Young Louis Slotin, instead of ducking and possibly saving himself, tore the two hemispheres apart with his hands, interrupting the chain reaction! By this instant, self-forgetful daring, he saved the lives of the seven other persons in the room. He realized at once that he himself would be bound to succumb to the effects of the excessive radiation he had absorbed, but he did not lose self-control. Shouting to his colleagues to stand exactly where they had been at the moment of the disaster, he drew on the blackboard an accurate sketch of their relative positions, so that doctors might discover the degree of radiation to which each had been exposed.

And then, as he waited beside the road with Al Graves, the scientist who except for himself had been most severely exposed-as they waited at the roadside for the car that was to take them to the hospital, he said quietly to his companion, "You'll come through all right. But I haven't the faintest chance myself." It was only too true. Nine days later he died in agony. Nineteen centuries ago the Son of the living God walked directly into sin's most concentrated radiation, allowed Himself to be touched by its curse, and let it take His life. The accumulated guilt of the ages released its deadly contamination over Calvary. And He who made the atom permitted Himself to be nailed to the tower at ground zero, allowed wicked men to trigger the cruel device we call Calvary.

But by that act He broke the chain reaction. He broke the power of sin.

Strangely true were the mocking words of those who saw Him die: "He saved others; himself he cannot save." Matthew 27:42. Never were truer words spoken. For to interrupt the chain reaction of sin, to stop its deadly fallout, He must give His own life. He could not save Himself and save others too. It is as if He spoke to every man, "You can come through all right. But I haven't the faintest chance Myself." Could it be that the God of the universe, in a final attempt to help our limited, finite minds to grasp something of the meaning of Calvary, has permitted our tampering with cosmic forces to give us a vocabulary that might better explain it? Has He given us cosmic words that we might better understand cosmic events-and a cosmic Plan? better understand sin?

Have you ever stopped to think how dangerous sin is? Sin-that mysterious intruder into the universe, that subtle rebellion against God! You cannot always see it, touch it, feel it. God Himself could not explain it-for neither men nor angels would have understood the vocabulary needed to describe it. He could only stand aside and let all the universe see its effects. Trace its history. It may seem harmless enough. But wherever its fallout has touched man, a disintegration, a devastating change, has taken place. It has so completely tainted our nature that even when we half recognize it and want to escape, humanity is helpless.

Call it what you will. Every man, woman, and child stands helpless before it. Helpless-were it not for the selfless act of the Son of the living God, who dared to touch death for every man! Who of us has not listened to a countdown? Visit the site of any nuclear release, and every participant and witness is required to stand by for the countdown to wait through those unearthly, suspense-filled moments when a man counts backward. Five - four - three - two - one - And then it happens! And man stands transfixed with fright at what his hands have done!

When the sacred pages of Scripture were written, the words countdown, ground zero, and fallout were still unborn. Yet through the centuries the greatest countdown of the ages was taking place. Notice the new meaning in these words of the Apostle Paul: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son ... to redeem." Galatians 4:4, 5.

God had a reason for sending His Son into the world at this particular hour. It was one of the darkest moments of history. The concentrated sin of the ages had settled upon Palestine and the surrounding nations. Sin had become a science, and vice a consecrated part of religion.

It was in such an hour that the Son of God made His unassuming entrance into this world-in a Bethlehem stable. We trace His lovely youth, like a flower in the slime of dissipation and vice for which Nazareth was noted. At the age of twelve He surprised the learned men of the Temple with His wisdom and perception. Then the eighteen silent years. And at the age of thirty He stepped out from the carpenter's home and boldly proclaimed that He was the Messiah, the Son of God.

It was that claim and the spotlessness of His character that stirred insane and jealous forces to plot His death. Yet repeatedly we read that "his hour was not yet come." Until that hour He was safe. Little did His enemies know that the countdown of the ages was in progress, that they were counting down according to a prophetic clock.

At last, after three years packed full of loving ministry, He said, "The hour is at hand." And wicked men set out to commit the foulest crime ever chargeable to the human race. No longer did a divine Hand hold them back from their sinister purpose. Watch the tragic sequence of it all as it begins in Gethsemane. And watch it closely, for Gethsemane was the battlefield of eternity. And the battle concerned you-and me! Gethsemane! Through the years the inspired portrayal found in that remarkable book *The Desire of Ages* has become so much a part of my thinking that I find it impossible to describe those scenes without using some of its phrases. The author pictures it with all the pathos of an eyewitness. Watch it unfold. And remember that this is not a drama, but a battle.

As Jesus and His disciples made their way out through the city gates, across the Brook Kedron, He became strangely silent. He had spent many nights in prayer, but never a night like this. As He entered the garden, the awful burden of the world's guilt began to settle down upon His soul. By actual experience He was beginning to taste death for every man. Leaving His disciples, He removed a few steps from them and fell on His face, as if crushed by some invisible weight. All hell pressed in upon Him as the titanic struggle raged in His soul. The enemy of God must succeed now-in the Savior's weakest hour-or be forever doomed.

The Father hid His face from the scene. Jesus must bear the guilt of fallen humanity alone. There must be a gulf between God and sin. And the terrible isolation was crushing out the life of the Son. Would He stand the test? Would He bridge the river of death for every man? Please do not overlook the possibility that He might have failed! The humanity of the Son of God trembled in that crisis hour. The fate of the human race hung in the balance. The awful moment had come! Would He wipe the bloody sweat from His brow and leave humanity to perish in its own iniquity? He could have done it!

Only a few hours before, Jesus had stood like a mighty cedar against the storm of opposition that attempted to overpower and confuse Him. But now He is like a reed beaten and bent by the anger of the storm. In His agony He clings to the cold ground, as if to prevent Himself from being drawn still farther from His God. The cypress and palm trees from their leafy branches drop heavy dew upon His stricken form, as if nature would weep with its Author, wrestling alone with the powers of darkness. But He heeds it not. From His pale lips comes the cry, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Yet even now He adds, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Three times He shrinks from the last, crowning sacrifice. But the history of the human race rises up before the world's Redeemer. He knows that if left to themselves, the transgressors of His law will perish.

Is there no way to bypass Calvary? No, there is no way. Sin has challenged God's law. And that law must stand, or the universe itself will fall. Sin cannot be isolated or ignored. There is no other way to deal with it except to let its deadly curse fall upon Himself. The decision made back in eternity He will not change! He will save man at any cost to Himself. With His bare hands He grapples with the merging hemispheres of sin and heroically separates them, breaking their power. Those hands will bear the marks of that encounter throughout eternity. But because of what He did that night, millions will live.

A mighty angel strengthens Him as He steps out of the garden into the last fury of the conflict. But the battle now is won-a battle that only the Son of God could fight and win. What matter now the scenes of that farce of a trial! The decision is made. He will save man at any cost. But men do not know-or care.

How little did men understand what was taking place! How little did they understand who was on trial that night! They thought they were trying Jesus before Pilate. But only a few short hours before, they themselves had stood on trial before this Man. And He had held to His decision to save them. Even Pilate seemed to sense the situation. Even his blunted conscience forced him to say, "I find no fault in him."

"No fault in him." 'Tempted-harassed-distressed-walking into the center of sin's deepest fallout-yet not contaminated. "No fault in him." Yet He was beaten and sent to be crucified. It borders on the incredible that men could have done what they did that day. It is difficult to see how the leaders and teachers among God's chosen people could become instruments in this greatest of human crimes.

As the fallout of sin became deeper and denser, strange people met outside those city walls. The teachers who hated Him were there. The priests who bought Him were there. The mob who cried, "Crucify him"-and the thieves who died with Him. And we see ourselves in the crowd. You and I meet at Calvary! Sin becomes very real when we see what it did to the Son of God. Imagine the scene if you can. The crowd stands in restless attention. The Savior is nailed to a roughhewn cross. It is thrust into place. And men think that ends the story! From the throng rises the cutting, sarcastic cry, "Save Yourself! Save Yourself-if You can!"

Could men in their blindness see only a dying man and suppose this to be the end? Jesus had prayed, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' Men did not know-though they could have known. They saw the black clouds about the cross and wondered what foul omen they might be. They did not know that Jesus had entered-for them-into the outer darkness of separation from God. They saw only a man and cried, "Save thyself!" But thank God for the record of one exception to this almost universal blindness. Above the rabble of those mocking voices one solitary man cried, "Save me!" No wonder the Savior turned, even in His dying agony, at the sound of those words! Here was one who seemed to understand.

You see, for centuries God's people had brought innocent lambs to the Temple and slain them as a demonstration of the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God who would come. Now He is here. The countdown of the ages had narrowed to the zero hour. But only the dying thief seemed to understand. He saw beyond the torture, the pain, the indignity of it all. He saw this dying Man coming again to earth, past the streaming constellations of the skies, to establish His kingdom. He saw not a martyr, but a sacrifice. And he said, "Save me!" That is the point. Was this a man-just a good man-the best man, it may be-dying as a passive victim in the hands of wicked men? Or was it incarnate God paying the price for a lost race?

Never forget it! If He was a mere man, we are describing only murder. If He was God, we are describing an offering. If He was only a man, we are witnessing a martyr. If He was God, we are witnessing a sacrifice! Sin with its deadly fallout spells death. Death is in it. Death is written on every nerve, tissue, and cell of our bodies. The whole human race is affected. And there is nothing any mortal can do about it. A sacrifice is needed. A martyr could not touch it. But "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." That is the solution! Sin had built up in intensity until it became a critical mass at Calvary. But the Son of God threw His own body across the fury of its chain reaction and broke its destructive power -to save you, and me! Thank God! And when I see it-see it as it is, a gift of God for one so unworthy as I-it breaks my proud, hard heart. It softens and subdues my restless nature. And when I hear Him say, "Father, forgive them," I know He means me! I know He means you!

6. Treasures in Clay

PARCHED, desolate hills! Distant, inaccessible caves! Forgotten retreats silently keeping their treasures in clay! And then-a Bedouin boy looking for a lost goat. A stone tossed idly through a hole in a cliff. The sound of cracking pottery. Tightly rolled scrolls, and fragments-fragments that, painstakingly put together, would shatter the doubts of a surprised world. Bedouin boys looking for goats! Little did these lads dream that they held in their hands actual copies of the Sacred Scriptures-copies a thousand years older than any Hebrew manuscripts yet found. Looking for goats. Yet in their hands they held one of the most sensational discoveries of the twentieth century-the Dead Sea Scrolls.

A surprised and grateful Christendom watched as overnight these earliest known manuscripts thrust themselves squarely into the spotlight of the world's rapt attention. Men must now stand by while God Himself, using a Bedouin boy and a divinely guided

stone, vindicated His Word. In this age of modern scientific discovery the claims of the Book we call the Bible demand that every man find a solid, satisfying answer to these vital questions: Where did the Bible come from? Has it been preserved from error through the centuries? Can we count on it-this Book that to many has been the puzzle of the ages?

All this we hope to learn from the fascinating story of how we got our Bible. Did you know that the Bible is actually a library of sixty-six books? And did you know that it took about fifteen hundred years to write it? That its sixty-six books were composed by nearly forty writers, the first of whom, of course, never lived to see the last? What a jumble of confused and conflicting ideas the Bible would be if forty impostors had taken it upon themselves to write it! Yet these forty men, without the opportunity to counsel together, have written in intricate harmony.

Suppose that a man from South America should send me a peculiarly shaped piece of white marble, and that different men, unacquainted with each other, from several widely separated countries should do likewise. And then suppose I should find that these strangely carved pieces of marble fit together into the perfect whole of a lovely statue. How would you explain it? "Oh," you say, "that is easy. One man planned the whole design and gave blueprints or patterns to sculptors in various lands."

And you would be exactly right. So it was with the Bible. Businessmen, kings, preachers, fishermen, soldiers, and statesmen were chosen by God, each to bring parts of a complete message to His people. All these parts are in flawless harmony-evidence of their divine origin. Written by forty men, did I say? Or shall we discover that the Bible has but one Author? Listen to 2 Peter 1:21: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

There you have it! The Holy Spirit of God, the Third Person of the Godhead, was the Voice that spoke. And these holy men, these prophets, became the channels for that Voice. "Yes," someone is saying, "that is what the Book claims. But how can I know that those words within the Book, the claims it makes for itself, are true?" May I answer your question by using a simple illustration? A teen-age boy is sent to the drugstore for some sulfur. In a little while he returns holding a package in his hand. Is this the sulfur we desired?

We immediately open the package and see that it is labeled "sulfur." It looks like sulfur. It smells like sulfur. It claims to be sulfur. This is the internal evidence that we have sulfur. But is it really sulfur? We turn to the boy who brought it. He reports that upon arrival at the drugstore he asked for sulfur. The pharmacist went to the shelves, took something out of a bottle, prepared a package, and the boy came straight home. This is the historical evidence that the little package contains sulfur. In other words, the story of how it came into our hands indicates that it must be sulfur. But is it really?

We now apply the final test. We ignite it, and immediately know that it is sulfur by its characteristic blue flame and suffocating odor. This is the experimental evidence. It proves to be genuine sulfur. Now as we face our task of identifying the Word of God, I think you will agree that the safest procedure-and a most rewarding one would be to follow these same three steps. In so doing, we shall find from the internal evidence-from what it says about itself-that it claims to be the Word of God. From the historical evidence-from the intriguing details of how our Bible has come down to us-we shall discover that it must be the Word of God. And finally, from the experimental evidence-what it actually does for men-we shall see that it proves to be the Word of God.

Do you see how logical our task becomes? Naturally we would begin with the claims from within the Book itself-the internal evidence. We have already read that "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy" Spirit. And 2 Timothy 3:16 claims that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God." There is no question about what its claims are. It claims, without qualification, to be the authoritative Word of the living God. And never forget it, that claim is either true or not true. It cannot be both.

Think it through. The Bible claims to be written by men inspired by the Holy Spirit. Either its writers were inspired, or they were the most consistent liars the world has ever produced. You see, it is impossible for the Bible to be merely a good book. If its claims are not true, they are lies. And a book of lies cannot be a good book. But now, if God did speak through "holy men" of old, how have these writings come down to us? How can we know that their accuracy has been preserved through the centuries? How can we know that the printed Bibles in our homes today contain the identical message that God spoke through the inspired prophets?

Quickly scanning our Old Testament, we find that it divides roughly into three sections. The first five books, written by Moses, were the only Scriptures Israel had for many years and were referred to as the law. Then there were the books that contained the inspired record of God's dealings with Israel-the Books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, etc. These were called the writings. Then there were the prophets-Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other stalwart men of God who stood fearlessly as His spokesmen. Several centuries before Christ, Ezra, the royal scribe, and his associates gathered together all the copies of the law and of the prophecies they could find. And shortly thereafter the books of the Old Testament were compiled and arranged much as we know them today.

At the time of Christ these were the Scriptures used. When Jesus quoted Scripture, it was Old Testament Scripture, for the New had not yet been written. It was after our Lord's departure that faithful disciples recorded the story of His life. We call these careful and inspired accounts the Gospels. Then a large portion of our New Testament is made up of letters written by Paul and other leaders of the early church to the companies of believers they had raised up. The Gospels, the letters, and the Book of Revelation, by common consent of the early church under the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit, became our New Testament. But now you ask the question that has troubled thousands before you. "Do we still have the actual manuscripts of Peter and Paul, of Matthew and Mark, of Jeremiah and Ezekiel? If not, how do we know that the Scriptures as we have them today are accurate? Is there not the possibility that error may have crept in?"

That straight question brings us back to the Bedouin discovery -a discovery that has fortified the faith of millions in the Book. Most famous of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and by far the most complete, has been the Isaiah scroll. In an almost perfect state of preservation, it is inscribed on seventeen sheets of leather sewn together into a length of almost twenty-three feet. And it contains the

entire text of the Book of Isaiah, from the first verse to the last. Other caves in the vicinity have yielded thousands of fragments belonging to hundreds of manuscripts. These have enabled scholars to account for practically every book in the Old Testament.

But why all the excitement? Why such unusual interest in these scrolls-particularly the Isaiah scroll? Simply this. It is clear beyond any reasonable doubt that the Isaiah scroll was written before the time of Christ. You see, before the discovery of this scroll nothing even approaching an original Old Testament manuscript was available to us. The best we could expect was only a copy of a copy of a copy-no one knew how many copies. And always there was that recurring question: What may have happened to the accuracy of the text through all the centuries of copying?

We had many prized manuscripts, both Greek and Hebrew, in our possession. For instance, there were treasured old Samaritan documents. There was the manuscript at St. Catherine's Monastery on the slope of Mount Sinai. There was the one, even more valuable, rescued from a wastebasket at St. Catherine's and now on display in the British Museum and many more. The oldest of the Greek (New Testament) manuscripts dated from the third century after Christ. But the oldest Hebrew (Old Testament) manuscript in our possession was a copy made six centuries later.

Therefore the Isaiah scroll brings us in one stroke a thousand years closer to the Bible writers than any Hebrew Old Testament manuscript so far known. And, most important, careful examination reveals that the text of this two-thousand-year-old manuscript is substantially identical with the Book of Isaiah as it reads in your Bible and mine! No, we do not have the original manuscripts of Isaiah or Jeremiah or Job or the apostles. But when by way of these breathtaking discoveries we are privileged to actually handle Hebrew copies from the time of our Lord or earlier, and then compare them with ours, we can know-we need not speculate-we can know that God has preserved His Word through the ages. In fact, one New Testament manuscript brings us within thirty years of the writer himself.

What does this mean to you? It means that if your faith has been shaken in the reliability of the Bible record, you can well afford to readjust your thinking in support of the Good Book again. The earth has yielded treasures in clay. And doubt retreats in embarrassment! Yes, the Bible claims to be the Word of God. And tightly rolled scrolls, resting through the centuries in their jars of clay, are an evidence that it must be. But-I ask it reverently-does it prove experimentally to be the Word of God?

Come with me to a tiny island set like a jewel in the South Pacific. Who doesn't remember the story of the mutiny on the Bounty? But did you know that this intriguing story has not ended yet? It is a fascinating tale that centers around the old and treasured Bible found in a battered sea chest taken from the Bounty. Captain Bligh had sailed the Bounty to Tahiti. And then he, with eighteen of his men, had been set adrift. The mutineers, with men and women whom they had persuaded to accompany them from Tahiti, landed on tiny Pitcairn Island, burned the ship, and were not discovered for many years.

The early days of Pitcairn were a story of drunken revelry and murder-a tale too horrible to describe. At last only one of the mutineers-John Adams was left. Surrounded by the children of the fugitives, himself the only link between those young people and a frightful future, John Adams felt a solemn responsibility. But what could he do? He turned to the only book on the island, aside from a hymnbook the Bible which had lain unmolested through the years at the bottom of the old sea chest. He read it. He read it to the children. He made it the center of their education. A church was built, and a school. As a result, every inhabitant of Pitcairn Island is a Christian-all because of the Book.

Today, as we near the close of the second century since the Bounty yielded its Bible to an island of fugitives, not one boat, but many giant vessels and luxury yachts stop to visit this little paradise in the Pacific. Travelers on the passing ships purchase their fruits, their souvenirs, from the islanders, who come out to meet them. They are loaded with flowers as the long boats leave again for Pitcairn. And floating across the waves can be heard the voices of the islanders as they sing their parting hymn:

"In the sweet by and by,
We shall meet on that beautiful shore."

Such is the transforming power of the Book of books. You, too, may know that power. You can know the experimental evidence that the Bible is all that it claims to be. You can know-in your heart of hearts-that it is the living God who speaks. As Columbus skirted the shores of the New World, he approached the mouth of the River Orinoco. It was suggested that they faced an island. But said the famed discoverer, "No such river flows from an island. That mighty torrent must drain the waters of a continent!"

Just so, the more you personally read the Book of God, reverently permitting it to speak to your mind and heart, the more you will know that it does not come from the empty hearts of impostors, but that it springs from the depths of eternal love and wisdom. Like the fugitives of Pitcairn, you will find it penetrating, healing truth-truth that unshackles and releases the chains of sin and restlessness in the lives of men. No wonder Jesus said, "The truth shall make you free!"

Before another day begins-another day with its rush and tension and care-guard well a few quiet moments. Let the Word of God speak to your soul, let its wisdom refresh your mind, and let its message win. For "it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

7. Dead men Do Tell Tales

DEAD MEN do tell tales! From their dusty beds is heard a story more exciting than fiction, as civilizations long dead do speak with thunder tones to this generation. In our day there leaps a chorus from the tombs of the distant past-voices that force men to revise many once-cherished opinions about the Bible.

Come with me, then, on an intriguing journey into the past that will strengthen any man's faith. We shall stop first on the coast of Lebanon, where rugged fishermen stoically, drawing the needle, mending their nets on the site of ancient Tyre, give to the world a dramatic vindication of the Book.

Strange, isn't it, that skeptics did not reckon with the words of an ancient prophet, and with rocks that tell their tales. Listen to these words of Ezekiel. "And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers. I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock." "They shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water." Ezekiel 26:4,12.

There in trouble-torn Lebanon is the scene of a drama of fulfilling prophecy that has extended across the centuries.

It was not long after this prediction was written that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, destroyed old Tyre. But there was nothing unusual about his destruction of the city. It did not fulfill the details that Ezekiel had given. And shortly thereafter a new city of Tyre was built on an island near the old site.

Did this mean that the prophecy had failed? Watch what happened 250 years later. It was then that Alexander the Great came with his armies, preparing to take new Tyre. In order to get his invading army out to the island city, he tore down the timber, lifted the stones, and literally scraped the dust from the site of old Tyre so that he might build a causeway out to the island.

Remember Ezekiel's words? I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock." "They shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water." And that is exactly what happened.

Through the centuries sand, silt, and gravel have washed in upon Alexander's causeway until today the ancient island appears to be a jutting extension of the mainland. Thousands of refugees have congregated there. Yet old Tyre is destroyed. The site is scraped like the top of a rock. Its Baal worship has been reduced to no more than a memory. Tyre poses no threat to God's people. It gives no comfort to atheists. And today the words of the prophet stand fulfilled: "Thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more." Ezekiel 26:14.

Perhaps you can begin to understand my interest in these ancient sites and in the science of archaeology. To me it has always been a fascinating study, and the deeper I go into it, the more exciting it becomes!

Could it be that Jesus looked down to our day and thought of these careful, persevering diggers for facts as He said, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out?

You see, for a century now scholars from many nations have been digging in those Eastern lands that cradled civilization. They have been finding things exactly as the Bible describes them, and exactly where the Bible says they are.

The name of Abraham, for instance, no longer suggests the ignorant nomad he once was assumed to be, but rather the wealthy, intelligent patriarch who came out of the sophisticated Ur of the Chaldees. In the library unearthed in the city of Ur, one of the world's oldest metropolises, are histories, dictionaries, law books, medical books; books on mathematics and astronomy; business contracts and mortgages. This was the civilization in which Abraham lived.

From the world of the New Testament, scholars have uncovered the palatial edifices of King Herod on the western shore of the Dead Sea. And perhaps most meaningful of all, in the heart of old Jerusalem has been found the very pavement that Jesus stood before Pilate and was condemned. These are only a few of the discoveries that make it necessary for some in our modern day to revise their views about the Bible, for many events that once passed for pious tales are now known to be historical.

The story began in 1798, when Napoleon started his ill-fated Egyptian campaign. Trooping along with his soldiers were 120 artists and scholars commissioned to explore and describe the ancient ruins of Egypt. From Alexandria to the First Cataract, a distance of more than six hundred miles, a vast museum spread out before the French. It was while standing beneath the pyramids that the little general uttered those memorable words, "Forty centuries look down upon you."

Yes, strange hieroglyphics upon temple walls and monuments looked down upon Napoleon's soldiers. Yet not a person in Egypt or in all the world could read them!

But in the following year, as one of the soldiers was digging a trench in the delta of the Nile he came upon a strange stone. The finding of this slab of black, basalt-we call it the Rosetta stone-can be considered the first great discovery of modern archaeology. What it said is of little importance. The important thing is that it was written in three different scripts - Egyptian hieroglyphic, Egyptian cursive, and Greek.

Since Greek was easily understood, patient linguists working over a twenty-year period were at last successful in deciphering the other two inscriptions.

This ability to read the Egyptian language as it was written in the days of the ancient Pharaohs unlocked vast treasures of a forgotten civilization. The door to the past was now ajar. And brilliant beams from the past began to shed their light upon once doubted Bible narratives.

Come with me now to Babylon. I do not believe there are more significant revelations from the field of antiquity than come from its ruins. It was here that Belshazzar's feast was held and the strange writing seen on the wall.

Despite the Bible record, critics some decades ago affirmed that Belshazzar was only a fictitious character who never reigned over Babylon. Yet today inscriptions on brick and tile concur with the Bible story-that Nebuchadnezzar was a religious man, and that

Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus, reigned as prince regent at the time of the downfall of the empire. In fact, anyone who visits the British Museum may inspect the famous Belshazzar Cylinder that gives his name and describes his place in history.

Isn't it significant that in Daniel's important book-where the history of Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar is recorded -we read, "But thou O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased"? Daniel 12:4. Knowledge would be increased-not only knowledge of science and invention, but knowledge of the Word of God. Daniel's book would be unsealed in the time of the end. And now archaeology takes its place among modern sciences and helps to unseal the book, to unlock the Scriptures, as men long dead allow us to piece together the fascinating story that vindicates the sacred pages.

Perhaps the most unusual example of such vindication surrounds the story of the ancient Hittites. The problem of the Hittites might well be called the riddle of the ages. For, you see, forty-eight times the Bible mentions the Hittite race-its dealings with Abraham, with Solomon, with David, with Egypt. These references picture the Hittites as one of the most powerful of ancient empires. Yet, aside from the Bible, in all the records of antiquity there was, not a trace of them -not a word.

Scholarly critics reasoned that it would be impossible for such an empire to disappear from history without leaving a single trace behind. The lack of evidence was interpreted as evidence that the Hittites never existed, and the Bible record was pushed aside. Yet all the while stately columns, half-buried statues, massive ruins bearing strange inscriptions that no one could read, looked down in silence upon their unbelief.

Then came the Rosetta stone. The Egyptian inscriptions were deciphered. The vast museum of monuments and pillars all along the Nile, closed through the centuries, now opened its doors. And mighty Karnak began to reveal its story. Here, on these massive pillars and palace walls, Ramses II described again and again his political conflict with the mighty empire of the Hittites to the north.

Then minds turned to mysterious ruins in central Turkey first noticed in 1834. By 1880 at least one brave hero of archaeology advanced the reckless theory that these ruins were once the capital of the Hittite empire. In 1910 we caught our first faint glimpse of its history. But it was not until 1946 that there was hope of reading the Hittite hieroglyphic inscriptions. Today technical volumes and popularly written best sellers tell the story of the Hittites, a mighty empire stretching from the Black Sea to Damascus. This riddle of the ages has been solved, and the Book once more vindicated!

Never before have we been able to turn so confidently to evidence outside the Book to support the claim that it makes for itself. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God 2 Timothy 3:16.

Said the poet:

"Last eve I paused beside the, blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
Then looking in. I saw upon the floor,
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

How many anvils have you had, said I,
To wear and batter all these hammers so?
Just one, said he, and then with twinkling eye,
The anvil wears the hammers Out, You know.

And so, I thought, the Anvil of God's Word
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon,
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The Anvil is unharmed, the hammers gone."

John Clifford.

And now for a moment let me take you again to one of the most unlovely spots in all the world-but one that has captured the imagination of people everywhere and popularized the science of archaeology.

Since the day in 1947 when that Bedouin shepherd looking for a lost goat stumbled upon the first of the treasures now known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, the northwest coast of the Dead Sea has been

Thousands of Bedouins have fairly swarmed over the area, a beehive of activity. Combing every conceivable crevice, rock formation, and hillside cave that might possibly yield more of the precious manuscripts.

In this area, not far from where the famous Isaiah scroll was found, archaeologists have now discovered the entire community of the Essenes-a religious sect of Christ's day who lived in seclusion and spent their lives in transcribing the Scriptures. Nearly every Phase of the life of these remarkable people has been pieced together as scholars and Bedouin diggers have unearthed this self-sufficient community-the huge kitchen, the water supply, the baptistery, the workshops-even a copper urn containing five hundred coins that helped to date the settlement near the time of Christ.

It was my privilege to arrive in Jordan just as its director of antiquities, Dr. Dajani, and the renowned scholar Pierre de Veaux were about to open a new dig in this famous community. At their invitation our cameras were the first to record the opening of this new section of the community. I talked with these men on the spot and heard them explain the significance of this nerve center of the Essenes. Standing atop an excavated tower, they pointed out the location of the scriptorium, the very room where the copying of the Scriptures was done, and where the desks and inkwells they used were found-with ink still in them! I shall never forget Dr. de Veaux's enthusiasm as he described how the ink in the inkwells had been analyzed and compared with that used on the scrolls and found to be identical!

Yes, breathtaking discoveries are vindicating the Book. And as a result of this accumulated evidence, hammering against the minds of thousands of the most discriminating thinkers is the growing conviction, "The Bible is right after all!"

It is nothing less than tragedy to spend one's life in doubting, questioning, the Word of God, only to find out at the end of the way that it is right after all. You could have depended on it all along. You could have had it to stand on when every other prop was swept away. It is tragedy to find out so late. But it is worse never to find out at all!

It makes a difference what you believe about the Bible. It is more than paper, ink, and leather-more than the skilled craftsman's design. It is more than an authentic history of peoples long dead. If the Bible were no more than that, it would not matter what men did with it.

But the heart of the Book, the thing that makes it Eve, is the account of what happened on a hill outside Jerusalem some nineteen hundred years ago. And it makes a difference whether or not we accept what the Book says about that.

Either the Son of the living God died on that cross, or He did not. He was who He said He was-or He was not. It is one or the other. It cannot be both. You see, it makes a difference whether Calvary is fact or legend.

You may remember the narrative of the unbeliever who rescued an orphan boy from a burning building. Having lost his own wife and child, he desired to adopt the lad. Christian neighbors were skeptical about the wisdom of placing the boy in an infidel home. But the applicant won his case when he held up his hand, badly burned in the rescue of the lad, and said, "I have only one argument. It is this."

He proved to be a good father, however, and little Bobby never tired of hearing how daddy had saved him from the fire. He liked best to hear about the scarred hand.

One day with his new father he visited a display of art masterpieces. One painting interested him especially the one of Jesus reproving Thomas for his unbelief, and holding out His scarred hand. "Tell me the story of that picture, Daddy." "No, not that one." "Why not?" "Because I don't believe it." "But you tell me the story of Jack the Giant Killer, and you don't believe that." So he told him the story, and Bobby said "It's like you and me, Daddy." It wasn't nice of Thomas not to believe after the good Man had died for him. What if they had told me how you saved me from the fire and I had said I didn't believe you did it?"

The father could not escape the sound reasoning of a little child. He had used his own scarred hand to win a small boy's heart! Could he continue to resist the scarred hand of the Man who had died for him and say He didn't to it?

The Savior said to Thomas "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side. And be not faithless, but believing." John 20:27. And He added, "Because thou has seen me, thou has believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Would not the Savior commend those today who have built their faith on His Word alone? Yet there are those who have sincerely doubted. For these He has allowed a flood of evidence to sweep into this generation and carry away the doubts of every man who is willing to see and believe.

Towering above all other evidence is the evidence of the cross. Deeper than argument, stronger than death, it says to every man, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." And man responds-as did a skeptic who once heard those words "O God, what a dream! If only He could!"

He can! It is not a dream! The cross is founded upon a Gibraltar of evidence. Yet Calvary is deeper and stronger than all man's reasoning. It is as deep and as strong as your need! "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands."

What else can a man do but say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!"

8. Footsteps in the Sky

FOOTSTEPS in the sky! Footsteps echoing across the corridors of space-the footsteps of a Friend! They are footsteps that were, heard more than a century ago, as whispers in the distance. Footsteps with heavier tread as the whispers grew louder and more persistent. But today they are footsteps that approach with thunder tones.

For a moment watch with me a moving drama from the early days of World War II. It happened in the Philippines. General Douglas MacArthur had decided that in order to successfully wrest these great islands from the hand of a then ruthless enemy, he must delay direct action. Under cover of darkness, and surrounded with but a few close aides, he left with the promise, "I will return."

Not only an island, but the entire free world's prestige and honor were at stake. Millions hung on those words, "I will return."

Reminiscent, isn't it, of another drama of deliverance even more vitally affecting you and me. Jesus, the Son of God, nineteen hundred years ago was preparing to leave this planet. He had laid careful plans to wrest this world-only a tiny island in the universe-from the hands of the enemy. But He must delay direct action. Quietly, and surrounded by a few friends, He had made that familiar promise, "I will return." "I will come again!"

For centuries the Christian church has taught that Jesus would return to this world a second time, and that His coming would bring an end to our world as we know it-to usher in a better one. Sober thinking these days takes into account such a possibility. Could it be that the hope of ages will soon be fulfilled?

Said Jesus, "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also." John 14:1-3.

Take that promise into your life, just as it reads. Believe it in simple, childlike faith. And it will give you a confidence that nothing can shake.

But you ask, "If our Lord is actually coming back, then why have we heard so little about it? For if He is, nothing else matters!"

And you are right. But the disturbing fact is that it is in our own Bibles-and has been there all the time. And these words of the Savior are not alone in Scripture. Not a dozen, not fifty, not a hundred, but 260 predictions about the second coming of Christ appear in the New Testament alone! The evidence is simply overwhelming.

Yes, the fact that He is coming, how He will come, the signs preceding His coming, and more important still, the necessary preparation for His coming, are all written down for us by Inspiration. No wonder we need to study our Bibles for ourselves!

Almost back to Eden the prophets described His coming. "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints." Jude 1:14.

Listen to Job: "For I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." Job 19:25. And to David: "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence." Psalm 50:3.

Jesus Himself said, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Matthew 24:30.

And then the Revelation gives crowning glory to the Scripture teaching, as in almost the last words of the last chapter its writer spotlights the promise of the Savior, "Surely I come quickly."

Not far from Tokyo, Fujiyama-or Fuji, as it is affectionately called-rears its snowcapped head more than twelve thousand feet above the horizon, dominating the landscape for many miles around. A Japanese artist does not consider his painting complete unless somewhere he has painted his beloved Fuji. He may have it in the distant background. He may paint it prominently in the foreground in gorgeous color. He may clothe it in the shadows of twilight or in the gray hues of the storm, but always Fuji.

Just so with the Bible and the return of Jesus to this earth. Sometimes the prophets paint the second coming in the somber tones of the great day of the Lord, but more often in the bright colors of hope and gladness to come. But whether in the shadows or in the light, always the second coming of Jesus Christ.

"I will return," said MacArthur. "I will return," said Jesus nineteen hundred years before him. And then, that day on Olivet, watch the moving scene: "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1: 10, 11.

This same Jesus with whom they had lived side by side, this same Jesus who had endeared Himself to them by unforgettable acts of ministry, was to return. His every act, His every word, had brought these men to love Him as a Person. And now this same Jesus would come again-as a Person. Nothing less could calm their fears. Nothing less could give them hope.

Men will actually see Him come. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him." Revelation 1:7. Eyes of love, eyes of hate, eyes of scoffing, eyes of anticipation, eyes of weeping, eyes of gladness-every eye will see Him come. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:27.

Like a blaze of glory stretched from sky to sky, our Savior will return to earth past constellations of unnumbered worlds. He will come not as a Babe in Bethlehem, not as One despised and rejected of men, not condemned to die on a cross, but as King of kings and Lord of lords, whose right it is to reign.

He comes again, Creator of the speeding spheres. The God of nature returns. Little wonder that the very elements will first herald and then accompany His triumphant descent!

You remember that at the time of Christ's death the sun refused to shine on the scene. The earth quaked. All nature rebelled at what was done to its Creator. Would you not, then, expect that the God of the atom, the Christ who stilled the storm and quieted the waves with a word, would herald His return, the climax of human history, by manifestations in nature? Listen to this: "I will show wonders in the heavens... before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come." Joel 2:30, 31. And Jesus Himself said, "There shall he sign in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." Luke 21:25.

How appropriate! No generation in history is better able to comprehend these two scriptures than ours, for no generation has so turned its attention upon the heavens.

The science of astronomy has fascinated men for centuries. When our teen-age children were but babies, men were still content to look through the eyepieces of our giant telescopes and wonder at what they saw. But today we are no longer content to look. Scientists are attempting to conquer the laws of gravitation so that we may personally explore outer space. It is to this generation-this space-minded generation-that God says, "I will show wonders in the heavens." Wonders in the heavens! Footsteps in the sky!

It was near the close of the eighteenth century. A new nation was arising, bound for a surprising destiny. These were the days of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin.

May 19, 1780, dawned like any other day in New England. Then the lightning flashed and the thunder rolled. By midmorning the clouds had become thinner, and the heavens assumed a brassy appearance. A few minutes later a heavy blanket of unearthly darkness covered the land. Men returned from labor. Schools were dismissed. Cows came home from pasture. Thoroughly alarmed, leaders and people alike sought an explanation. This was not an eclipse!

The strange darkness of the night that followed was no less terrifying than that of the day. It is said that a piece of white paper held before the eyes could not be seen, so intense was the gloom. After midnight the unnatural darkness disappeared, but the moon, though now visible, was veiled in a strange hue.

Footsteps in the sky! Then fifty-three years later another footstep was heard. Days and nights had been coming and going for centuries. The sun and the moon and the earth had been following their appointed course. Only occasionally had shooting stars been seen. Then suddenly one night the stars took on a special meaning to mankind. A display of celestial fireworks took place in the heavens, with a magnificence never before seen, and extending over all North America. Said an eyewitness, "Never did rain fall much thicker than the meteors fell toward the earth." Here is a footstep of the coming King that borders on our generation. For who of you has not heard of some grandfather or great-grandfather who witnessed the falling of the stars on November 13, 1833?

In these celestial displays, this celestial skywriting, we find the opening of the time of the end and the ushering in of rapidly fulfilling prophecies of Christ's second coming. How can I make a statement like this? Listen to Revelation 6:12, 13: "And I beheld and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth."

And do you remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:29, 30? "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven: ... and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven."

Yes, wonders in the heavens-as a magnificent prelude to His return, a convincing demonstration that it is near. Footsteps in the sky! Some reverent astronomers have concluded that when our Lord returns, the vast corridor of Orion might be the star-lined procession way through which He will pass. Could this be true?

The Great Nebula in Orion, to the naked eye, appears as only a single hazy star. But the one-hundred-inch and the two-hundred-inch telescopes reveal this mystery of the heavens to be a tremendous corridor approximately nineteen trillion miles across. Said the astronomer Larkin, "These negatives reveal the opening and interior of a cavern so stupendous that our entire solar system ... would be lost therein."

And Garrett P. Serviss adds, "Is there not some vast mystery concealed in that part of the heavens? To me at least it seems so; for I can never shake off the impression that the creative power which made the universe lavished its richest gifts upon the locality in and surrounding Orion."

And what could Lord Tennyson have meant when, referring to Orion, he said, I never gazed upon it but I dreamt of some vast charm concluded in that star to make fame nothing?"

One says "Some vast mystery." Another says, "Some vast charm ... to make fame nothing." What giant lodestone seems to be pulling minds to that part of the heavens? Could this canyon in the skies possibly be the corridor through which our Savior will return?

But whatever His pathway, whatever vaulted highway of the sky our returning Lord might choose, the Apostle Paul describes His descent in these positive, thrilling words: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17.

It is in your own Bible. And the prophecies indicate with thunder tones that this generation-that these eyes-will actually see the fulfillment of these words.

A dark picture ahead? Atomic night? No, a glorious dawn, when the Prince of heaven, the King of kings, your Savior and mine, will return according to His promise to bring deliverance. Said Daniel, "And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Daniel 12:1. Add to this the words of our Savior, "Then look up, for your redemption draws nigh." Luke 21:28. At that time-look up! Deliverance will come-from the skies!

May I take you back to that glad day at the close of the second world conflict when two thousand prisoners of war were delivered from enemy hands. Two of the prisoners had built a little radio and secretly listened to the news. One day they heard a familiar voice. "This is General MacArthur speaking. I have returned!"

What marvelous news! The months had dragged wearily into two and a half long years since the day the general left behind him the promise to return. Now he was returning amid a thunder of guns, with an armada of ships and an air force the like of which had never before been seen in the Pacific.

In the meantime, the news filtered through the camp that the enemy, sensing the hopelessness of its own situation, and possibly in the spirit of reprisal, had actually decreed the death of the prisoners. Among the prisoners was one who had been asked to serve as a camp official. One evening the guard informed him that at seven o'clock the next morning he was to call the prisoners together. Could this be the time when they would hear the long-feared death sentence?

Terrible were those hours as he watched the hands of the clock moving toward that fateful moment. Then he went out with the bell ringer to call the camp. The steel bar was raised, ready to strike the gong. Would this be the camp's death call?

But suddenly they both looked up. Each saw the same thing. In unison they exclaimed, "Look! Planes!" But were they friendly or enemy planes? The bell ringer, his hand still in the air, watched in breathless anticipation. Nearer and nearer they came. No, they were not enemy Planes. As they roared overhead, paratroopers leaped out into the prison yards. Deliverance had come at last!

Make no mistake about it. The forces of evil are intent on destroying the human race. The enemy of God and man has his hand raised, ready to strike the death gong. The great controversy between Christ and Satan, between good and evil, between right and wrong, is on the verge of its last titanic struggle. But it is written, "At that time thy people shall be delivered." At that time – "look up for your redemption draws nigh."

"Down the minister aisles of splendor, from betwixt the cherubim,
Through the wondering throng, with motion strong and fleet,
Sounds His victor tread approaching, with a music far and dim-
The music of the coming of His feet.

"Sandaled not with sheen of silver, girded not with woven gold,
Weighted not with shimmering gems and odors sweet,
But white-winged and shod with glory in the Tabor light of old-
The glory of the coming of His feet.

"He is coming, O my friend, with His everlasting peace,
With His blessedness immortal and complete;
He is coming, O my friend, and His coming brings release-
I listen for the coming of His feet."

-Lyman W. Allen.

Footsteps in the sky! Deliverance at last! The Savior face to face! Eternal life with Him!

Just think of taking hold of a hand and finding it God's hand! Just think of feeling invigorated and finding it immortality! Just think of waking up and finding it home!

9. The Hinge of Time

I WATCHED in England with the coronation crowds. All London was a spectacle of fantastic preparation, for royal splendor defies description. As early as twenty-four hours before the dawn of Coronation Day, eager thousands began their struggle for a vantage point along the streets where the procession was to pass. Through the long night they waited patiently. What mattered the cold, or the hardness of the sidewalks, or the light rain that fell? Were they not to see their queen?

Then as the morning came, those early watchers were joined by multitudes of others banked tier upon tier. Big Ben ticked above them as they watched. Occasionally their patriotic chatter was interrupted by the whisper, "She's coming!" At this every eye strained eagerly. Again and again the whisper rippled along the sidewalks, "She's coming!" But always there was disappointment.

Big Ben had struck high noon before the coronation was completed at Westminster Abbey. Finally in the distance the trumpets were heard, and the waiting throngs-moved with justifiable pride, their eyes filled with tears of joy-passed the cry from mouth to mouth, "The queen is coming! The queen is coming!" I shall never forget how that vast mass of humanity rocked with enthusiasm as at last their newly crowned sovereign appeared. Elizabeth II was queen!

Down along the centuries has echoed the promise of the Savior, "I will come again!" Hardly had He disappeared into the skies when His followers began to look for His return. Again and again a lone voice has whispered, "He is coming!" But always there has been disappointment. God's clock has not yet struck the hour.

The feeling of thousands might be expressed in these words: "I can understand the disappointment of those who waited for Elizabeth II to appear. For that is exactly the way I have felt about the second coming of Christ. Father and mother expected Christ's return, and they were disappointed. My grandparents before them were taught the second coming, but never saw that day. How can I know that I too will not be disappointed?"

Can men know when the hour will strike?

It was in the early days of preparation for the hydrogen bomb that men realized their need of larger and better computers. A computer that could remember only twenty-seven facts was hardly capable of the fantastic calculations that must now be made to determine the probable behavior of millions of atomic particles within the new bomb.

Then came Von Neumann with his MANIAC-Mathematical Analyzer, Numerical Integrator and Computer. MANIAC could handle 40,000 bits of information. At the console of such a computer, men who wanted to know the chances of war could divide the resources of a country into the panic and despair of its population-or multiply those resources by the country's inventive capacity and

its obsession with victory-and come up with an intelligent answer. It was said that “for the MANIAC even the end of the world was only one more question to be answered by calculation.”

But is the hour of Christ’s coming and the end of the world a secret that will yield to the computations of men? Can men feed world conditions into an electronic brain, along with the thinking of great men, and come up with the answer?

The disciples of Jesus were first with the question, “When shall these things be?” Jesus answered, “Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” Matthew 24:36. Yet He qualified His answer with these words: “Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh: so likewise you, when you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.”

It has never been God’s plan to take men by surprise. He said through the prophet Amos, “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he reveals his secret unto his servants the prophets.” Amos 3:7. The great catastrophe of Noah’s day was preceded by the preaching of Noah. The ministry of Jesus on this earth was preceded by the work of John the Baptist. Will no prophet warn men that the hour of Christ’s coming is upon us?

The difficulty is not that Scripture is silent on the subject of when Christ will return. For it is not. The difficulty is that men are unwilling to accept what the Scriptures say about the future.

A certain prophecy was once explained to Kaiser Wilhelm in the days when he was at the height of his power. As he began to get the drift of it, as he began to see what its fulfillment would mean to him personally, he said, I can’t accept it! It doesn’t fit in with my plans!”

Nor did it fit into the plans of the ancient king to whom it was first spoken. Watch the intriguing drama as it unfolds!

Absolute monarch of his golden day, the king lies in troubled sleep. As he tosses and turns on his royal couch, shadows of anxiety steal across his face. The cares of world dominion have weighed heavily upon his mind. He has looked questioningly into the future. Would his kingdom pass into ruins as had those before him?

Now God takes note of what this man has been thinking and gives him a strange dream. And then He allows him to forget it. Morning comes, and the king’s desperation to recall the dream brings confusion to the court. His counselors, even under threat of death, are unable to suggest what might have been the subject of his dream. But out of the confusion there arises a man of God—a captive from a conquered land.

The king-Nebuchadnezzar. The time-six hundred years before Christ. The hero of the hour—the prophet-statesman Daniel. Listen as in unmistakably clear language Daniel reveals first the dream and then its meaning:

“Thou, O king, saw, and behold a great image.” Daniel 2:31. Eagerly the king watches the noble face of the young prophet as he speaks. “This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.”

Absolutely spellbound, Nebuchadnezzar, proud monarch of the mighty Babylonian empire, looks at the youthful Daniel in amazement. Here an unassuming servant of God is reporting with uncanny accuracy the dream that only a few hours ago had flooded his mind.

“Thou saw till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.... And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.”

The king relived the startling scene. He saw again the stately image with its head of glittering gold, its breast and arms of polished silver. He saw again the body and thighs of burnished brass, the legs of solid iron, and strangest of all, the mixture of iron and clay of which the feet were formed.

But why was the gold replaced by silver, and the silver by brass? What was the meaning of the great stone that came thundering upon the feet of the image to grind it to powder? What was this rock that would become a great mountain and fill the whole earth? Would Daniel tell him? Leaning to the edge of his throne, the monarch breathlessly awaited Daniel’s next word. And how it pleased the king as Daniel said simply, “Thou art this head of gold.”

Here was flattering news. He-Nebuchadnezzar—the head of gold! After all, were not historians already calling Babylon the golden kingdom? Were not his hanging gardens destined to become one of the wonders of the ancient world? Would not future generations read his proud claim written in stone, “For the astonishment of men I have built this house. May it last forever”?

“Thou art this head of gold.” Any clever politician would have stopped there. But Daniel continued with the interpretation exactly as God had revealed it to him. “And after thee shall arise another kingdom.”

Babylon was not to last forever. Was Babylon, then, only the first of a series of kingdoms that would succeed upon the ruins of one another? Could God be tracing the rise and fall of nations to the end of time? Was He answering only Nebuchadnezzar’s questions about the future? Or was He answering yours and mine? We shall see as we read on.

“After thee shall arise another kingdom.” These bold words were enough to interrupt anyone’s thoughts of grandeur. Here was anything but a happy revelation. More perplexing still, the proud king was to be succeeded by an inferior power. This did not fit into his plans. His kingdom must not be succeeded by another. No wonder that some time after this, in defiance of the God of heaven, he made a great image, all of gold, and set it up in the plain of Dura.

But the gold was replaced by the silver—and in Daniel’s lifetime, at that! You remember Belshazzar’s feast, when in a drunken revelry the kingdom was overthrown, conquered by Cyrus the Persian.

The dual monarchy of the Medes and the Persians, represented by the two silver arms, ruled for about two hundred years. Today it, too, lies in ruins. The prophecy had said, “And another third kingdom of brass. . . shall bear rule over all the earth.”

Climaxing his conquests in the famous battle of Arbela, 331 years before Christ, the young and ambitious Alexander had swept to dizzy heights of victory in five short years. At the youthful age of twenty five he was master of all he surveyed. Seven years later he was dead! So swiftly does earthly glory fade. The brass kingdom toppled.

"And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron," Daniel had continued in verse 40. That fourth kingdom was Rome-the iron monarchy of history. It was in the days of Rome that Christ lived and died. Roman soldiers officiated at the crucifixion. A Roman seal closed His tomb.

Four world empires! And would you not naturally expect that if there were four, there might also be a fifth, arising upon the ruins of the fourth?

But no! The divine forecast says in verse 41, "And whereas thou saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided." Something new here. A change was to take place, a division to set in. And did it happen?

Yes, during the fourth and fifth centuries several distinct nations came into being within the boundaries of Western Rome. Rome, the mighty empire of the Caesars, disintegrated before the onslaughts of barbarians, and in her place we see the well-known nations of Germany, France, Switzerland, Portugal, England, Spain, and Italy.

I ask you, Could man in his own wisdom predict the future with such accuracy? No! Fulfilled Bible prophecy stamps the Word of God as divine. But now listen to verse 43: "And whereas thou saw iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: 'but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.'" What do you think of that! Europe will not stick together!

Just as the prophecy predicted long ago, men have repeatedly tried to unite the segments of ancient Rome into one mighty empire again. They have attempted to reestablish the dictatorship of the Caesars. But God says in seven crisp words of prophecy, "They shall not cleave one to another."

These are the words-the seven words-that form a barrier to every dictator who dreams of world conquest. No plan to rule the world will ever succeed for long. For the God who knows the end from the beginning says that the broken pieces of Rome will not cleave together. They will not stick!

We begin to see the reason for history's uncanny repetition. Nebuchadnezzar had no trouble ruling the world. Nor did Cyrus and Darius, or Alexander, or the Caesars. But then all was changed. Since the days of the Roman Empire, history, like a broken record, tells the story of every would-be dictator in one persistent word: "Defeat-defeat-defeat!"

That one word tells the story of Charlemagne, Louis XIV, Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm, Hitler, and every dreaming dictator who yet may follow. And back of it all is a power-packed prophecy.

Napoleon had seemed the master man of destiny. "Only five feet, two and a half inches tall, thin-faced, sallow-complexioned, and round-shouldered, he developed one of the most rapid, clear thinking, tireless brains ever to function in a human cranium." In 1799 he seized France and set out to unite the remaining segments of the old empire in Europe. But you remember how the prophecy was magnificently fulfilled through the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo, and Napoleon's idea of world empire was finished.

The Kaiser set out with the same idea in 1914, and I think we all know the end of that story. But even while the news of fresh disaster came in from every front, a corporal in action on the crumbling German lines was taken to a hospital. There seemed to be nothing seriously wrong with him, but he looked so completely prostrated that he was assigned to a cot. Patriots were roaming the hospital wards asking for signatures as the surrender was being signed. This man defiantly turned his face to the wall and refused to listen to the news of the new republic. It did not fit into his plans.

Two days later Adolf Hitler got off that bed and left the hospital with a feverish desire to marshal the world under his banner. And that story, too, has been written on the world's nerves with the blood, the sweat, and the tears of millions of men and women the globe around.

Many powerful peace agencies have attempted to bring about a United States of Europe. But no man, no group of men, no nation, no combination of powers, can ever long succeed, for it is written, "They shall not cleave one to another."

And now the climax of it all, the destiny of the nations-your destiny and mine-is found in the words of Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed."

Not in the days of Baby on, not in the days of Persia, not in the days of Greece, not in the days of Rome, but down in the days of these kings, in our time, God will set up His kingdom. And Revelation 11:15 adds impact to the words of Daniel: 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.'

Wonderful news! I bring you no sensationalism, no wild or fanciful predictions. Rather, I bring you the sure and certain message from God that the next great event on the stage of human history is destined to be the second coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom earth's crown belongs.

His coming kingdom is the stone that would strike the image on the feet-not in the days of the head of gold, or the silver, or the brass, but in the days of the feet of iron and clay-and become a great mountain and fill the whole earth.

There need be no confusion here. Just as surely as there was a Babylon, a Medo-Persia, a Greece, a Rome; just as surely as there came a breakup of these mighty empires into the nations of Europe as we see them today; just as surely as these nations have attempted to unite, and failed-just so surely will the next great event be the second coming of Jesus Christ, your Lord and mine, as King of kings, and Lord of lords!

And there need be no fear. Men may talk of a switchboard of annihilation, triggered by some fumbling finger. But the God of heaven places barriers before nations, dictators, and men. To all He says, "Hitherto shall thou come, but no further."

Through these perplexing days you may have the settled assurance that the Hand that made the atom is controlling the hands that discovered its secret. God will permit men to go only so far, for the kingdoms of this world are not to be totally destroyed by man's ingenious devices. According to the Word of God, they are finally to surrender, not to each other, but to the scepter of Christ Jesus Himself.

If this were a political book, if these were ordinary times, you might appreciate what you have just read and merely remark, "Well, that's interesting. It has added to my store of information." And all would be well. However, I sincerely believe that we are brought face to face with the most important decision a man or woman can make -that of placing ourselves on God's side.

The great coronation is about to take place. The King is coming! If it does not fit into your plans, then change your plans! God will help you.

The King is coming! No thoughtful man or woman interested in his own eternal welfare dare let this information go unnoticed. Some may not like it, may not care to adjust to it. But none dare ignore it. There is not time to ignore it! You may recall the visit of Queen Elizabeth to Lord Leicester's proud castle in the Midlands of the British Isles. Rippling through the ranks of her eager, waiting subjects was the whisper, "The queen is coming!" Then as she stepped across the threshold into the castle, in her honor the great timepiece of the castle was stopped, never to be started again, forever marking the moment of her arrival.

The King is about to step across the threshold of time. Every clock, every watch, every timepiece the world around, will be forever stopped, never to be started again. Time will turn upon its hinge and become eternity.

Will you place yourself on God's side? This is the moment to decide. Eternity has no clock. Decision belongs to time. And time is now!

10. Race to the Stars

IT WAS on October 4, 1957, that men everywhere stopped their hurrying, their loitering, their worrying, their contemplations, their competitions, to learn that man had made a moon.

It took a little time to realize what had actually happened. Then the truth dawned upon even the dullest of us. That tiny moon had rocketed us into a new age, a space age. Man at last had weakened the gravitational hold of this planet upon its restless inhabitants.

America was a nation in shock. Gradually she recovered enough to lift her own satellites into orbit. We realized that we were actors in a technological revolution that would dwarf every other revolution into insignificance. And then came Lunik II, smashing into the bleak surface of its target barely eighty-four seconds off schedule. It had been only fourteen years from Hiroshima to the moon!

Like it or not, we were in the center of a moving, cosmic drama. What yesterday was fantasy, today was fact. What yesterday was elusively intriguing, today was dangerously near. We were in it! We had touched the universe, and its broken secrets had plunged us into nuclear and moral fear. These were the days to which Jesus looked when He spoke of "men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." (Luke 21:26.)

The future filled men with terror. In fact, we had not yet recovered from what we saw on the morning of our first atomic test at Los Alamos, when we got our first glimpse of what we were really handling.

Everything happened faster than it could be understood that morning. No one saw the first flash of atomic fire. It was only possible to see its dazzling white reflection on the sky and on the hills. Those who ventured to turn their heads saw a bright ball of flame growing steadily larger and larger. One member of the Theoretical Division actually thought-though his reason told him it was impossible-that the ball of fire would never stop growing till it had enveloped all heaven and earth. And a senior officer shouted in terror, "The long-haired boys have lost control."

Yes, the universe was yielding its secrets. And now, with the advent of the satellites and moon rockets, space was opening its doors. But the devastating implications of space control in the hands of morally undisciplined men who also possessed nuclear power, held a horror for thinking men who read the signs of the times.

"Can scientific man survive," shouted Bertrand Russell, "or is the mixture of advanced knowledge with primitive undisciplined passion so unchangeable as to make human survival improbable? I think," he continued, "that the really important question raised by modern technology is not will it be possible for man to inhabit other planets? but will it be possible for man to continue to inhabit his own planet?"

How could Russell reason otherwise when a large part of the money allocated for scientific research in the past eighteen years had been spent to perfect methods of mass extermination? Could it be that we are approaching the time when God must intervene to "destroy them which destroy the earth"? (Revelation 11:18.)

Notice. Russell and a host of others like him are concluding that the combination of scientific genius and undisciplined passion could prove disastrous-even to depopulating our planet. The question that both Scripture and history force upon us is this: Is man morally capable of wisely handling the secrets of the universe? Or have his hands touched a power too mighty for his soul?

These spinning balls meticulously orbiting our planet send down valuable information concerning the density of spatial matter, the strength and nature of cosmic rays, the conditions that man may expect to meet in outer space. Taped in their nose cones may be messages of peace on earth and good will to men.

Yet their clicking signals boast no instruction as to how to change man's nature.

But wait! Does not the beep-beep-beep of the satellites say to the scientist, "Obey-obey-obey"? No man knows better than he that if we expect space to be kind to us, we must obey its laws. Every attempt of man to lift his rockets into the sky has taught him one consistent, rigorous lesson-that space is orderly and obedient.

Listen to Wernher Von Braun, the dynamic space expert: "Some think of the earth as a safe and comfortable planet, and they say that space is a hostile environment. This is not really true. Earth is protected by its blanket of atmosphere, to be sure, but it is a disorderly place, and unpredictable. It is full of storms and winds, of fogs and ice, of earthquakes. It is also full of people-people with thermonuclear bombs.

"There is beauty in space, and it is orderly. There is no weather, and there is regularity. It is predictable. Just look at our little Explorer; you can set your clock by it-literally; it is more accurate than your clock. Everything in space obeys the laws of physics."

Yes, all creation respects the Hand that guides it. We alone disobey. Could it be that the signals of the satellites speak a language we dare not disregard? Could obedience to the laws of the universe be our need? Could our petty frustrations be the badge of our inner rebellion against a loving Creator's plan?

God's laws are dependable. Yet on this planet we find confusion and contradiction, disorder and disintegration. And things are not getting better. In fact, some economists tell us that because our planet has been so thoroughly plundered, exodus earth is imperative. They tell us that we must find resources in time from other planets. They list political, military, economic, social, and moral reasons for space travel. If these reasons are sound, then disaster awaits us if we don't find a way off this planet.

But God has not been caught unprepared. The Scriptures speak of exodus earth in far more realistic terms than men dare to use. It was Jesus Himself, you remember, who demonstrated the possibility of space travel and promised it to His followers. It was there on the Mount of Olives that the disciples saw His feet leave the ground. The laws of gravitation were circumvented as the Lord of glory was swept heavenward. "I go to prepare a place for you," He had said. "And . . . I will come again."

Thrillingly confident words! Exodus earth will be a reality. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout," said Paul. "And the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17.

Picture it-if you can! The descent of our Savior past vast constellations, bursting into view with a brilliance of display that attracts the eye of all earth's multitudes! The long-awaited resurrection of our loved ones! And then, lifted together into the skies, escorted by the Savior to the place He has prepared-to be forever with Him! Every word is packed with meaning. And every word is about to be fulfilled.

How do we know this? We know it because our race to the stars, the very scientific advances of our day, are graphic evidence that our Lord's appearing is not far distant-in fact, it is even at the door. Read again the words of God to the prophet Daniel, for every day gives them new meaning: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Daniel 12:4.

The God of heaven here predicts advances in both knowledge and speed. And these are to be a signal that we are living in the time of the end. Knowledge in the Book-and knowledge in the world of science and discovery. Men's minds have broken into the secret vaults of the universe. We know more about travel to distant planets today than ancient explorers knew about their trips by sea before they started them.

Speed? It took Magellan's expedition years to encircle the earth. Astronauts do it today in ninety minutes. What would Magellan have thought of the suggestion that man might one day reach the moon in less than five days? Yet rocket specialists now whisper of a day when rockets might approach the speed of light!

For thousands of years men have lived and loved. They have fought and died. But only in our day have radar and jet propulsion and Cape Kennedy become a part of everyday living. We talk casually of supersonics and ultrasonics, of space platforms and interstellar flight. Submarines circle the globe powered with a handful of uranium, and missiles approach their target with unerring accuracy.

Missiles! What deadly attraction draws men and missiles together? We have been lured on from atom bombs to hell bombs, from guided missiles to ultimate weapons. No wonder that a small boy, asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, replied simply, "Alive!"

For a moment of almost ridiculous contrast to this strange generation, may I remind you that not so many years ago an employee of the United States Patent Office resigned his position. The reason? Everything that could be invented, had been invented, he said. He felt it was only wise to anticipate the day when he would be asked to find other employment. And that was before the great mass of scientific discoveries tumbled into an unsuspecting world.

It is only natural to wonder why all this increase of knowledge was not spread out a little more evenly over world history. Why did not some of it come in Abraham's day, or that of the Caesars? Modes of travel in the days of our great-grandparents were little different than in the days of Abraham-

In "the time of the end," said Daniel, "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

But men, in their race to destruction, scarcely pause to listen. They fail to hear in their exploding missiles the echo of an ancient prophet's words. They fail to see in the smoking trail of the jets a celestial skywriting that ought to alert them.

Do you wonder that God has withheld all this until now? Can you escape the conviction that it is well that He did?

The very fact that God has permitted men to unlock the secrets of the universe is proof that He must be about to step across the threshold of time to bring an end to this world as we know it. The God of heaven could not take such a risk except in such an hour—an hour when He stands ready to intervene.

Is there not but one explanation for it all? You and I stand not only near the final hour, but on the very verge of it!

Said commentator Leland Stowe in his book *While Time Remains*: “We have telescoped a score of centuries. At last there exists a universal time-fuse. This is the jest to end all jesting. My did we, who know so little, seek to pry earth’s last and mightiest secret from her breast? But now it’s done. But our fingers and our hearts and minds are what they were before. And measuring the desperateness of our task we may well plead: ‘Just fifteen minutes more, please!’”

Dare any man suggest that we have not reached the final hours of time? Yet you can thank God that we have. For no human formula can meet our needs. Science and medicine and education will never be enough. Spaceships can never get us off this planet in time to save civilization.

I ask you, How would the kind of interstellar flight envisioned by our spacemen solve the problems of this generation? just what would such an exodus earth do for you or me?

Have you ever stopped to realize that in order for interstellar flight to be a practical possibility, we must first attain a speed of at least 6,000 miles a second or 21,600,000 miles an hour? Even then it would take 250 years to reach the center of some distant planetary system that might be inhabited. This means that several generations of men and women would die en route, before the expedition could be completed. No, space travel will not solve our problems unless we can first conquer death.

The only real solution is in the exodus earth that God describes. For He alone holds the keys of death. I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore and have the keys of death.” Revelation 1: 18. It is He who says, “Surely I come quickly.” Thank God that day is near!

But now for a moment may I take you back to the scene of man’s first attempt—shall we say—to escape into space?

It was out on a fertile Mesopotamian plain that men, defying their Maker, attempting to reach far enough into the sky to escape any further judgment of God, built a tower of brick. Listen: ‘And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.’” Genesis 11:4.

It was then that the Lord God took a hand, you remember. By the simple expedient of confusing their languages He effectively spread men to the ends of the earth. The resulting confusion has ever since named this first space venture the Tower of Babel. For Babel, or Babylon, as the city was eventually named, means “confusion.” Sin-rebellion against God, disobedience to His laws—has always resulted in confusion—the kind of confusion and contradiction that Von Braun describes.

Could it be that this first attempt to escape into the heavens contains a warning for men in our day?

I ask you, Would God permit restless, sin-contaminated men to invade the heavens? Would God permit man with his hate and his greed, his pride and his lust, to travel to other inhabited planets in this condition? God’s plan is to isolate sin until its final cure—not to spread it. And scrubbing our rockets germ free will not solve the problem!

Remember the Tower of Babel. It was centuries later, and not far from the site where men projected their tower into the heavens, that a young and reckless prince regent—Belshazzar by name—sat on the throne of Babylon as his father Nabonidus took to the field of conquest. Belshazzar had called in a thousand of his lords. In defiance of the God of heaven they were drinking from the sacred vessels stolen from the Temple at Jerusalem. But in the midst of that night of revelry and vice, God inscribed with a bloodless hand, in flaming characters that every drunken eye could see, the words that spelled the finish of God’s forbearance: “Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin,” which being interpreted is, “Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.”

But now you and I witness man’s latest attempt into space. Could these flaming satellites prove to be a handwriting in the sky? Like the narrowing countdown of a nuclear release, are their signals counting the hours allotted to men and nations whose cup is almost full? Many reverent scientists believe that if we listen closely we shall hear not the quiet beep-beep-beep, but “Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin” —“Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.”

What does this mean to you? God has made a way of escape. It can be yours. It is your choice. Will He say to you, “Thou art found wanting”? Or will He say, at your request, “Thou art forgiven”?

Forgiven! Can there be any other choice? For it will be forgiven men and women, safe from the power of death, who will be lifted by the hand of God past the stratosphere, past the ionosphere, into the nothingness of space, across the vast void until they touch down safely at the gates of the city of the eternal King.

God’s own exodus earth! God’s own race to the stars! Home at last!

11. Soul in Conflict

THE LIFE STORY I know best is one that began under the shadow of Pikes Peak in beautiful Colorado. It was a minister’s home that welcomed me. This, I was to discover, was both a privilege and a peril. A privilege—because I could have been ushered into no happier or more favorable environment. A peril—because its very security I was later to misunderstand.

Life was radiantly happy, filled with boyish dreams, but guided and shaped by rubbing shoulders with each one in our very normal family of six.

In fact, if it were possible to uncover the chapters of those early years and let you see the inner workings of such an environment, I think you would be delighted at one moment and surprised, or even shocked, at another. Perhaps your heartstrings would feel a tug of sympathy at times, and joy at others, in the unfolding of those always interesting experiences.

Suffice it to say that my early years, rather than the cloistered seclusion often mentally associated with a minister's home, were a realistic exposure to life. For my father, you see, was not simply a preacher. He was a true helper of men. He touched life at every level. And he wisely exposed me to enough of these experiences to make a profound impression on my young mind. I learned then that sermons come not alone from keen mental discipline, wide reading, and scholastic achievement-however essential-but from life.

Even during those first years of adolescence, gnawing away at my restless, awakening mind were the first faint suggestions that God might someday call me into the ministry. I confess that the idea surprised me. And it was to surprise even more those who knew me.

These were convictions I was determined to stifle. For however appealing my home background, and however insistent the call of God to my young heart, I determined to escape from what I foolishly called "restriction" into what I mistakenly called "freedom."

Yes, I would stifle the voice of conscience if necessary. I would discover for myself what life was all about. And I would be wise, I thought. I would safeguard my future security by vigorous preparation for a place in the world of business and commerce. A civil engineer I was to be-and the very finest. So I planned.

In other words, I had decided to learn the hard way. I would run away from the call of God and make my plans without Him.

But all this was to lead me deeper and deeper into perplexities that I had not counted on in my carefully calculated road to success. Perplexity soon turned to confusion. I had tried to make up my own rules. And they had failed. I was all mixed up, and unwilling to admit it to anyone, much less myself. Yet all the while I had a lurking suspicion that the thing I really wanted was the thing I was fighting.

God did not leave me alone, though I wanted to be left alone. He loves us too much to concede to all our desires. Like a man who has taken too many sleeping pills, I needed to be walked and walked and walked. "As long as the prod is there, the Person is there." That was just the trouble. God was there. And it made me uncomfortable.

The conflict between what I knew to be right and "everybody does" brought confusion and contradiction within. Every reference to the life I was stifling, every person who symbolized my early training, angered me. I felt like a civil war inside.

At last I could stand it no longer. It was a Friday evening, and I was seated in a meeting where my father was speaking. There he stood, that dear man of God, with flowing white hair and noble face -the very essence of kindness. He was speaking to the entire congregation, not to me in particular, but every word he said cut like a knife. I got up and walked out of the meeting and moved restlessly into the shadows. I shall never forget those moments. In that still summer evening, looking up past the trees into God's own sky, I actually shook my fist at the heavens and said, "Holy Spirit, leave me! And don't ever come back!"

Thank God, that prayer was never answered! But breathing those words, the shock of having said them, did something to me. At least the words were prayer, though bitter in their defiance.

This was the climax to a long series of events in which the evil one had been overstepping himself. I had been doing things that surprised even myself. And now I was thoroughly shocked.

In my restless boredom one opportunity had been mine, one advantage, that perhaps some do not have, at least not to such a degree -the opportunity of comparison. For as I moved through the world of entertainment, as I mingled and talked with those I thought I admired, seldom did I see a truly happy face. And I could not forget the indelible impressions of my early youth as I had witnessed transformed lives, radiant faces. They had once been bored and restless souls no different from these I was attempting to admire. I could not help contrasting what I had seen, the satisfaction I once knew, with the emptiness I was now experiencing.

MY course of action was not paying off. I knew deep in my soul, as does any man who has tried it, that "the way of transgressors is hard." I do not mean that there is no pleasure in sin. There is. But it satisfies only an impulse. It does not satisfy life. And the price is too big to pay.

I began now to read the fine print on the devil's contract. And I decided to break it!

Little did I dream that I was standing on the threshold of a transforming experience that would dwarf my former dreams of personal happiness and satisfaction. I was to learn a secret that would not only save my own restless soul, but would help millions who are secretly longing to know.

For many months this simple, most evident secret seemed to evade me. I set out at once to reconstruct my life, thinking this to be my duty. And I did it with the meticulous care of a civil engineer. Vigorously I attempted to set my house in order. I knew what was right. There was no problem there. But religion-at least my experience with it-seemed to be weak on the how.

What worried me was that no matter how hard I tried, I repeatedly failed. Yet strangely enough, when I asked older Christians just how I might succeed in overcoming temptation and the powers of wrong habit, the counsel of those I asked was simply, "Try harder."

Although it sounded a little too much like self-hypnosis, I whipped up my will again, flexed my muscles, and made another try.

But after a while the will relaxed, and I found myself right back where I had started. This produced discouragement. And if there was anything I did not need at the time, it was discouragement.

Evidently something was wrong. I dropped to my knees to plead with God. I opened the Word and studied it carefully. For if this business of Christian living was genuine, there would have to be a more adequate demonstration of it in my life.

Now came the surprise. For as I opened the Scriptures I found no emphasis on trying harder. Instead I read such words as these: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may you also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Jeremiah 13:23. And the words of Jesus: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" "Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Matthew 7:16, 18. No wonder it could not be done by simply trying.

And then imagine how I felt as I found in the seventh chapter of Romans a description of the very conflict I was experiencing—a description almost uncanny in its accuracy. Listen to Paul's words, beginning with verse 15, as Phillips has translated them: "My own behavior baffles me. For I find myself not doing what I really want to do but doing what I really loathe. My conscious mind wholeheartedly endorses the Law, yet I observe an entirely different principle at work in my nature. In my mind I am God's willing servant, but in my own nature I am bound fast, as I say, to the law of sin and death. It is an agonizing situation, and who on earth can set me free from the clutches of my own sinful nature? I thank God there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord."

A way out! That brought courage. Evidently the difficulty was in my own sinful nature. I began to understand why it is that man sins. I realized that this planet is in rebellion against a good and loving God, that a fallen, corrupt, degenerate nature has been passed on from generation to generation, that sin and disobedience and rebellion have so warped and undermined the perfect nature with which God originally endowed man that it is utterly impossible for any man, in his own strength, to live for God.

No wonder I had made so little progress in overcoming evil habits. How could it be otherwise, so long as my fundamental nature was unchanged? I had attempted to cover conflict and defeat by outward discipline. I had been content to keep my unholy traits of character, while I grasped frantically for grace and poise and personality to cover them up.

How often I had seen it in others—even in professing Christians. For it is one thing for a hostess to keep sweet and charming at a social function when a guest soils her lovely gown—outwardly calm while she is burning inside. It is one thing for an employer to be courteous to a bungling workman, a blundering customer, when influence and reputation are at stake—though all the while hate burns in his heart. But it is quite another thing to have a power inside that will take away the hate and the burning.

I saw that patching up the outside could never heal the inside. I could not cover defeat with culture, or weakness with personality. I must have a power that could go deeper than that, or forever live with a mocking heart.

But light began to dawn. Hope sprang up as I read such words as are found in 1 Thessalonians 5:24: "Faithful is he that calls you, who also will do it." Here He promises to do it. And then I read Jude 1:24: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless." Here was not partial victory—the kind I was experiencing. And 2 Peter 1:4 solved the problem: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature."

I saw now why simply trying had proved so futile. Evidently God had planned to do something deep and fundamental within me, and I had not permitted it. It was a new nature I needed—a transformation as much a miracle as changing a wolf into a lamb.

A very dear friend helped me tremendously one day with that illustration. Shall we suppose, my friend suggested, that a wild timber wolf should watch and admire the habits of a flock of peaceful sheep and decide that is the way an animal ought to live. Suppose he attempts now to live just as a sheep lives. Would not that wolf have a difficult time? Would he not be likely to slip back to his old way of life? Green grass might prove tasteless as he remembered feeding on some dead carcass.

But suppose that God by a miracle known only to the Creator should transplant into the wolf the nature of a sheep. Then would it be difficult to live like a sheep? Not at all.

The possibility described in 2 Corinthians 5:17 now made sense. It had seemed before like only a pious platitude. But it was infinitely more than that. Listen: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

It was in the Book all the time. It was not new because I discovered it. But as the secret unfolded, I stood in wonder before the utter simplicity of God's plan. After all, why should we make it so involved and difficult to grasp? Would a God so anxious to save us reveal the way in words we could not understand?

Unfortunately, the language of religion, its familiar vocabulary, like the oft-repeated chimes of a bell, seems sometimes to lose its power to grip the mind. We hear the words so often that we scarcely hear them at all. How many times my dear father tried to tell me the secret. And I didn't hear!

It was amazing how all the statements on this subject now seemed to fall into place, as in an almost-completed puzzle. The incident related in John 3 became more vital to me than I ever dreamed possible. You will remember that Nicodemus—a man thoroughly respected, highly trained, possessed of a dignity and culture rarely seen in those times—came to Jesus by night. And there under an Eastern sky the Savior of men kindly but forcefully probed to the heart of his problem as He said, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Strong words, these. And Nicodemus did not quite understand, for he questioned the possibility of rebirth. But Jesus pressed home His point in yet clearer language: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

My wonder deepened at these words of Jesus. Evidently such a transformation is possible. But how could it be brought about? I found my answer in John 1: 13: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The new birth was not something that could come about through the will of man. No wonder I had failed!

True, I had changed direction. I had decided to break my contract with rebellion. I had faced the unpleasant task of confession. I had felt the grief that Peter must have felt when he betrayed and denied his Lord. I had come to the place where I could say, I am sorry. No one else is responsible. I am to blame. God help me!"

All this was opening the floodgates for the new birth. But nothing I could do could bring it about.

Unquestionably I was facing a miracle. And did I, a budding civil engineer, have to submit to a miracle? Evidently. For he who is trying to reach heaven by his own works is attempting an impossibility. Thank God that the Christian life is not simply a modification or improvement of the old! Instead, it is a transformation of a man's nature that brings every promise of God within his reach. Ever since the day I discovered that secret my greatest joy has been to see the light in the eyes of men and women as this truth dawns.

It all came about so effortlessly. And I had tried so hard! Listen: "No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God." - *The Desire of Ages*, Page 173. No one sees the hand. But the miracle is there.

Tongue cannot tell it. Pen cannot write it-the peace this transaction brings to the human breast. This is the transforming secret that was to dwarf every youthful dream into insignificance. I learned it the hard way. But I learned it never to forget!

Let me take you back to that night when I stood in the shadows, looking up at the stars. Had I been examined that night on the theory of truth, I would have passed with flying colors. But it was not theory I needed. It was life.

I knew then and there that if ever these lips or this pen were commissioned to share truth with others, power must attend its proclamation or it would accomplish nothing. I knew even that night the terrible responsibility of the ministry. For no man or woman is ever the same after he has heard the claims of Christ upon his soul. I knew then, as I know much better now, that it is possible for men with eternal destinies at stake to accept a theory of truth and yet be lost. For without the transforming process that comes alone through divine power, the original tendencies to sin are left in the heart in all their strength, there to forge new chains and impose a slavery that the power of man can never break.

I had so narrowly escaped such a slavery that I determined no one within the hearing of my voice would ever step back into life unaware of its danger. God help the man who rests passively and unafraid under the shadow of a superficial profession, an outward cloak of religion! He is the man I sincerely pray my ministry may help.

I realize now that the struggle of that night under the stars was in reality the beginning of my ministry-and the reason for it. God knew that the real desire of that lonely heart was just the opposite of the words that escaped those lips. The deepest cry of the soul-that His Spirit might never leave-is the prayer He heard that night. And forever I thank God!

12. Fortress of the Mind

IN THE PIONEER days of early America settlers had often to face the attacks of Indians who resented their presence. Men these be feathered warriors had taken a man captive, they would sometimes take delight in playing with their victim as a cat with a mouse. For instance, a captive might be told that he had a chance for life if he could safely pass between two long lines of his enemies armed to the teeth with tomahawks and knives. This, of course, meant almost certain death. But on rare occasions a man might escape by running like the wind or dodging like a rabbit.

This was called running the gauntlet, an expression used ever since. However cruel and heartless this practice, it was little different from the array of satanic weapons today. Men, women, and youth are still running the gauntlet of temptation. And it is a run no less hazardous.

Said the Apostle Paul, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:12. The forces of evil were never so strong, so subtle, and yet so attractive. It is no use thinking that the fight is going to be anything but fierce and furious.

A man may say, "You don't know what I'm up against, or you would understand how hopeless it is for me to live as a Christian. If I were in a preaching job like yours, it would be easy But in that shop I am surrounded every day by a crowd of men whose talk is blasphemous and whose lives are rotten. How can you expect any fellow in circumstances like mine to live a Christian life?"

Surprising as it may sound to some ears, victory in the titanic struggle for the soul depends not on our own strength or determination to resist, not on our speed or ability to dodge the knives of the enemy, but upon which power is in control of the fortress of the mind.

"What do you mean?" you ask. Simply this: When a man begins to serve Christ, the enemy of God does not relax his attentions. He intensifies his attack. With diabolical cunning he prepares his ambush. It may be a surprise attack when a frontal attack is unlikely to succeed. It is usually when we are alone that temptation is most dangerous. At such times, by insinuations, low imaginings, and evil purposes that steam up the mind and dim its windows, the enemy endeavors to hide the face of Christ. He knows that if he can conquer our thoughts, he can conquer us The battle we are here describing is the battle of the mind, soul.

The mind can be a fortress well guarded, powerfully supported, properly orientated in cooperation with Him who never lost a battle. It can be a fortress that Christ holds in a revolted world. Or it can be weak, undefended, vulnerable to attack.

Here the theater of action turns within every human breast. It is no wonder that God says "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Proverbs 4:23.

Would it not help right here if we understood what the Bible means when it says heart? What is the heart that we are to guard diligently? What is the heart that we are asked to give to Christ? Has this vital analogy become meaningless because we hear it repeated so often without explanation?

Certainly Scripture is not speaking of the fleshly organ that pumps blood through the veins. It must be describing something central, deep within the springs of life. Can it be anything less than the mind? The mind-the heart spoken of in the Scriptures-is the seat of the affections, the citadel of the soul, the center of conscious reasoning, the avenue of communication between God and man.

Jesus Himself said, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders." Mark 7:21. Do these proceed from anything but the mind? Paul describes the for the mind is the fortress of the Word of God as "a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12.) The mind alone is the source of thoughts and intentions.

Yes, coming to grips with the real issues in this battle between Christ and Satan, between good and evil, we see that transformation of the mind is absolutely essential. To suggest anything less as a permanent cure would be like spraying rose water on a cancer. The heart, the mind, needs to be changed. And Paul's words in Romans 12:2 indicate that such a change is not only necessary, but possible. He pleads "Be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Is it any wonder that God says, "A new heart also will I give you"? Ezekiel 36:26. Renewing it does need, for "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jeremiah 17:9.)

I have been delighted and amazed at how clearly the Scriptures present the central problem. And then some modern psychologists come along and describe in a vocabulary familiar to every one of us what the Word has explained in crystal clarity for centuries. Evidently the Creator knew what had happened to the mind of man since he fell from his high estate.

For instance, we talk about the subconscious mind and the helplessness of human nature to cope with its power. The ancient Job had never heard of the subconscious when he asked, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Yet with inspired and penetrating insight he answered, "Not one." Job 14:4.

Deep in the subconscious mind of every one of us lie inclinations and habits-filth that rises to rest like scum on the surface of the mind. There is not a man or woman but knows what I am talking about.

The question that long haunted me was this: Could conversion affect the subconscious? If not, what hope is there for anyone? But thank God, it does! The stroke of Omnipotence can sink to the depths and sweeten and purify the whole. In language too clear to be misunderstood God says, "A new heart also will I give you." A new mind! Changed by the power of God!

This brings us face to face with a very familiar word-temptation. Surprising as it may seem, temptation is not sin. Temptation will be with us at all times. For as long as we have body and brain, temptation will attempt to reach us through both. We carry it with us like germs.

But the fact that we are tempted need not be a guilty secret. Temptation itself is not sin. I repeat this because the very suggestion of wrong seems to bring pollution with it. If we mistakenly believe that temptation is sin, we will blame ourselves for suggestions of evil even while we detest them. This will bring a sense of condemnation and discouragement, which, if continued in, ends at last in actual sin. We fall often from the very fear of having fallen.

The enemy of mankind stands ready to make the best of any situation. He brings the suggestion of evil and then turns around and says, "How sinful you must be to have such a thought! You must not be converted. You must not have the real thing!" And we drop to our knees and ask forgiveness for the devil's sins. It is as though a burglar should break into your home and then turn and accuse you of being the thief.

You see, the great point is that the enemy can never overcome a man until he has the cooperation of the man himself. There is no sin until by thought, word, or deed we encourage the tempter. Temptations may allure. They may perplex and harass and distress. They may create an atmosphere in which it is mighty hard to breathe. But they cannot contaminate without an act of your will. They cannot triumph over you without your consent. It takes two to make a successful temptation.

Would the familiar switchboard illustration help us here to understand this very real distinction and relieve our minds from many an anxiety? Shall we say that in the switchboard of every heart there are two main trunk lines-good and evil, right and wrong, Christ's line and the devil's line. But no matter how frequent or insistent or excited the flash of the enemy's light, it cannot contaminate unless you make contact. You need not answer the light. You need not plug in. The light is the temptation. The contact is the sin.

There is no power in all of earth or hell that can compel you to sin. But believe me, all heaven cannot save you from sin if it is thought about, cherished, relished, and played with in the mind.

Do you see why God says the fortress of the mind must be transformed? I think the psychologists have it about right when they say that in any battle between the imagination and the will, the imagination usually wins. You are never safe while in your thoughts you are caressing sin or allowing sin to caress you.

One more word about temptation. It can result in strength. Every time you are tempted, you either rise or fall, you either conquer or are conquered. Your reaction to temptation can leave you better-or worse. If trusting in the power of Christ you are victorious, you are stronger and better prepared for the next attack. If you lose, you are weaker, more vulnerable, less able to withstand the next onslaught. And only those who have met temptation in the strength of the mighty One will stand in the last crisis.

Personally I know of no greater help in overcoming temptation than the words of Jesus: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16:33. When I got hold of the idea that I would never meet a sin or a temptation that He had not already conquered, it became a tower of strength. For why did I, with His power at my command, need to surrender to that which had already been conquered?

I think of the legend of the ancient warrior who during a battle had his head cut off. But so involved was he in fighting that he fought on and killed many, until a woman cried out, "Your head is gone. You are dead." So he fell down and died.

Evil fights on its brainless battle. But why permit it to bully you? Its head is off.

One of the easiest things in the world is to develop an inferiority complex before sin. We yield to the feeling that sin is a permanent part of things, that it cannot be eradicated, that our case is peculiar and different, that because God loves us He will overlook our sin, or a hundred and one other excuses. Therefore we are defeated in mind at the very start of battle. And never forget that every battle of the soul is fought, and won or lost, in the mind-before your friends or your family know anything about it.

When a strong temptation comes your way, why not try asking it to bend its head? And there on its neck you will see branded the figure of a cross-the mark of its losing encounter with the Conqueror of Calvary. Why surrender? By God's grace you have won. You are on the winning side. Confidence leads to victory-not confidence in yourself, but confidence in the Savior who conquered sin. His victories become yours.

I hope this point is clear enough to encourage you to try its secret. It is where our attention is centered that counts. Constantly looking to ourselves will bring only weakness and defeat, for we see nothing but our own inadequacy and sin. When we look to our interior states and feelings, a very unrepresentative self, instead of Christ, fills the horizon.

You see, sin thrives on attention, even negative attention. Self would rather be thought badly of, remember, than not be thought of at all. And again I repeat, whatever gets your mind, gets you. Whatever invades the mind, invades the fortress of the soul.

Even a loyal attempt to fight sin in the mind can lead to succumbing to it. The Lord has a better way. He asks us to change our minds by looking to Him. Here is our central human need. For more tired, discouraged, defeated minds result from frantic attempts to fight sin in the mind, to expel it, than from any other experience that comes to the Christian. Is not God's way better? Simply turn your attention elsewhere.

This point was made vividly clear to me by E. Stanley Jones, as from his rich background he told of the Indian fakir who came to a village declaring he would demonstrate how to make gold. The villagers gathered around as he poured water into a huge caldron, put some coloring matter into it, and began to repeat "muntarams" as he stirred. When their attention was temporarily diverted, he let some gold nuggets slip down into the water. Stirring a little more, he finally poured off the water, and there was the gold at the bottom of the caldron. The villagers' eyes bulged. The moneylender offered five hundred rupees for the formula, and the fakir sold it to him. "But," the fakir explained, "you must not think of the red-faced monkey as you stir. If you do, the gold will never come." The moneylender promised to remember that he was to forget. But try as hard as he might, the red-faced monkey sat on the edge of his mind, spoiling all his gold.

Just so, to try to forget your sins will only drive them into your consciousness. To forget them, center your attention elsewhere.

We begin to see that most of our troubles lie in the imagination -a diseased, undependable imagination, made so by long contact with sin. But thank God that our fears, our temptations, our doubts, can all be brought into captivity at the hands of Christ. That is the promise. That is the thrilling possibility. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:5.

Yes, the conflict within the heart of man is not new. Nor is it unimportant. It is part of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. And from the very beginning the battleground has been the human mind. It has been a battle for its possession.

May I make one suggestion? Any breaching of the mind, any deliberate weakening of it, any control of it by another-even temporarily and for seemingly worthy purposes-can sabotage the soul's defenses without your knowing it. To lightly surrender that citadel of the soul to a human being, for however commendable a reason, may hold long-range, devastating consequences.

I refer to hypnotism-the rising and increasingly popular turn of the mental sciences. just a caution. Think it through. That caution may save your life-and your soul!

My emphasis here, in the strongest language I can command, is to affirm again the workable, practical truth that true healing of body, mind, and soul cannot come alone and primarily from within ourselves, from any inherent powers that we may possess. It must come from God. We can cooperate with the laws of God as they operate within that fantastic instrument called the human mind, to be sure. But such healing and transformation as the human heart longs to know can come only with the lift of the implanted power of God.

I think of the building of a giant bridge across a portion of New York's harbor. Engineers were searching for a base upon which to rest one of the mighty buttresses. But deep in the mud and practically buried, they discovered an old barge, full of bricks and stones that had long ago sunk to that spot. It had to be moved. Yet in spite of every device it remained firmly held to its muddy bed.

At last one of the engineers conceived an idea. He gathered other barges about and secured them by long chains to the sunken wreck while the tide was low. Then all waited. The tide was coming in. Higher and higher rose the water, and with it the floating barges. Then creaking and straining on the chains, that old boat was lifted from its viselike grip-raised by the lift of the Atlantic Ocean! Need I draw a parallel?

I ask you, Is your mind like an old barge full of bricks and stones, gripped by memories you long to forget, held by age long leanings and habits you would give anything to be released from. bound by fears and. unholy imaginations? Has every human device failed to break the power of their viselike grip in your life? just know that the lift of the Triune God will deliver you. He is able!

The enemy of God and man is not willing that this priceless secret be clearly understood. For he knows that when you receive it fully, his power will be broken. And you will be free

13. Taproots of the Soul

IN HERTFORDSHIRE, in the heart of old England, was a garden dominated by a weeping willow tree. Characteristically its branches drooped in a giant circle, and the sharply tipped leaves gave to the tree the appearance of finely spun lace.

The children of the family played under this tree as they grew up, its branches falling round them like a tent. At first to their surprise, and later to their disgust, they noticed that every year long, ugly shoots with large round leaves would grow out from the trunk. Aspen leaves they were, so unlike the delicate, arrow-shaped willow leaves.

This was puzzling. Aspen leaves on a willow tree? How could such a thing have happened? The mystery was solved when the old gardener explained that a weeping willow shoot had long ago been grafted into an aspen tree. In time the willow had overcome the aspen, until all the branches were willow. Yet each springtime aspen leaves would grow out from the trunk, and the children would indignantly pull them off. For had they been left, they would have spoiled the whole appearance of the lacy tree.

In this weeping willow with its aspen leaves we see a parable of life. And is it any wonder that we find the most accurate parables of life in nature? For the God of nature, the God who made the tree, is the God who made the soul. And the laws that govern the growth of all living things are the laws of the Creator, who implants new life in your heart at the time of conversion and watches over its growth.

Trees and souls! Parables are sometimes very, very real-as real in this case as a strange and unexpected paradox of the spiritual life that every man and woman needs to understand.

You see, there is a tendency with some to expect all conflict to end at conversion. It seems only natural to expect that when the soul is given to God all inner contention should give way to unruffled peace, allowing the Christian to live happily ever after. For a few days, or weeks, or months, this may seem to be the case. Life is one glad, developing, beautiful day. There is new power within, new strength to overcome weakness, and a sense of forgiveness that makes a man radiantly happy in his newfound faith.

Thank God that such an experience may be permanent, and often is. But sometimes this is not the case. Strange things may begin to happen. Old temptations, old feelings, old thoughts, may clamor again for recognition. A man may yield momentarily to these old impulses. He may find himself suddenly irritable and bad tempered. And he thought he could never be that way again!

The personality is troubled. The new Christian is surprised and ashamed at the appearance of the telltale shoots of the old life. He tries to pull off the aspen leaves so that no one else may know. But he is divided inside. He knows that a house divided against itself cannot stand. And he is discouraged.

Said Spinoza, the Dutch philosopher, "Do not weep. Do not wax indignant. Understand." And whatever Spinoza may or may not have known about the Christian life, who can say that his words do not fit the need of the man who discovers this strange division within himself? Weeping will not help. Growing angry will help less. Understanding the problem will do wonders!

Now it is most natural to experience a rapid climb to new heights through the miracle of conversion. But many are unprepared for the tableland that sometimes follows-a tableland of victory interspersed with occasional defeat. They think that conversion promises uninterrupted victory, and when it does not come, their disappointment is overwhelming.

In fact, it is just this baffling problem of inner conflict and division when peace and harmony have been expected that leads some to ask, "Why does life seem to glide along so smoothly for the man who has made no profession of following his Lord and who cares little about the spiritual life? Why are there no apparent conflicts within him? Yet on the other hand the man who has been born again and calls himself a Christian seems to be opposed at every turn. Why is this?"

The answer is quite simple and very evident as we think it through. The man without Christ has only one nature, the nature with which he was born. There is therefore nothing to oppose it. But the man who has accepted Christ, who has submitted to the miracle of conversion, has had new life grafted into his soul.

Two natures, you see. Like the willow and the aspen. The one nature is his by right of physical birth. The other is his by right of spiritual birth. And these two are antagonistic. That is why there may be struggle in the life of the Christian. And that is why there may be no apparent struggle in the life of the non-Christian.

The implanting of new life within a man at the time of conversion may set up certain tensions within the personality. These are described by the Apostle Paul: "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would!" Galatians 5:17.

I like the way Dr. Phillips translates these lines: "For the whole energy of the lower nature is set against the Spirit, while the whole power of the Spirit is contrary to the lower nature. Here is the conflict, and that is why you are not free to do what you want to do."

Evidently this is why the Christian is faced with a conflict within, while the non-Christian seems to drift along with no evidence of struggle. So fundamental is the change conversion brings, that the vitality of the new life will likely set up a disturbance within.

The Christian, then, is not always ushered into unruffled calm. A settled conviction, to be sure. But a new nature now contends with the old. Even the Apostle Paul faced the problem of contending with the remnants of the old nature. It was long after he had first experienced the power of the indwelling Christ, long after he had entered into a life of consistent victory, that he wrote, "I die daily." 1 Corinthians 15:31.

Every day the claims of Christ conflicted at some point with inclination. Every day he found it necessary to crucify the old nature. He said, I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." 1 Corinthians 9:27.

This is not theory. This is not a fictitious conflict. It is as real as today. There are now two natures within the soul. One of them will rule.

Shall we make it practical? Tomorrow morning as you arise fresh to meet a new day, ask yourself the question, "Which of these two natures will control my life during the waking hours of this day?"

I would like to tell you now the answer to that question.

But you say, "You don't know me. How could you tell which nature will rule in my life?"

I may not know you personally. But I do know this- whichever nature is the stronger will rule your life tomorrow. If the spiritual nature is the stronger, it will rule your life tomorrow. If the old nature is the stronger, it will rule your life tomorrow.

May I go so far as to say that whichever nature rules you, determines your destiny? For when Jesus comes through the blazing heavens, your standing in that day will depend upon which nature then rules your life. And it will be one or the other. It cannot be both.

But now please notice the secret. Whichever nature you feed will be the stronger. By a divine act the Creator has implanted new life and power in your soul. God has done in you a work of grace beyond the ability of man to bestow. But now comes your part. You can either feed or starve that new nature. The outcome of the conflict, in a very real sense, depends on you. The essential thing now is to utterly neglect that which feeds the flesh, while turning your attention to feeding the spiritual nature. Remember, the nature you feed will be the stronger. And what feeds one starves the other.

Do you see now why so many- and their number is legion- live on in a state of frustration? The problem is so simple. They have been feeding both natures just enough to keep them alive. They have just enough of Christ in the life to produce conflict, and not enough to produce control.

Remember the words of Scripture, "Be sure your sin will find you out" and "By their fruits you shall know them"? If ever they apply, they apply here. For the man or woman who compromises just a little, thinking no one will ever know, will sooner or later be surprised and embarrassed to see those telltale shoots of the old life appearing when least expected to spoil the magnificence of the tree God planted.

The whole problem is easily solved. Then why continue to live in conflict? Why perpetuate a civil war inside when the secret of growing peace and inner power is so simple?

Let me put it this way. Two ferocious dogs are fighting each other. The outcome of the battle is anyone's guess. But suppose that one of them is starved for two or three weeks and then allowed to limp weakly back into the conflict again. What will be the outcome of the battle now? Which one will win? Is there any question? No. The one well fed and strong will win. How could it be otherwise?

Feed the spiritual nature, friend. That is the priceless secret of growing, satisfying peace.

"How do you feed the new nature?" you ask. "How can I be sure that it is strong enough to control my life?"

The health habits of the soul are not unlike those of the human body. Let it breathe. Feed it. Let it grow strong by exercise.

Prayer is the channel for the life-giving oxygen that penetrates the lifeblood of the new nature. Let the soul breathe. Pray now not as a duty, not merely when you are in trouble. Talk to God as you would to a friend. Tell Him your needs, your desires, your joys. Let it be the spontaneous, unrehearsed outpouring of the soul.

I could write many pages about the rules of prayer. But I would rather say this: God is more interested in you than in the rules of prayer. If at first you do not know the rules, if you happen to come in the wrong door, God will not send you back to come in again the right way. Pray- and know the joy of it!

Feed the new nature. God's Word invites you. Every page is nourishing food. You have talked to God. Now let Him talk to you through the open Book. You will find the promises of Scripture like leaves from the tree of life that hang over heaven's wall to the fallen world. And remember, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

And then, the deepest desire of the newly healed heart is to bring others to the same Source of healing. Such service is the exercise of the soul.

A doctor once found a little dog with a broken leg. He took the little fellow home, put the leg in splints, and kept him until he was, well. But as soon as the dog was able to run about the house, he disappeared. "That's gratitude," thought the doctor. "As long as he needed me, he stayed. As soon as he didn't need me, he ran away."

The next day there was a scratching at the back door, and there was the little dog. But another little dog was with him. And that other little dog was lame!

The secret cannot be kept. It has to be shared.

Prayer-Bible study-sharing. These open the floodgates. These make it possible for the strength of the living Christ to flow unchecked into your life. Keep the floodgates open.

Yes, whichever nature is fed will be the stronger. And when you take hold of that simple, practical truth, you will be surprised at the problems it will solve.

Every day we live, we face a series of choices. The clothes we wear, the books we read, the company we keep. The thoughts we think, the care we give our bodies, the food we give our minds. How we spend our recreation time. All these must enter into Christian living, for all these affect the health of the soul. We need consecrated minds and hands and feet these days. We need consecrated fingers to turn the dials.

Which nature does it feed? Here is the question that will settle many problems of right and wrong. It will be amazing how this simple formula will clear up even minor questions that seem inconsequential in themselves. Which nature does it feed? This will settle it!

But now, which nature have you been feeding? Has compromise within brought defeat, failure, discouragement? Have you been feeding the old nature and starving the new-or feeding the new just enough to keep it alive?

Trees and souls are not unlike. The Japanese, I am told, in their research gardens have a way of stunting forest trees so that they never grow higher than potted plants. They tie the taproot so that the tree lives only on the surface roots. And the roots, of course, feed the tree. Destined to be forest giants, but stunted, dwarfed, their taproots tied!

Your life can be stunted, tied by compromise and sin, frustrated in its purpose, dwarfed in its destiny. Or it can be like the giant redwood, free, unshackled, rooted in the centuries and lifting its head to God!

Cut loose, friend! Come clean with God. Sink your roots deep in the strength of the mighty One. And live!

14. After the Wedding Bells

DEARLY BELOVED, we are assembled here in the sight of God and in the presence of this company to join together this man and this woman in the sacred estate of matrimony."

Thus opens the marriage ceremony with words that have been spoken before countless couples for many generations. Wherever they have been said, they have deeply impressed men that the loving heart of our heavenly Father has withheld from us no good thing.

It is a sacred moment when "two people who were strangers to each other are drawn together by an irresistible attraction so that their souls cannot be henceforth divided by time or space. When a man sees in one woman that dream of purity and sweetness that has ever haunted his soul, or when in one man a woman finds the love and satisfaction that her heart has been unconsciously seeking," they can know they have found true love, the basis for lasting happiness.

It was to protect and prolong that sacred moment that these memorable words were spoken by the Creator: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Wedding bells ring. Wedding bells announce that heart is given to heart, and life to life. Wedding bells ring dreams into reality, blueprints into homes, and hopes into fulfillment.

But the sound of the bells fades away. Reality has come. And reality is not always like the dream. For a home needs more than a blueprint, and hopes need more than vows.

What is it that keeps untainted, unmarred, un-shattered, the inexpressible joy of the wedding day? What is it that keeps love burning in two hearts-after the wedding bells?

"Love is not passion, love is not pride,
Love is a journeying side by side.
Not of the breezes, nor of the gale;
Love is the steady set of the sail.

"Deeper than ecstasy, sweeter than light,
Born in the sunshine, born in the night.
Flaming in victory, strongest in loss,
Love is a sacrament made for a cross."

Author Unknown.

Unfortunately, this fine and beautiful arrangement given by God has been in too many cases so cheapened and abused that it bears little resemblance to what God intended it to be. Holy wedlock has too often been transformed into unholy deadlock.

Many marriage partners-and their number is legion-are caught in a desperate struggle to save their marriage. Some are frankly confused, not known why or how their hopes have been so bitterly blasted. Divorce has assumed popular proportions. One writer has said, "Let's call marriage a belt that we can buckle and unbuckle." In other words, if you do not like it, just unhook!

But God never intended this sacred relationship to be assumed or discharged lightly.

Is there, then, an answer to the world's marital dilemma? I believe that any man or woman who sincerely wants to discover the building blocks of a happy and lasting marriage may do so. For the who planned the home tells us how to build it. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." Psalm 127: 1.

You may be surprised at how much a man's marriage has to do with the destiny of his soul. You see, the man or woman you marry is more than a body to be clothed and fed. There is a soul as well. When you face the Judge of all the earth, a time that is repeatedly and reverently described in Scripture, you stand absolutely alone before your God. But here is a matter in which you face eternal responsibility for all given to you by marriage or by birth.

A happy marriage is built upon love. That sums it all up. But we hear the word so often that we need to take it apart and view it before the slow-motion camera to see how it works in a five-room house with four walls, three children, a restricted budget, and a custom-made problem or two.

Love is fundamental kindness. It is unselfish attention-the kind that came so naturally during the days of courtship. It is believing in your companion. It is thinking appreciation rather than criticism. It is expressing that appreciation. The four words "I'm proud of you" will do wonders for a companion. If you do not believe it, try it.

"Nag people and they sag,
Believe in people and they bloom."

It is written: "Love is forbearing and kind. Love knows no jealousy. Love does not brag; is not conceited. She is not unmannerly, nor selfish, nor irritable, nor mindful of wrongs. She does not rejoice in injustice, but joyfully sides with the truth. She can overlook faults. She is full of trust, full of hope, full of endurance." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Weymouth.

The secret of a lasting marriage is not profound, and it ought not to be difficult. Why is it that we have kind words for others through the day, but when we cross the threshold of our own homes, we let down? At least there is a tendency to do so. But guard yourself at that point. You love your family dearly. Tell them so once in a while! Said Margaret Sangster:

"We have careful thought for the stranger,
And smiles for the sometime guest,
But oft for our own
The bitter tone,
Though we love our own the best."

Unselfish love! The thresholds of our homes can be a lift instead of a letdown. Our thresholds ought to admit us to a kingdom where the wife is queen and every daughter a princess-and where Christ reigns over all.

Never forget that Christianity includes culture and simple courtesy as well as uprightness of character. Someone has remarked that "some Christians are washed, but not ironed." Unfortunately, this is true. But it need not be. When Christ is in the home, it will be a place where we give our own the best, where the simple attentions and courtesies of courtship come as naturally as the day they were born.

Some years ago a couple were about to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary, and a local newspaper sent out a reporter for an interview. The husband was at home.

"What is your recipe for a long, happy marriage?" the reporter asked.

"Well, I'll tell you, young fellow," the old gentleman said slowly. I was an orphan, and I always had to work pretty hard for my board and keep. I never even looked at a girl until I was grown.

"Sarah was the first one I ever kept company with. When she maneuvered me into proposing, I was scared stiff, but after the wedding her pa took me aside and handed me a little package. 'Here is all you really need to know,' he said. And this is it."

He reached for a large gold watch in his pocket, opened it, and handed it to the reporter. There across the face of the watch, where he could see it a dozen times a day, were written these words: "Say something nice to Sarah."

Too simple to work? Just remember that great happiness is made up of little kindnesses. It is also true that a lack of appreciation in small things may grow until it becomes a great divisive factor.

The ruin of a marriage may not be a dramatic affair. There may be no unfaithfulness, no desertion, no blows-just a slow accumulation of dissatisfaction, a gradual growth of misunderstandings and irritations, until one day one companion or the other says, I can't stand it any longer." And the tragedy is that many such individuals do not really sense what is happening or how to stop it.

Remember this: Unsolved problems become set in the mind as attitudes. Try making it a rule never to go to sleep at night until disagreements are settled. Although there may be forgiveness and loving attention the next day, the scar remains. Unsolved problems become attitudes, you see. Five years later, ten years later, a companion may suddenly reason, "Did I marry the wrong person?" and feel very wicked for thinking such a thing-and yet not know why.

"I love you." These are hard words to say in a moment of tension and misunderstanding. But we need to say them. And sometimes we need to add three words even harder to say - "I was wrong." There are times when a heart cannot be healed without those words. No wonder James wrote, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed." James 5:16.

We are fast learning that fear, anger, resentment, and bitterness not only lay the groundwork for divorce, but actually poison the body system. Fussing one's way to the divorce court may lead also to the hospital. The body is not made for hate. Body, mind, and soul are made for happiness and goodwill.

That brings us to what Glen Clark popular author and publisher, has listed as one of the beatitudes of a happy marriage. It is this: "Blessed are the married ones who strive first of all to make their mates happy rather than good."

The trouble is that so many of us feel it our duty to make our mates good-and we sometimes make everyone concerned unhappy in the process. But if we would first make our companions happy, I believe we might more easily succeed in the other objective. The wise man said, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine."

"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." When couples learn to pray together, they have found one of the surest secrets of preventing marital difficulties. Family prayer was once an established institution. When it declined, up went home problems and divorce. But is it any wonder? The number of people who go on week after week, month after month, year after year, without family prayer is simply appalling.

"Rear you an altar that will last forever,
Longer than any shaft or marble dome.
Erect it there beside your own hearth fire,
The chaste, white family altar in the home.

"Chisel the Word of God upon the waiting
Hearts and minds of dear ones gathered there,
And the blowing sands of time will not erase it,
Nor friction dim the imprint of your prayer.

"And memory will hold those chiseled letters.
Prayer shall be embedded in the heart.
O father mother, rear that lasting altar,
And the children whom you love will not depart."

Author Unknown.

God said through Jeremiah, "My people have forgotten me days without number." Jeremiah 2:32. Makes one think, doesn't it?

In a home where a Christian mother had passed away, the little girl told a stranger in awed and frightened tones, "We haven't had prayer in our house since my mother died, and nothing has happened yet!"

What a poor, limited conception of what prayer really is! Are children being taught that prayer is merely a fire escape? No, nothing had happened in that home-nothing but deterioration. God is not going to strike us dead. He loves us too much for that. There may not be any serious calamity aside from spiritual decay. But that decay rots away the moral fiber from the inside until suddenly we lose out, just when we think we are strong.

Unselfish love-Christ in the home-lasting marriage! This is the ideal. But in a shocking number of cases the ideal does not exist and divorce stands at the doorstep. Somewhere along the line the sacred confidence of the family circle has been broken. That moral reserve and spiritual dignity that cause the careless and the loose to keep their Place have been lost. Advances have been made, hearts broken.

And you do not have to look very far for the root of the trouble. For down in the heart of God's Ten Commandments, commandments that some have discarded as only unreasonable taboos, is a very reasonable warning that, when obeyed through the power of God, guards the purity of the race. It reads simply, "Thou shall not commit adultery." Exodus 20:14.

However relaxed the moral fabric of the society in which we live, however benumbing the repeated assertion that everybody does it, however convincing the published reports of moral decadence with which we subconsciously compare ourselves, God says, "Thou shall not commit adultery."

Always remember this: Whatever professional advice you may have been given to the contrary, the Creator of man's body, mind, and emotional structure, the God who understands our fears and our frustrations and our needs, is the One who says, "Thou shall not commit adultery."

The Pharisees came to Jesus with a loaded question about divorce. And He replied I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife on any grounds except her unfaithfulness, -and marries some other woman, commits adultery." Matthew 19:9, Phillips.

Jesus here recognized the one situation in which a man or a woman is free to remarry. It is simply this-when he discovers himself to be the innocent party in a moral fall.

But has it ever occurred to you that the so-called innocent one may share in the responsibility for divorce? Has it ever occurred to you that it is altogether possible for an individual to be so selfish, so un-attentive, so unloving, so downright cold in his relationship to his mate that these unfeeling actions make temptation tragically real and encourage the unconsecrated heart to sin?

Oh, yes, as far as friends are concerned, as far as the church is concerned, he may be the innocent party. But there was one who was not willing to love, one who was not willing to lay selfishness aside, to win and hold that mate by true affection. I tell you before God, that individual shares in the guilt.

However frustrated and confused a life partnership may have become, however futile may seem your efforts at reconciliation of hearts that have grown cold, please remember that divorce should never be thought of as an easy back door out of an unpleasant situation. For a divorce, however legitimate not only seriously scars your own life but tragically undermines the lives of your children.

Divorce cannot heal. No legal or material device, however ingenious, can heal. Only unselfish love and the power of the living Christ can heal.

Perhaps the most serious delusion of our day is the delusion that hearts can be mended with material things. One of our most tragic mistakes is our sheer dependence upon material things and our feverish rush to acquire more and more in the false hope of finding happiness therein.

Recently a huge floor-covering corporation featured a delightful ad with all the color and modern appeal of design. Across the ad in striking, bold letters were these words: "Lay linoleum-and have a happy home!"

Do you see? If there is home trouble-lay linoleum! IF there is quarreling or bickering-lay linoleum! If the children are wild and disobedient-lay linoleum!

But laying linoleum-or wall-to-wall carpet, for that matter-or installing a deepfreeze, or contracting for a second automobile-none of these however useful or pleasant, are the secret of a happy home.

Self-forgetful love and genuine moral fidelity-these alone are the qualities that can transform a collection of human beings into a home. And these can be ours. God has not been caught unprepared. We don't need to accept ourselves as we are. When a man consents to the healing stroke of Omnipotence, when a man invites the enabling, energizing power of his God, he can know that that touch of purity and unselfishness will sink to the depths. It will leave him clean. And it will leave him kind.

What would you give for a cleansing like that? What would such a change do for your home? What would such a possibility mean to those you love? You've promised them the best. Heaven will help you give it.

15. About Divine Healing

THE STORY has burned across the gospel pages for nineteen centuries and more-the story of the woman who tremblingly, hesitatingly, reached out to touch the seamless robe of the Son of God.

Could it be that the Healer still is near enough that we moderns can touch His garment too-and live? What is the truth about divine healing? We open the Word of God in an endeavor to answer that question as sanely, as kindly, and as hopefully as we know how.

When science has gone as far as it can when all human help has failed, when we have followed one promise after another only to be disappointed-we remember the woman who touched His garment. And ho springs up that disease, and even death, may now, as then, be pushed back by the intervening hand of a great God.

It may have been a superstitious faith that she exercised that day. Weak, timorous, maybe even theologically inaccurate. But it was the kind of faith that the Savior delights to honor, even today.

Did you know that there are almost unbelievable promises in the Word of God about how and when and under what circumstances God will intercept His own laws, invade the human personality if invited, change the course of nature if necessary-and heal? Promises like this: "Bless the Lord who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all thy diseases." Psalm 103:2, 3. And this: "Pray one for another, that you maybe healed." James 5:16.

God does heal. There is no question about that. Jesus, while on earth, spent more time in healing than in preaching. Restoring men was His delight. And you can be assured that God desires to exercise His healing power today just as He did then.

Remember that God is not the originator of disease, suffering, and death. But He is the Author of laws that when violated bring trouble and pain. These bodies of ours are very responsive to the laws of cause and effect. And somewhere, sometime, somehow, we have to learn the truth that "whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap!" (Galatians 6:7.)

This truth works with mathematical precision. It works every time. But God lets us experiment if we must. He does not force the will. For instance, our prisons and hospitals are filled with evidence of the effects of alcohol. But God does not knock the bottle out of a man's hand. Medical science now presents an array of facts that definitely link smoking with lung cancer. But God does not have an angel standing by to blow out the match. Any thinking man knows that overeating may contribute to a heart attack. But God does not push him back from the table when he has had enough. The time may come when a nurse will have to mark his menu. But God never does.

God does not force the will of man. But neither does He leave it without direction. He places the facts before us. If we choose to disobey, we choose also the consequences of disobedience.

I ask you, Would it be for man's best interest if God should, whenever requested, remove the illness that he may have brought upon himself? If God should heal promiscuously, giving men new energies to burn out in continued disregard of the laws of health, would it be for their best good?

You see, God's plan for the restoration of man includes more than healing. It includes teaching him how to live. The Son of God traveled a long ladder down to where man was. But the ladder was intended to be traveled both ways. Jesus came not only to reach but also to lift. Never was His healing separated from His teaching.

You remember the man at the pool of Bethesda. Jesus said to him, "Take up thy bed, and walk!" But a little later, in the Temple, He said to him, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee!" John 5:8, 14.

Now, it is our privilege to pray for healing, even if we have had something to do with bringing about the emergency. We are actually invited to pray for the healing we need, to fulfill certain conditions and make certain adjustments in our living. I have repeatedly seen God honor His Word at the conclusion of reading and acting upon such words as these: "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." James 5: 14, 15.

When that plan is carefully and sincerely followed, when your desire is placed before God not in dictation or demand, but with the concentrated faith of a lifetime, and in the strength of simple, unadorned, relaxed believing, an answer always comes.

The answer may not come in just the way you ask. Sometimes God heals instantly, sometimes gradually. And no thoughtful man would conclude that it is less an act of God to restore and heal over a period of six or eight weeks, permitting us to cooperate with Him in the healing process, than to heal in a more spectacular way. For it is not the time element alone that makes healing divine.

True, it requires nothing, less than creative power to speak life to a decaying body. But did it ever occur to you that the same creative power revealed in the miracles of Jesus is continuously at work in man's behalf? The creative power of God works through the agencies of nature, hour by hour, to sustain and restore us. Through the agencies of radiant sunlight, fresh air, cooling water, adequate rest, and pure food God lets down a ladder for our healing. And when we recover from illness, it is God who restores us.

God heals-sometimes instantly, sometimes gradually. Then sometimes God, who sees the future, as we do not, does not heal at all. He simply answers, No. But always remember, God is too wise to make a mistake and too good to be unkind.

You see, you might demand healing from God. And God might give it. One mother beat the air with her fists. She challenged God to heal her dying child. The child lived. But that mother lived to see the day when that son was executed as a criminal.

All faith must be fitted around the final will of God. If Jesus needed to say, "Thy will be done," how much more do we need to say it! His will, we can always know, is for our best good. And in the end, as enlightened eyes look back upon difficult experiences, there will come from lips once bitter and critical the surprising words, I see now. I would have had it any other way."

Yes, God still heals. He has made some striking promises about divine healing-promises that He honors again and again, wherever there is faith and a willingness to cooperate with the conditions that He has laid down. Yet keep in mind that there is a counterfeit for every genuine doctrine, for every gift of God.

God has said that miracles would be brought to their lowest abuse in the last days of world history. His Word tells us that before Christ's second coming counterfeit miracles will be performed in the name of religion-even in the name of Christ.

Remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 7, where He looked ahead to the judgment day and described the astonishment of certain miracle-working Christians when He would say, I never knew you"? Listen: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity." Matthew 7:22, 23.

"What did He mean?" you ask. And you say, "Surely the devil would not bring into the lives of people such a wholesome blessing as healing, would he?"

Yes, evidently many will be healed by a power other than Christ's. And Christ-in whose name they are healed-will have nothing to do with it. Therein lies the subtle deception. "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Matthew 24:24.

Now I would not sit in judgment concerning any man or any group of men who claim the gift of healing. God will reveal to every sincere heart sufficient information to discern the true from the counterfeit.

But I do know that no people in all the history of this world have been called to face such deception as we.

All miracles, you see, are not divine. Two forces are operating in this world. And only the man or the woman who takes time and sincere effort to understand the Word of God, who has an "It is written" as the basis for his action-only such individuals are safe from deception.

Never has the world been more in need of healing. And never have the healing lines been longer. There are the faith healers. There are the mass hypnotic healers. There are the trance healers, and the spirit healers.

Evidently there is need for a sharp distinction between true divine healing and the counterfeit. The two stand side by side. Both are Supernatural. God honors true faith wherever He finds it. But Paul tells us that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:14.) And Revelation 16:14 makes it clear that the spirits of demons in the last days will work miracles-not merely tricks. "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles."

The man who accepts all that is miraculous as coming from God soon finds himself in a strange dilemma. For there are undoubted miracles in and out of the church. There are miracles all through the cults. There are miracles in spiritualism. There are miracles even in the voodoo of Haiti. But here is the point. Shall he accept the teaching because of the miracle? What sort of faith would be his if he did so?

Remember that to turn aside from Scripture is to walk on ice that is treacherously thin. For miracles can never take the place of knowing and following the will of God. It is a dangerous thing, to make a miracle the price of your soul!

We are in the last desperate stages of the great controversy between good and evil. It is a battle for the minds and wills of men. And miracles are cheap enough, if by them the enemy can trap the soul. Any man who steps off the solid ground of Scripture is in constant danger of being drawn into the whirlpool of deception.

An American investigator describes a voodoo ritual witnessed on one of his trips to Haiti. "As I heard the drum and the organ, I realized how closely this demonstration in a lowly Haitian home paralleled a phenomenon I had frequently witnessed in America." "Each drum had its distinctive rhythm. They blended with the organ into a hypnotic symphony against which I consciously braced myself and into which I was unconsciously drawn." His wife, he says, "was already partially hypnotized by the embrangling sounds and the swaying motion of the worshipers." And then, describing the conclusion of another service, he comments, "Our wills and our volitions were buried with the sacrifice."

Need I say more? Is any man safe without the discerning power of the Word of God?

"How then, can one distinguish between true and false healing?" you ask.

I sincerely believe that there are certain earmarks, questions, and sincere contrasts that, if kept in mind, will keep you from serious deception on this vital point.

Does the healer demand healing from God? Or does he teach his people to say, "Thy will be done"?

Does he exalt Christ as the Great Physician? Or does he make God only a sort of publicity agent to further his own personal fame?

Does he stay close to Scripture? If not, the words of Isaiah apply: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20.

Does the healer tell those who come to be healed that their illness may be the result of their own disobedience to nature's laws? Does he teach them how to cooperate with those laws in the future?

Does the healer tell his people about the healing power of sunlight as it is allowed to shower its radiant energy over body and soul? Does he tell them of the healing potential of ordinary water-skillfully, scientifically, generously used, inside and out? Does he tell them about the relaxing effects of simply watching water in motion -a waterfall, or even a fountain in the backyard? There is something about water in action that unwinds nerves, takes the kinks out of muscles, and removes strain from the heart.

Does he tell men and women how to take a tip from their heart and rest between the beats? Does he tell them about pure, fresh air, God's air-conditioning system for body and mind? Air means oxygen. And oxygen means life. Reduce a man's supply of oxygen, and the higher centers of his brain are affected first. A man's judgment and memory are so impaired that even ordinary questions are answered stupidly. Reason enough for getting plenty of fresh air?

Does the healer explain what happens to a man when he neglects exercise? Does he explain that we must keep our nerves in balance that unless we balance mental activity with physical exercise, sooner or later the mainspring is going to snap? A good brisk walk every day is cheaper and safer and far more interesting than a nervous breakdown.

And does the healer say a word about diet? Fruits-in all their luscious, appealing beauty-simply packed to overflowing with readily assimilated vitamins, minerals, and natural sugars. Grains-waving fields of grain. Kernels-the heart, the life-prepared for your health and enjoyment and the building of body proteins. Nuts-a concentrated, health-building delicacy provided by a thoughtful Creator. Vegetables-in abundance and variety and color to suit every taste and desire. Firsthand, Creator-appointed foods for the human race.

Does the healer tell men and women that this brief summary pictures the original diet God gave to man, and that, when it is followed with wisdom and simplicity, the best health is enjoyed? Does he tell them that the body is the temple of God? Said Paul, "Have you forgotten that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?" 1 Corinthians 6:19, Phillips.

Would you bring anything unclean into a temple? No? Yet many unclean things are brought into our bodies. And I almost hesitate to read what Paul says about this practice-it is so straight! If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." 1 Corinthians 3:17. No wonder Paul says "Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Could it be that what we eat or drink has more to do with the health of the soul than we have realized? Evidently.

This brings us to the fundamental difference between true and false healing. One deals only with the momentary need of the body. The other, along with healing, teaches men how to live in harmony with the laws of the Creator. One promises life in obedience-the other in disobedience. In counterfeit healing there is no recognition of the part sin may have played in producing illness, and no turning away from it. But the Savior says to every man, "Go, and sin no more."

The healing of the body. The healing of the soul. And who can say which is the greater miracle? "How thankful I am that God not only said to Roy Slaybaugh, 'Take up thy bed, and walk,' but that He also said to me, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee.'"

These were the words of Berkley Jones, once a desperate criminal, his picture in every guard tower, with orders to shoot to kill if he should step out of bounds.

Berkley Jones, with his brother, had escaped from prison with the help of a pistol. They were racing at eighty-five miles an hour around a curve on a narrow country road when they collided with an innocent man.

God miraculously healed the torn body, and at last Roy Slaybaugh gained permission to visit the two young men in the Oregon State Penitentiary. A strangely deep friendship sprang up. Both boys gave their hearts to Christ. Both were paroled. Berkley attended a Christian college and is now faithfully witnessing for the Lord in working for youth.

Talking with Berkley Jones, I looked into the face of one redeemed by a miracle as great as the recreation of a torn, broken body. Here was a re-created soul. Imagine, once a desperate criminal, his picture in every guardhouse-imagine him talking to me like

this, as he described his first meeting with one he had so greatly wronged: "Here was the man I had seen practically dead beside the road the day I hit him. Now I saw how God had healed him. And then to know that this man could forgive me the terrible wrong I had done to him. For the first time I saw what forgiveness meant. It was that which led me to Christ."

And then he concluded, "How thankful I am that God not only said to Roy Slaybaugh, 'Take up thy bed, and walk,' but that He also said to me, 'Thy sins he forgiven thee.'"

Yes, who can tell which is the greater miracle? Both demand the creative power of God. But while one restores life here, the other ensures life eternal.

Friend, please know that God will hear your sincere prayer for the healing of the body. But the ears of a loving heavenly Father are even more eager to hear the prayer, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." God never says No, or even Wait, to this request.

16. Now Never to Be Tired

SKIDDING ALONG! Getting by! Getting by with the aid of too many cups of coffee, too many cigarettes, too much wound-up nervous energy-and too little sleep, relaxation, fun, and frolic. Spending five dollars worth of nervous energy on a five-cent problem. Tense, parchment-faced individuals who cannot decide whether to take a Benzedrine and go to a party or take a Aspirin and go to bed!

An old legend tells of a Portuguese monastery that stood precariously atop a three-hundred-foot cliff. Visitors were strapped in a huge wicker basket, then pulled to the top with an old ragged rope. As one visitor stepped into the basket for the descent, he asked anxiously, "How often do you get a new rope?" "Whenever the old one breaks," a monk replied.

Risky-dangerous-like skidding through life on a threadbare rope! Tired-ready to break!

In this hurry-scurry, pell-mell, atomic age of jets, speed, and spasm, we take too little time to live sanely. We careen down the wild highway of modern life until our health is gone. And then, with our time and with our money, we pay. Too late we discover that when the rope breaks, it cannot be replaced. The Creator gave us only one.

It was back in 1925 that a young medical student at the German University of Prague, burning with enthusiasm for the art of healing, noticed what many physicians before him had noticed, that there are certain symptoms that are common to a great many diseases, and are therefore of little help in making diagnosis. For instance, the fact that a patient feels ill, has a slight fever, a loss of appetite, and a few scattered aches and pains, would hardly enable a physician to pinpoint the disease.

Young Hans Selye was too new in the medical profession to realize just how laughable his question might sound to his elders if he should find the courage to ask it. But why, he wondered, had physicians since the dawn of medicine given their attention to understanding the specific symptoms of individual diseases and never troubled themselves to understand the condition of "just being sick"? What is it that makes a man sick-not sick with pneumonia, or sick with scarlet fever, or sick with measles, but just plain sick? My could not the methods and instruments of research be applied to that problem?

That question in a pioneering young mind was the beginning of many years of research that has resulted in a most valuable contribution to modern science-the better understanding of the stress of life.

Stress, you see, is simply the wear and tear of life. It is what life does to you. Stress is not necessarily caused by some great problem that rolls suddenly upon the mind or body of man. It may be caused by crossing a street in traffic, by reading with poor light, by the ringing of the telephone, by an endless variety of routine everyday occurrences-even by sheer joy. It is not possible to avoid stress entirely. But it is possible, and very important, to adjust your reaction to it, to strengthen the body's defenses against it. For medical science now knows that many diseases are caused largely by errors in the body's response to stress, rather than by germs or poisons or any other outside agent.

One of Dr. Selye's most valuable, and most interesting, contributions has been to point out that every man begins life with a certain reserve of vital force, or adaptation energy. Once it is gone, it cannot be replaced. It is like a bank account that can be depleted by withdrawals but cannot be increased by deposits.

Many people use up this vitality, restore it from superficial supplies, and are tricked into thinking the loss has been made up by rest. On the contrary, every withdrawal of the deeper reserves of vital force leaves its scar. The man who thinks he can tax his body beyond normal limits and then restore it all by a few hours or a few days of rest is like the spendthrift who draws money out of his savings, puts it into his checking account, and reasons that no loss has been sustained.

That man deceives himself. For stress, somewhere, is wearing the defenses thin. The body is only as strong as its weakest part. And someday, like the rope at the Portuguese monastery, it will break.

I am aware that men and women are caught today in the grip of tense nerves, the whirl of social commitments, a chain of never ending pressures that seem quite beyond their control. Anxiety and stress are in the air we breathe. No wonder men and women are tired-ready to break.

Listen to this significant description of our day: "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." 2 Timothy 3:1-4, R.S.V.

Stress in the last days. And every one of us has felt it. But tornadoes are not mentioned as the cause. Earthquakes are not blamed. The stress we feel is not the mysterious fallout of H-bombs. Stress comes from within.

But men and women do not want to look within. They are not content to lay their guilt and their grudges at the foot of an old fashioned cross. A cross does not seem to fit into this pell-mell age. They look elsewhere to drown their restless boredom.

Tired-ready to break! But millions keep themselves awake, and keep themselves asleep, and try to solve their endlessly growing problems, with a streamlined pill. They ignore nature's red light and career 'blindly on.

Fatigue, you see, is nature's warning that vital energy is being exhausted. But men and women ignore the warning, put a penny in the fuse box by indulging in another cup of coffee, another cigarette, another pill-and carry on.

These are not idle words. The spine-chilling term drug addiction may be nearer to you and your family than you think.

Let us go back to World War II, when new drugs were discovered that gave their users abnormal strength and courage temporarily. The Allies, the Nazis, the Japanese, used them. They went into the kits of men sent on dangerous missions.

But tragedy occurred when with war's end these same drugs moved onto our highways to keep sleepy truck drivers awake. Then into the athletic lockers across America, and onto the playing fields to stimulate more spectacular performance. And finally into the medicine cabinets of average American families.

Amphetamine-liberally doled out to our people! It was this same amphetamine that Carl Austin Hall used to gather courage to kidnap and murder little Bobby Greenlease. Six billion doses of amphetamine are taken each year in the United States. This drug, which can be a most potent introduction to the life of an addict, to the world's cruelest vice, is one of the largest selling drugs in the United States.

These chemical crutches look innocent enough. The first one may make you feel like a miracle. But how does it make you feel to know that a surprising number of cars you meet on the highway are driven by mildly, or not so mildly, drugged persons-persons who at any moment may suddenly see things coming toward them that are not there? Death travels the concrete ribbons. And the intoxicant responsible may not be in a bottle at all, but in a streamlined pill!

The average man or woman would draw back in horror if he felt he were a victim of morphine or cocaine. But the newer drugs are no less dangerous than the older. The barbiturates, for example, can deaden the higher centers of the brain which act as the watchdog of the conscience. With this watchdog drugged to sleep, a person forgets his inhibitions, and wild impulses may rage unchecked. No crime is impossible to the man whose conscience is asleep.

I wonder if you realize just how stimulated we are. I wonder if you realize how much the term drug addiction really includes.

Did you know that if a warehouse were stacked high with bags of ordinary coffee beans, there would not be an ounce of actual food value in it? Could it be that the millions of pounds of coffee consumed by Americans are only pennies in the fuse box, forcing tired bodies to carry on beyond their strength? Is there such a thing as coffee addiction? Many medical men are answering, Yes.

Did it ever occur to you that the popularity of many cola drinks is not due to their flavor, or even to their tremendous advertising, but to the dose of caffeine they contain? And is afternoon tea only a pleasant custom? Try giving it up!

Why is it that when medical science reveals the relationship between smoking and lung cancer-why is it, I say, that tobacco sales waver only slightly and then return to normal and continue to rise?

Can there be any other answer than that men can't quit smoking without the aid of a power greater than their own?

Tired-ready to break! Is it not time to ask, "What makes a man tired?"

A book popular in our bookstores for some years bore the title *How Never to Be Tired*. It had a phenomenal sale because there are so many millions of tired people in the world.

Now the assertion that it is possible never to be tired obviously needs qualification. For there is a natural and normal tiredness that comes from physical labor. The wise man said that the sleep of a laboring man is sweet. And in John 4:6 we are told that Jesus was weary and found it necessary to rest.

A wholesome bodily weariness from hard work is quickly balanced. The energy lost during the day is built up with a good night's sleep. But there is a tiredness that is not so replaced-a tiredness that dips into the reserves of vital force. What is it, then, that in this deeper sense makes you tired?

A troubled mind-selfishness-worry-depression-fear-guilt-and the streamlined pill you take to try to correct them. All these make you tired. All these produce stress. All these break down the life forces and invite disease. All these can poison the springs of life.

You say, "All this is very startling. And I can see that it is true. But what can I do about it? How can I keep from passing on the tiredness of the mind to the body?"

Thank God, there is an answer! And that answer is not simply understanding the psychological aspects of the problem, however helpful that may be. Nothing will satisfy now except that which meets the simple, unadorned needs of the soul. You want a prescription for the strange, unsatisfied tiredness within.

Therefore I offer you the invitation of the Savior. "Come unto me and I will give you rest."

Simple words. But they are the words of the Creator of the body and of the mind. These words, I sincerely believe, are a prescription for all the physical, mental, and spiritual ills of man. They may sound too simple to work. But they have never failed.

Is yours a tired body? The world offers its miracle drugs. But God says, I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee."

Is yours a tired mind? Modern science knows how to jerk a tired mind out of a rut. But God says, "A new heart [a new mind] also will I give you."

Is yours a tired soul? There are voices that counsel you to silence the conscience, to forget your inhibitions, if you would be healed. But Jesus came to "save his people from their sins."

Rest! When you lay your guilt at the foot of the cross, you will find it. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Rest! When you lay your selfishness at the foot of the cross, you will find it. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall save it."

Rest! When you lay your fear at the foot of the cross, you will find it. "Perfect love casts out fear: because fear hath torment." Fear torments. Guilt poisons. Selfishness kills. But love heals!

Rest! Do you long for it? Remember the words of the minister, "When a man sees in one woman that dream of purity and sweetness that has ever haunted his soul."

"But wait," you say. "That was long ago." Or, "That is not for me."

Then let me say it this way: When a man, or a woman, finds in the Savior that dream of peace and rest that has ever haunted his soul, when he finds in the Rock of Ages the strength and satisfaction his heart has been unconsciously seeking, he can know that he need never tire again!

17. God and I Are Partners

GOD AND I are partners, somewhat in the way God and one certain man raised a successful corn crop. Here is how the man described it:

"God and I raised fifty acres of corn. He created the soil; He laid deep reservoirs of moisture beneath it. . . . I plowed the land, harrowed it, and buried the grains of corn in neat rows.

I left the planted field in His care. The warmth of His sunshine played upon it. Tiny green shoots appeared.

I cultivated the ground as God worked by my side. If He had not done His work well, I should have failed. If I had not done my work well, He would have failed....

"With my two horses I drove up and down the long rows. God used 121,000 horses in the field-2,420 horsepower units of divine energy per acre every moment that the sun shone.

"Throughout the long summer, He watered the growing crop, not like the meager dripping of a garden hose; He distributed 165,000 tons of water over the fifty acres of earth.

I worked 500 hours on our fifty acres.

"God worked more than six hours to my one-twenty-four hours a day all summer without pausing a minute.

"Even after I had finished my work and left the field, He stayed on. Without a miracle I should have had no corn for my labor.

"Each grain I planted in May became 1,200 grains in September. "The corn we raised is His and mine, for we are fellow workers." Partnership with God! One of the most fascinating possibilities of the Christian life is that of entering into partnership with the Creator.

You see, the God who created our world could manage it without our help, if He chose. He could take His appeal to the world without our assistance. He could make angels His ministers, and finance the work from His own unseen storehouses of wealth. The Shepherd could go out alone to find the lost sheep. Instead, He asks us to go with Him, to share the satisfaction of finding lost men and women and bringing them back to the fold.

It was just such a fascinating possibility that Jesus placed before the rich young ruler when He said, "One thing thou lacks: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shall have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." Mark 10:21.

Jesus looked into the face of a young man who might have done a work like that of the Apostle Paul. His sparkling talent, united to the Savior, might have won many for the kingdom. But Jesus saw one defect of character. "One thing thou lacks: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor." And the words cut like a knife.

God does not call every man to sell all that he has and give it to the poor. But He does call every man to decide what his relationship to the things of this world shall be.

Evidently it is not a sin to have wealth. For I read, "Thou shall remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that gives thee power to get wealth." Deuteronomy 8:18. And God said through the Apostle John, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou may prosper and he in health, even as thy soul prospers." 3 John 2:1.

Abraham and Job were without doubt among the wealthiest men of their times. Yet both recognized the divine claim upon all that came into their hand. Nicodemus was a man of great wealth. And God made him a mighty pillar of strength to the early church. There are modern Nicodemus's, too. I know some of them.

There is the physician whose dying minister father asked him to carry on his work. The son said later, I had a lot of confidence in my father's prayers. But I didn't see how that prayer could ever be answered."

This doctor had lost his faith in Christ as a personal Savior. He worshiped the god of the philosophers. He dabbled in the Eastern occult sciences and felt drawn toward the masters of the East. Finally, almost at the point of no return, God called him back.

He heard the call and stopped dead in his tracks. Then in a spontaneous desire to acknowledge God's ownership of his wealth, he placed a gift of breathtaking proportions upon the altar.

Three years later that man's son-in-law was proudly displaying a choice mountain ranch that the doctor had just purchased. It was after dark, and it was necessary to see the property by moonlight and spotlight. He pointed out the spring where they had drilled into the side of the mountain and found water in answer to prayer. "You know," he said, "dad could have put his money then into a ranch like this, instead of giving it to God. But he wanted to give it. He followed his conviction. And now God has made it possible for him to have this too." It works that way!

There is the man who had a small construction business. It was just an ordinary business, nothing spectacular about it. But God blessed him with good judgment. And then came the space age with its missiles. Construction near a government launching site could only prove a good investment. God touched that man's heart with the spirit of giving, with the burden to carry His message into the cities that soon may close against it. His gifts, likewise, have been in breathtaking sums, and will be counted in a multitude of trophies for the kingdom.

I shall never forget the morning that a distinguished-looking gentleman of about eighty years walked into a film studio in New York City and joined me before the cameras to tell his story.

He told how he had built up his fortune, and how he had forgotten God's part in it all. "It was I who had made the money," he said. It was I who could make the decisions. I had been so independent of God, though I believed in Him."

Then suddenly a private fortune of forty million dollars vanished, almost overnight. Crushed, broken, defeated, he tossed restlessly in a hospital room, afraid the morning would never come-and afraid it would!

Nurses watched. They dared not leave him. And then, with the dawn came a gospel hymn:

"No matter what may be the test,
God will take care of you;

Lean, weary one, upon His breast,
God will take care of you."

(Copyright, Hope Publishing Company, owner.)

He spoke slowly into the camera: I found that in the matter of faith and prayer I was as helpless as a man in deep water who doesn't know how to swim. As I heard the song that morning, my heart cried out, 'O God, will You-will You take care of me?'

Those singing nurses taught him how to pray. Those singing nurses helped J. C. Penney to find his God. And he found a Friend who cared, a partnership that never failed.

God does not call every man to be a Nicodemus. He does not call every man, like the rich young ruler, to sell all and give to the poor. But He places before every man the fascinating possibility of partnership with Him. It may be an unequal partnership, to be sure, for God does so much and we can do so little. But it is partnership nonetheless. And every man, when he has done his best, can look back and say, If God had not done His work well, I should have failed. If I had not done my work well, He would have failed."

Yes, if God calls every man to partnership with Himself, He must have a plan. And that plan contains one of the most challenging, the most incredible, promises in all Scripture. Listen!

"Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, said the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Malachi 3:10.

When the impact of that promise begins to dawn, when we get our thinking straight on these practical matters, we step into a surprising, a totally satisfying, adventure in faith.

Think it through. First of all, this is God's world. He is the absolute owner of all things. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Psalm 24:1. He gives us everything. But in return He asks from us only a faithful stewardship of our tithes and offerings.

Did you know that although Christ often condemned the actions of the Pharisees, He commended their tithing? "You pay tithe," He told them, "but there are a number of very important things you have missed." And He continued, "These ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Matthew 23:23.

And do you remember the words of Jesus, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's"? Matthew 22:21. We often quote those words to point out our moral obligation to the government under which we live. But I ask, Are we equally careful in rendering to God that which is His?

It is a matter of loyalty. That is the secret. And when we learn it, living faith begins to grow!

God's plan for gospel finance is clear. And it always works. He says, "Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse and prove me."

I think you can see that not by the wildest stretch of the imagination can these words be construed to mean that a Christian should have to support the work of God by gathering up cast-off clothing from the attic and bring it to the church basement for a

rummage sale. A Christian should not need to bake pies or beans or hold bingo parties to gather up money for the propagation of the gospel.

Now please do not misunderstand me. A bake sale, the repairing of garments for the needy, or the promotion of some building project these are perfectly proper in their Place. But never should they be substituted for God's plan of partnership in supporting the work of His kingdom.

I sincerely believe that this very inconsistency, this failure to carry out God's plan, has sometimes caused non-Christians to lose confidence in religion, thinking it to be merely another racket.

The Presbyterian Record reports that "Horace Greeley once received a letter from a woman stating that her church was in distressing financial straits. They had tried every device they could think of -fairs, strawberry festivals, oyster suppers, a donkey party, turkey banquets, Japanese weddings, poverty sociables, mock marriages, grab bags, box sociables, and necktie sociables. 'Would Mr. Greeley be so kind as to suggest some new device to keep the struggling church from disbanding?' The editor replied: 'Try religion.' Yes, why not try God's plan?

If I wish to honor my mother, or my wife, with a gift, I do not measure my waistline and put its equivalent in pennies in a little sock and resent it to her with fanfare. No, I take from my earnings, and sacrifice if necessary, to give to the one I love.

At one time David was offered, without charge, cattle that he might sacrifice to the Lord. But he said, "Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." 2 Samuel 24:24.

One of the truest principles of the abundant life is unselfish giving, giving to the point of sacrifice. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over." Luke 6:38.

But some may be reasoning, I always give as I feel impressed as the Spirit moves me."

Unfortunately, impulse giving is not dependable. The work of God can no more be supported by impulse than can the government. Suppose that the government should send its tax collector passing the hat from door to door, appealing to patriotic pride and love of country. The nation would be a laughingstock and become financially bankrupt before many mornings.

God's plan is dependable. And the results, whenever and wherever men take God at His word, eloquently prove its worth. When the tithe is brought "into the storehouse" and distributed from there, according to the divine plan, the minister is no longer dependent upon impulse giving. He is not dependent upon the strength of his promotion or appeal, upon the financial ability of his congregation, or upon the charity of his members. He is free to give himself fully to the ministry, knowing that his needs are cared for by a regular and adequate, though certainly not extravagant, income from the Lord's treasury. He likely will not be lured away from the place of need by the promise of financial gain, for under the tithing system every minister, whether he pastors a large city congregation or a number of struggling country churches, receives alike for his labor. It is an arrangement equitable for both minister and people.

"Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse." And listen to the promise: "Prove me now if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Here is not a get-rich-quick plan. Here is not a convenient wedge to pry open the door of prosperity. God is not a cosmic errand boy answering to the whims of the selfish. But here is a promise that God delights to honor. "Prove me now," He says.

It was many years ago that I personally began taking God at His word. And the incredible promise of that scripture has always met my need.

During my late college days, with a wife and child, the need for stretching dollars became a very real problem. But it also became a satisfying adventure in faith.

You see, we reasoned that the tithe-the tenth-was already God's. And we wanted to give something. So we decided to keep out from our very small income 10 percent for tithe and another 10 percent for offerings. Perhaps that was more than we needed to do. But how God blessed!

Now we did not just sit back and expect a miracle. We did all we could to provide for ourselves. And it was a crowded program those days-with a full college study load, working a late evening shift in a nearby industrial plant, and pastoring a church forty miles away.

Then came the months when because of weather and a heavy study load we could no longer provide as much. Our only income then was twenty-five dollars a month. But somehow God just took over.

I remember the day when my wife confided in me that she was wearing her last pair of hose. And I confided in her that we were spending our last dollar. We prayed, knowing full well that God understood and would fulfill His promise when we did our part. Had He not said, "My God shall supply all your need"? We believed He meant just what He said.

And He certainly did. The very next morning I found in our post office box a package containing two pairs of hosiery. I thought of the words, "Before they call, I will answer." And how those stockings did last!

And I remember the time we sat down after Christmas and figured out ever so carefully our expenses for the coming year. To finish our educational venture we knew just how much we could spend. To some it might have appeared impossible to continue our Plan of tithing. But God was not unprepared.

We had it all worked out-except that there was no money for food for the month of January. And then, as we returned from visiting our relatives, we could hardly push open the door because of the boxes of food the Lord had impressed someone to bring-enough for an entire month. And only God had really known the problem. To this day I do not believe that the most astute bookkeeper could explain how the money stretched. Sometimes God permits His arithmetic to be understood only by faith.

Those days of early struggle are now but precious memories. Yet through the years, even with the adequate though modest income which God's plan provides the ministry, not once have I ceased to marvel at how nine tenths with God's blessing goes farther than ten tenths without it. It always works that way!

Well, I just wanted to tell you. I wanted you to know that in my heart, as in so many other hearts, is the conviction that God cares, cares enough to be concerned even with problems of dollars and cents.

It is a satisfying adventure to take God at His word and see how perfectly He fulfills His promise. The way of partnership with God unequal though that partnership may be-is the certain way to priceless faith in Him. That faith-that personal, living faith-can be yours today, if you so choose.

And remember, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

18. Masquerade of the Psychic

I WAS PASSING through London the day King George died. Princess Elizabeth and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, you remember, were on route to Australia, and little Prince Charles and Princess Anne were vacationing with their royal grandparents at Sandringham.

On the morning of the king's death immediate news of the bereavement was withheld from the children, who were playing in the nursery. However, Prince Charles noticed that the maids who came in to care for the room were weeping.

"Why is everyone so unhappy?" he inquired. And the nurse told him quietly, "Grandpa has gone away."

The little prince was not satisfied. He was soon asking for "Granny." When at last she came into the nursery, little Prince Charles sat on her knee, looked intently into her face, and asked, "Where has grandpa gone?" The queen mother was silent. She could think of nothing to say.

Death, from the day it first coldly introduced itself to man, has been a forbidding enigma. But it has been reserved for this generation to probe deeper into the mystery of life and death than any other. This is a generation that crowds eternity-and wants to know what is there.

It is little wonder, then, that moving boldly across the horizon of this questioning generation we see the masquerade of the psychic.

No man can close his eyes to it. Every man must decide what his relationship to it shall be.

Here we meet an issue that comes very close to the human heart. And what I say, I want to say with most tender sympathy. For the loneliness, the silence, that settle down upon one who has seen some treasured life slip into the shadows of death is so intense that we can have nothing but understanding sympathy for the heart that desperately seeks comfort.

The awful carriage and baptism of sorrow occasioned by our recent world wars have given to psychic cults an opportunity of which they have taken full advantage, until today there is not a home that escapes the bombarding of the psychic by way of newspaper, radio, television, or best seller. Everybody wants to know!

This intense interest in psychic research has put on its laboratory coat and crept into our universities. It is tugging at the edges of the medical profession. The hypnotist is attempting to probe deeper and deeper into the secrets of the human mind.

Countless thousands are turning to the psychic-some in the spirit of scientific investigation, others out of curiosity or for entertainment. And the number is legion who in their loneliness have become confirmed devotees of these movements.

You may, however, be one of the many who have cast all these phenomena aside as trickery. You may have dismissed them from your mind as fraud. But while some of them may be trickery-and even their own adherents admit that within the psychic circle there is much fraud-yet the person who dismisses them all as trickery or fraud has not had the slightest glimpse into these movements which had their origin in ancient times and which have left indelible marks on all the centuries until today no man or woman can be oblivious to their impact.

I am not a spiritualist. I have shunned involvement in the psychic world-not because I doubt the phenomena, but because I have learned in the Word of God of their origin.

Many have inquired concerning the Bible position on such phenomena. And is not an examination of this popular subject now a most logical step in our search for truth?

You see, we have come to a time when we dare not trust our five senses. Issues can no longer be safely decided by our eyes and our ears and our feelings. The issues that confront us today can be safely met only by the solid "It is written" of Scripture.

But first, do we have clearly in mind just what we want to discover in our search for truth? The reason that the principal psychic cults have appealed to so many thousands of people is that they claim to give opportunity to heartsick, lonely, bereaved men and women to communicate with those whom they have loved and lost.

Now, either this claim is true or it is untrue. If true, it is the grandest and sweetest truth that ever came to mourning humanity. If untrue, it is a shameless fraud perpetrated in the name of life's most tender memories. As we open the Word of God, I leave it with you to decide. The claim is true or untrue. You will agree that it cannot be both.

We read, then, from the one dependable source of information. "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:19, 20.

Right on the subject, isn't it? But notice this scripture as translated by Dr. Moffatt: 'When they tell you to consult mediums and ghosts that cheep and gibber in low murmurs, ask them if a nation should not rather consult its God. Say, 'Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? Consult the Message and the Counsel of God!''

That is a straight, clear word from God. When we are invited to consult one who is sensitive in the psychic arts, one who claims contact with those departed, we should answer, 'Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?' Rather, "Consult the Message and the Counsel of God!"

Now what does the message of God reveal about the dead? Do the dead come back? "As the cloud is consumed and vanished away: so he that goes down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more." Job 7:9, 10. Evidently there has been a mistake.

Now follow me carefully. The great hope which the Scriptures hold out to the human heart is that on the resurrection morning-not at death-loved ones torn from us will be united with us again. In fact, the entire structure of Christianity rests upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and the final resurrection of His followers in the last days. Job himself said, "For I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." Job 19:25. And he adds this triumphant note: "Yet in my flesh shall I see God." Verse 26.

But as to the dead coming out at the bidding of the curious, or returning to their household to see how loved ones are getting along, the Word says, "He shall return no more to his house." They are not to be recalled until that grand and final day when Jesus Himself shall return. In that day, and not until that day, death will give way to eternal life.

The Bible goes still further. It says that at death man's power to think ceases. "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Psalm 146:3, 4.

There need be no mistake here. The Creator knows what happens at death. And He tells us that the dead do not think. Let me read another scripture. "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished." Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6.

There we have it! The dead know nothing. They cannot remember. They cannot love or hate or envy.

However much you or I may have probed the mysteries of life and death and of the human mind, we do not know what is on the other side of the grave, except as the Word of God reveals it to us. But thank God, enough is revealed to give birth to genuine hope within the human breast-hope that all humanity desperately needs. Jesus Himself said that our beloved dead rest peacefully until the resurrection day, and that then He will call them forth. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28, 29.

Here the Creator of heaven and earth, who holds the issues of life and death in His hands, states simply that there is an hour coming when all the dead will hear His penetrating, life-giving voice. And then, not at death but on the resurrection morning, God's waiting ones will come forth with the priceless gift of immortality. That is the gospel, pure and simple.

Some years ago a small boy came into Sunday School from a non-Christian home. His mother had a morbid fear of death. One day, after listening to the story of the resurrection of Christ, the child bounded home with shining face and exclaimed, "Oh, Mother! You don't need to be afraid anymore to die, for Jesus went through the grave and left a light behind Him!"

Yes, one of the sweetest and most beautiful truths in all of God's Book is that when a man dies he rests quietly, undisturbed by memories of a troubled life or by concern for his loved ones, until the promised resurrection day. One prominent businessman said to me, as we studied the Word of God on this subject, "If that isn't the way it is, then that's the way it ought to be!"

Notice how consistent God's plan is. Think it through. Why would we need a resurrection at the end of time if men go to their reward immediately at death? Why would Jesus need to return to this earth a second time, as He has promised, to gather His people, they are already with Him now in Paradise? Why do the Scriptures teach a judgment in the last days if men are already judged at death?

Do you see? The dead do not return to their house. Their power to think ceases. They know nothing until Jesus calls them forth to everlasting life in that glorious reunion day.

An intelligent lady was studying the Bible on this subject. She had been very much interested in communication with the dead. But when she came to this particular point in her study, she exclaimed, "Then who is writing on my slate?"

Do you understand her dilemma? If what we have read from the Word of God is true-and it is-then who gives the messages in the darkened room? Who is masquerading in the disguise of those loved and lost? What are the powers that are operating in the psychic world? We have seen what they are not. Then what are they?

God tells us who the real powers are. The Scriptures clearly identify those powers that parade in the garb of others as the followers of Lucifer-the fallen angels.

I fully realize how difficult it is to grasp the idea that evil angels can actually work miracles. But that fact, I sincerely believe, is the key to understanding the psychic phenomena with which we are bombarded today. Please forever settle one thing in your mind: The supernatural, the miraculous, does not necessarily come from God. When that fact is fully established in your thinking, you are safeguarded from many a deception.

"For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles." Revelation 16:14.

You see, the fallen angels, the followers of Lucifer, the devils the Bible talks about, are superior intelligences. They can work miracles-miracles which will deceive all who are not guarded by a knowledge of Scripture. Satan can actually transform himself into

an angel of light. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." 2 Corinthians 11:13, 14.

You understand now that it is altogether possible for a fallen angel to masquerade as another being, to actually transform himself into the form of a loved one. You begin to understand now what really happened in the experience of King Saul, in the seance described in the Bible in 1 Samuel 28. Notice verses 6 and 7:

"And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor."

But did not Saul actually speak to Samuel? I ask you, How could he speak to Samuel if Samuel, like all the dead, was quietly resting in his grave with no knowledge of what was taking place? And would God send a message to Saul through the dead when He had already refused to communicate with him through His appointed means? You can see that the two sources of information are direct opposites.

No, the apparition claiming to be Samuel was not he. It was only an evil intelligence playing the part of Samuel in a psychic drama forbidden by God. And Saul died for his transgression. "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it." 1 Chronicles 10: 13.

Saul died for his sin. And God writes over the seance, over every attempt to contact the dead, "Wrong, wrong, wrong!" For the same evil powers that operated back there are operating today. Let me read it from the words of F. F. Morse, himself a spiritualist. In his book Practical Occultism, page 85, he says, "The phenomenal aspect of modern spiritualism reproduces all of the essential principles of the magic witchcraft and sorcery of the past. The same powers are involved, the same intelligences operating." Revealing evidence, isn't it?

Let me say it as kindly and as earnestly as I know how: According to the Word of God these spirits which come to us and claim to be the dear ones taken away by death, are not dead people. They are not living people. They are not people at all! They are fallen angels masquerading in the form of our loved ones.

A friend of mine was making Christian calls in Scotland. But in one home this Christian worker was surprised to be met with cold reserve by the lady of the house. The conversation, however, seemed to invite the lady's confidence, and soon she explained her bitterness toward all religion.

It seems that during the war years she had received a cable from the government stating that her husband was missing in action. For many long months she waited, with no word. Then well-meaning friends urged her to attempt to contact her husband through the seance, for they reasoned that no doubt he was dead.

She felt that a measure of comfort might be hers if she could make contact. And to her amazement she saw the likeness of her loved one. She recognized his voice. They talked over many personal things.

But months later her husband, alive and well, walked unannounced through the front door. He had never been dead or even seriously wounded. Unfortunately this disillusioned woman became bitter toward religion because of the evident deception, the shameless advantage taken of her sorrow by wicked and lying spirits. Remember? "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles."

No wonder Paul wrote, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostle of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

I want to be kind. I have nothing but love in my heart for those who have been sincere in their attempt to find comfort in the realm of the psychic. But the powers back of these phenomena take unfair advantage of men and women. They come with caresses and words of love when we are weak and sorrowful. That is why I feel compelled to speak as I do.

I have watched the growth of these sciences in Asia and Europe and America. I have followed carefully the experiments in parapsychology, as scientists with laboratory exactness have attempted to discover just what the extrasensory perception of the human mind, both before death and after, might be.

I have examined the cults of the dead, the claims of the masters of the East, with their long trail of offshoots. And I have found in them what many honest investigators have found before me. Sherwood Eddy, for instance, though greatly impressed with what he saw, confessed, I frankly admit that there is not only triviality and contradiction but fraud and trickery in the psychic field."

Please do not be confused. God's message for this critical hour is simply not found in the trivial disclosures of sometimes truthful and sometimes lying spirits. Saving truth is not contained in the "profound" information that two sisters had a ring, or in the materialization of an ash tray, or in the marvelous ability to see a table fork when someone else thinks about one.

"Have you seen Jesus?" one of the spirits was asked. And the spirit replied, "I have not seen Jesus over here, nor have I met any who have."

Jesus is not in spiritualism. There may be hymns in its seances. It may accept Him as a great medium. But He must leave the cross behind. Said Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, an outstanding devotee, "Spiritualism will sweep the world and make it a better place in which to live. When it rules over the world it will banish the blood of Christ."

But any supposed hope for the world that leaves out the blood of Christ is an empty hope, a cold hope. Again I quote from Sherwood Eddy: "One sometimes feels in such writings the pantheistic chill of the arctic night."

No, man's hope is not in psychic phenomena, not in messages from a cold, filmy spirit land, not in the dead at all, but in the living Christ. Man shall not live by word from the dead, "but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." And His Word

contains the most comforting promise ever made: I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

Seeing our Lord face to face. Joining our loved ones in the glorious light of never-ending day, nevermore to part. This is the promise! This is the gospel! This is the future that Calvary has made possible!

I urge you to turn aside every other consideration. Crowd out every other thought, and turn your eyes on Calvary. There is a controversy raging between good and evil, between right and wrong. Our only safety is to stand in the shadow of the cross!

"Beneath the cross of Jesus
I fain would take my stand,
The shadow of a mighty rock
Within a weary land."

Elizabeth C. Clephane.
Will you stand with me there?

19. The Other Side of Death

ONE of the most fascinating incidents coming from the annals of a past generation tells of the conversion of two prominent men who were avowed skeptics. One was the eminent Gilbert West; the other, Lord Lyttelton, famous English statesman.

These two men agreed that Christianity should be destroyed. But they also agreed that in order to destroy it, two things were necessary. They must disprove the resurrection of Christ, and they must dispose of the conversion of the Apostle Paul.

They divided the task between them, West assuming responsibility for disproving the resurrection, and Lyttelton giving his attention to the experience on the Damascus road. They were to give themselves plenty of time—a year or more if necessary.

But what happened? When they met again to compare notes, they had both become strong and devoted Christians. Each had been confronted with the indisputable fact of the resurrection. Each confessed that the remarkable change in his life had come about as the result of his encounter with a risen Christ.

I have discovered that if anything will unsettle the skeptic, it will likely not be our arguments, however sane or sound. Rather, it will be the degree of our own conviction. And that conviction depends upon the reality of our personal awareness of a risen Lord.

Some time ago I made my way down the narrow, winding road leading from Herod's Gate in old Jerusalem, past General Gordon's Calvary, to the quiet garden tomb believed by scholars to be much like the tomb from which Jesus rose. I stepped into that tomb and found it—as the disciples found the tomb of their Lord—empty! The words of the angel echoed, "He is not here: for he is risen."

The grave of Mohammed at Medina in Arabia is not an empty grave. The tomb of Confucius in China is not an empty tomb. Parts of Buddha's body are enshrined as relics in different places in the Orient. But the tomb of Christ is empty! "He is not here: for he is risen."

Do you believe—do you actually believe—that Jesus rose from the dead? Do you believe that your dead, too, will live? That is the question that has haunted man for generations. It is one of the oldest questions ever asked. Said Job, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Job 14:14.

The Apostle Paul puts the answer so plainly that none can fail to understand: "For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." 1 Corinthians 15:16-19.

This life is not enough. It is not satisfactory even at its best. If all life amounts to is getting a start, building a home, becoming established, making a material success, achieving social distinction, and then going down to the grave without hope of anything in the future—then are we not most miserable? The finest things in life have been left out.

When Jesus was here, He talked much and often about His Father's house. He urged His followers to look beyond this life, to look beyond the grave and death. Then in one of the most profound and miraculous demonstrations of all time, He laid down His life—a Biblical and historical fact—and after three days rose from the dead.

On this indisputable fact Paul builds his strongest argument to bring hope to bereaved men and women down to the end of time. Listen to his clear, straight reasoning: "For if the dead rise not—then is not Christ raised."

In other words, if there is no resurrection, then Christ is not risen. And he continues, "If Christ be not raised.... they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." You see, the one depends upon the other. The resurrection of your loved ones is as certain as the resurrection of Christ. Your hope and mine for resurrection from death depends entirely on the irrefutable fact that Jesus defeated death.

We have watched with satisfaction the strides of medicine and science as, one after another, enemies of man have been laid low. We have seen smallpox and malaria yield to research. We have seen tuberculosis and polio pushed back. Cancer and heart disease are beginning to yield to the persistent touch of scientific study.

Will man finally lay low the last invading virus, the last enemy of man? Will we find in some test tube the secret of life? Will we push out into space and find on some distant planet a way to conquer death itself?

No, this space-age generation stands as helpless before the power of death as any other. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," said Paul. And only Christ can destroy it. Only He can say, I am he that lives, and was dead; and have the keys of death." Revelation 1:18.

Yes, He broke the bands of death by His mighty power, and will return, according to His promise, to speak life to those who have been resting.

It was Isaiah who said, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.... And the earth shall cast out the dead." Isaiah 26:19.

Did you notice? "Thy dead men shall live." Does that not mean, "Thy dead, too, shall live"? Wonderful news!

"But how," you ask, "will it all come about? What happens to a man between death and the resurrection?"

There are various opinions-sincere opinions-as to the condition of a man in death. Some believe that if a righteous man dies, he goes immediately to heaven; that if a wicked man dies, he goes at once to hellfire.

Others say that this is not entirely true; that when a man dies, he stops over at a Place called purgatory for cleansing. Many insist that he goes to a spirit world where he is able to send messages to his loved ones. Still others are convinced that when a man dies, it is the end of him forever. And there are those who believe that when a man dies, he quietly sleeps until the resurrection day.

You can readily see that all these opinions cannot possibly be correct, for they are contradictory. And certainly a man who stands this side of death's door cannot of himself know what lies on the other side.

But God knows, and in the Scriptures He has placed information enough, and definite enough, to satisfy any man who seeks for the truth in this matter. We are not left to our own often faulty opinions.

Let me take you, then, to what I believe is the plainest text in all the Scriptures about what happens at death. It is found in Ecclesiastes 12:7: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Here we have a description of what happens to a man when he dies. And the question naturally arises, "What is this spirit that returns to God?"

Now in many Bibles, down the center of the page, you will find what we speak of as the margin. In this margin the men who prepared the Bible for printing have indicated other texts that they feel refer to the same subject. They have also given us some alternate readings of the original text.

For instance, we read in James 2:26 that "the body without the spirit is dead." In the margin we find that an alternate translation for spirit is "breath." "The body without the breath is dead." The spirit, or the breath, is what keeps the body alive.

Now notice Job 27:3: "All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils." Again we find in the margin that spirit might also be translated "breath." The two words are often used interchangeably in Scripture.

"The spirit of God is in my nostrils." It is clear that the spirit that a man receives from God and that goes back to God when he dies, is what God put into his nostrils. So we face the question, What did God put into man's nostrils?

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Genesis 2:7.

God breathed into man's nostrils at creation the breath of life. And at death that spark, or breath, or spirit, of life simply returns to God who gave it. You see, that breath of life is the animating contact with the great Source of life.

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." Shall we picture man as he came from the hands of his Creator? There is a brain in his head ready to think-but it isn't thinking. There is blood in his veins ready to flow-but it isn't flowing. There is a heart in his breast ready to beat-but it isn't beating. He is ready to live, to love, to act-but he isn't living, loving, or acting, yet!

Now listen. "And breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Nowhere are we told in Scripture that God gave man a living soul. Man became a living soul as the result of the union of the body with the breath of life.

Then when a man dies, according to Ecclesiastes 12:7, the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit of life, or breath of life, or spark of life, returns to God who gave it, whether he be saint or sinner. Is that clear?

This question may help us to understand: If the union of the dust of the ground and the breath of life renders man a conscious personality and makes him a living soul, what happens to that living soul at death? Anyone can see that it simply ceases to be a living soul until the Life-giver reunites the body and the breath of life on the morning of the resurrection.

May I illustrate it this way? Suppose that we have here a pile of boards and a pile of nails. That is all we have-just a pile of boards and a pile of nails. Now we take these boards and nail them together according to a plan. We no longer have a pile of boards and a pile of nails. We now have a box.

Where did the box come from? "Oh you say, it came from the union of the pile of boards and the pile of nails." And you are right.

Now let us suppose that we no longer want a box. So we pull out the nails and put them in one place, and lay the boards in another place. Now where did the box go? You say, It didn't go anywhere; it simply ceased to be a box." Yes, you are right again.

Just so, in the beginning God formed man of two things-the dust of the ground and the breath of life. As a result of the union of these two, man became a living, loving, acting soul. When he dies, the two separate. The dust returns to the ground. The breath, or spark of life, from saint or sinner, returns to God who gave it. The living, loving, acting soul does not go anywhere. It simply ceases to be a conscious entity until the resurrection morning, when the body and the breath of life are united again. That is Scripture pure and simple!

What does this mean to you? What does it mean to me? It means that when a Christian dies, he can know that in the resurrection morning not only will his life be restored, but he will also be given immortal life.

“Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” 1 Corinthians 15:51-54.

What wonderful news! But now I ask you to reason with me for a moment. You believe what I have read regarding the resurrection. You believe that when Jesus comes He will call the dead to life. Of course you do-if you are a Christian. The resurrection has been one of the pillars of the Christian faith for centuries. In all the Scriptures it is held out as the only hope for the future. But why would we need a resurrection if we have already entered heaven at death?

The Scriptures teach the return of our Lord. And the avowed purpose of His coming is to receive His people. Why, I ask, would Christ come to get His loved ones if, as is popularly believed, they are already with Him?

We have read of a last-day judgment when the cases of all men will be decided. But again I ask, Why would a judgment be needed if the dead are already in the place of their rewards?

Do you not see that something is wrong here? I fear that this inconsistency which crept into the Christian church centuries ago has caused countless men and women to lose confidence in the teachings of the church.

No, according to the Scriptures, death does not mean to go to heaven. Death does not mean to go to hellfire. Death does not mean to go to purgatory. Death does not mean to go to the spirit world. Death does not mean to go anywhere. Death simply means a cessation of life, a sleep, until the resurrection morning.

Jesus called death a sleep. When Lazarus had died, He said simply, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.” John 11:11.

Think it through with me. Is there anything more wonderful than dreamless, peaceful sleep at night? All toil, care, and heartache forgotten-no pain, no tears. No sense of passing time.

Even so, the Christian who dies may close his eyes in sleep for a hundred years perhaps. Yet to him it will seem the very next moment when he opens his eyes to see Jesus. Think of it! Only moments away from looking into the face of the Savior! For so it will seem. Does not that take the sting out of death?

Yes, God’s way is the best after all. We do not enter heaven one by one. We will all go together, at Christ’s return, escorted by the Savior Himself into the City of God.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17.

The God of the atom, the God of life, can and will speak on that resurrection morning. And thy dead, too, will hear. Loved ones who have passed from us, their bodies racked by disease and pain, can and will come forth in the likeness of their Lord, with a new and throbbing vitality, a beauty never before known.

When Jesus comes through the blazing, vaulted heavens, He will call out with a voice of thunder, “Awake, you that sleep in the dust of the earth. Arise to everlasting life!”

And that voice calling our beloved dead from their graves will be heard the world around. Families will be reunited. Children snatched away by death will be placed again in their mothers’ arms. What a glad reunion day!

Think what it will mean to the crippled, to the blind, to those weakened by disease, to minds confused by fear. God says, “The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap and the tongue of the dumb sing.” Isaiah 35:5, 6.

But think what it will mean to the able-bodied and the strong, to those who love life and want to live. Death may seem welcome to a body racked by disease and pain. But to the strong and youthful, death can mean only disappointed hopes, disillusionment, shattered ambitions.

But here is the answer to death’s sting. Not in the discoveries of science, not in the exploration of outer space, not in anything man can do, but in the promise of the resurrection made by One who Himself demonstrated its possibility-here is our hope!

Perhaps someone is saying, “How can this be? How is it possible, after many years of burial, for a body to be resurrected from the grave?”

Have we forgotten the creative power that made man in the beginning and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life? If God could form man from the dust of the ground, could He not bring him again from the dust where he is resting? Then “why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” (Acts 26:8.)

A number of years ago Lord Lindsay, in his travels through the Near East, discovered a mummy whose inscription proved it to be some two thousand years old. Upon carefully unwrapping it, he found buried in the hand of this mummified man a bulb of vegetable life.

Wondering just how long vegetable life could last, sealed as this was, he took it carefully out and planted it in rich, sunny soil. To his surprise, within a short time the bulb grew and a beautiful flower appeared.

Lord Lindsay’s remarkable find came to the attention of Mrs. S. H. Bradford, who wrote these beautiful lines:

“Two thousand years ago a flower
Bloomed lightly in a far-off land;
Two thousand years ago its root
Was placed within a dead man’s hand.

“Before the Savior came to earth,
That man had lived and loved and died,
And ever in that far-off time
The flower had spread its perfume wide.

“Suns rose and set-years came and went,
The dead hand kept its treasure well;
Nations were born and turned to dust,
While life was hidden in that shell.

“The shriveled hand is robbed at last,
The root is buried in the earth,
When lo! the life long hidden there,
Into a glorious flower burst forth.

“Just such a plant as that which grew
From such a root when buried low,
Just such a flower in Egypt bloomed
And died two thousand years ago.

“Then will not He who watched the root
And kept the life within the shell,
When those He loves are laid to rest
Watch over their buried dust as well?

“And will not He from beneath the sod
Cause something glorious to arise?
Aye-though it sleeps through countless years,
Yet from that buried dust shall rise.

“Just such a face as greets you now,
Just such a form as here we bear,
Only more glorious, will arise
To meet the Savior in the air.

“Then will I lay me down in peace
When called to leave this vale of tears;
For in my flesh shall I see God
Even though I sleep two thousand years.”

What would you give for a hope like that? That hope, for many a sleeping one, is about to be fulfilled. The day is not far distant. It is the day to which Job looked forward when he said, “Yet in my flesh shall I see God.” It is the day of which David said, I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.” It is the day envisioned by the dying thief when he prayed, “Lord, remember me when thou comes into thy kingdom.”

I wonder if we realize the faith it took for the dying thief to pray that prayer. For if ever it appeared that He who called Himself the Son of God would have no kingdom, it was at that hour. And I wonder if we can comprehend the faith it took for the Son of God to answer as He did. Notice the vital significance of that word today. Today, when even My own disciples have forsaken Me. Today, when My own people have crucified Me. Today, when it appears that I shall never have a kingdom. Today, when it looks as though I could never save anybody. I say unto you today, You will be with Me in Paradise.

Friend, never let a comma, misplaced by sincere men, confuse you. The thief, no doubt, did not die that day. He did not expect to die that day. He did not expect Jesus to die that day. He knew that death by crucifixion was a long, slow process, often taking several days. You recall the surprise of Pilate, late that afternoon, when he learned that Jesus was already dead.

And death for the Son of God was to be like that which comes to every man quiet, restful sleep. He was to be resurrected, not from three days in Paradise, but from three days in the tomb. He would say to Mary when He made Himself known on that Sunday morning, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father." John 20:17.

No, the dying thief looked far past that dark hour when he said, "Remember me when thou comes into thy kingdom." He looked far down the corridors of time to the day when He whose right it is to reign shall receive the kingdom from His Father. And Jesus, cheered by his faith, responded, I say unto you today, you will be with Me in Paradise.

It was a day that appeared, to all but one, as only crushing defeat. But one had understood! May I remind you of one of the most significant battles in world history that of the Duke of Wellington and Napoleon Bonaparte? The old verger of Winchester Cathedral never tired of telling the story of the day when the news of the battle reached England. It came by sailing vessel to the south coast and was carried overland by semaphore to the top of Winchester Cathedral and on to London.

The populace eagerly waited as the semaphore spelled out the words,

"W-EL-L-I-N-G-T-O-N D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D."

Just then a dense fog settled down over the harbor, as this incomplete message was waved on to London. A pall of gloom and discouragement settled over the land. Streets were barricaded. Women and the elderly prepared to defend their country in the streets and in the fields if necessary. But finally the fog lifted, and the semaphore signals came through again:

"W-E-L-L-I-N-G-T-O-N
D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D
T-H-E
E-N-E-M-Y."

Can you imagine the wild delirium of joy that spread like a prairie fire, made all the more gladsome when contrasted with the earlier news so grossly misunderstood?

Need I draw the parallel? Does not this experience illustrate the meaning that the disciples read into Christ's crucifixion, while all the powers of the wicked one watched with hellish glee?

The sun refused to shine on the scene. Darkness covered the earth. The resounding peals of thunder reduced the slender faith of the disciples to just two words:

"J-E-S-U-S
D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D."

As they laid His limp, lifeless body in a borrowed tomb, their depression deepened. Hear them reasoning, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel!" They thought they had made a mistake. Surely Jesus must not be the long-awaited Savior after all. Only a dying thief had understood.

But then as the light broke on that resurrection morning, the message which should have been understood by His closest followers began to be clarified. And the world has ever since been able to read the life-giving and glorious message:

"J-E-S-U-S
D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D
D-E-A-T-H!"

I ask you, Is there any better news? Tongue cannot tell it, pen cannot write it-the hope this completed message brings to the human breast. Take courage, friend, for on the resurrection morning thy dead, too, shall live!

20. More Than Legend

MAN IS made to worship. He will bow down to something -or someone. Something-or someone-will have the deepest affection of which he is capable. Will it be prophet, philosopher, martyr? Legend, relic, or myth? Or will it be more than martyr-more than legend?

I have stood thoughtfully by, watching with wonder the rituals of Hinduism in India-rituals that range from the horrible to the sublime. In those Eastern lands, in seemingly endless forms, I saw men desperately seeking for peace and inner cleansing-and tireless in their search.

I saw Buddhism, with its yellow-robed monks and palm-leaf umbrellas, with its prayer wheels and elaborate ritual. Nearly five hundred million people seek to find inner cleansing in that meditative and passive religion.

I have observed the philosophies of China, the ethical teachings of Confucius and Lao-tzu. But behind the color and pageantry and gaiety of the Chinese festivals is man's inner hunger.

I have traveled through the world of Islam, with its submission, with its prophet, spanning half the globe. I have talked with these devoted followers of Mohammed and seen their burning sincerity and unashamed devotion.

I walked the soil of Palestine. I saw Judaism, sloping away from Sinai, justly proud of its heritage as the appointed keeper of the law.

How, you ask, is Christianity different from all these? What does it offer that others do not? Are its ceremonies more potent to cleanse and relieve the needs of the human heart? Or is Christianity only a search for God arising out of man's inherent urge to worship, and leaving him finally unsatisfied within?

Is Christianity only a philosophy of life that has evolved slowly from legend or ancient tradition? Or is it what it claims to be—a divine provision to cleanse man from his sin and offer him eternal life? Is Christianity, as it claims to be, the record of God's invasion of human history by Jesus Christ to die in man's place, to rest in man's tomb, and to break forever the bands of death?

Yes, one who visits the Holy Land today finds more than legend—more than myths or shrines. More than history. For along the streets of those villages passed One who claimed to be the Son of the living God.

I walked in the footsteps of that humble Galilean—followed Him through Jerusalem's streets, along the Via Dolorosa, the way of the cross, and out to that quiet Garden Tomb—the tomb that many believe to be most like the one from which our Lord stepped forth that Sunday morning nineteen hundred years ago.

Walking into that tomb, I felt again the difference between Christianity and every other religion. For the tomb of Christ is empty!

Other great religions worship at the tombs of their founders. And those tombs are not empty tombs. But there is not a shrine in the world that claims one bone of the body of the Son of God. He left death eternally behind that day—and left an empty tomb as a witness. Friend, if you are looking for certainty, here it is!

Men and women today are desperate for an answer to certain persistent questions. They must know why they worship, and what they worship, and whom they worship. And history, and relics, and traditions, and shrines, and saints and martyrs in the distant past these are not enough. These terrifying days demand more than legend!

Today what father and mother did, what grandfather and grandmother before them did—however honorable, however satisfying and saving to them—is no longer enough for you and for me. A second generation religion simply cannot meet the faith-shaking, mind confusing, vision-blurring impact of this nuclear and space age.

Men and women are desperate. They grasp at anything that offers even the flimsiest promise. But unfortunately our councils for peace turn out to be only great gatherings of gloomy men—men who grow more pessimistic with each new tangle in the thread of human survival.

So men and women turn instinctively to worship—to worship something. It may be the gods of science and technology, with their promises of a better life. It may be gods of materialism that still talk about security—a security that could blow up in one blinding flash. It may be gods of steel and aluminum and liquid oxygen—bigger and more elaborate capsules that might, they say, whisk us away to some distant planet where we could be safe from dictators—and where perchance we might find the secret of endless life.

There are those who turn to all these, I say, only to be finally disappointed. For human technology can never solve our problems in time. And if they are not solved in time, they are not solved at all.

Time—so exasperatingly slow when you and I were teen-agers. Time—once so leisurely moving across the generations. But time itself has become this planet's greatest threat. For time, at last, is running out.

That is why millions today have turned from the sordid, pell-mell pursuit of gain to think again of that memorable dawn nineteen hundred years ago. For it was on that morning that the Son of God asserted His divinity and shook a stunned, unbelieving world into the realization that the One they had rejected was their Creator.

At that moment the power of death was broken. And now, for the first time in human history, there surged in man's breast the living conviction that his fondest hope, so long cherished, had at last been made certain. Our dead could be seen and loved again!

If I were asked to put in capsule form the fundamental difference between Christianity and every other religion, I would point simply to the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. In these three acts is made possible all that God desires to do for man.

It was the profound conviction which arose from witnessing these acts that led a mere handful of men, the majority of them untutored, all of them persecuted and hunted, to turn a pagan world upside down. They transformed a pagan society not by argument, but by the flaming testimony of the central acts in the drama of Christianity. And these acts were the death, the burial, and the resurrection of their Leader.

To keep these vital acts alive in the minds of all Christ's followers down through the ages to the end of time, our Lord carefully arranged that at the outset of the Christian life these three events in the life of our Lord might be impressed upon the human mind by a deeply meaningful ceremony.

"What ceremony could that be?" you ask. "Would it not naturally be Easter?"

The answer, surprising as it may seem, is No.

Oh, yes, it is an excellent thing to have a day on which we are reminded of these events. We ought to think about them more than we do. In fact, it would transform humanity if we were to spend a thoughtful hour each day contemplating the life of our Savior especially its closing scenes.

But let me remind you, the memorial, that God Himself has set aside to carry our minds back to that memorable weekend, is not a day at all. Rather, the Scriptures reveal that our Lord has designated baptism, that beautiful and meaningful ceremony, as the memorial of His resurrection. Let me read it.

“Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” Romans 6:3-5.

Do you see? God chose His own memorial. And He chose one that perfectly symbolizes these three vital acts of the Son of God, His death, His burial, His resurrection. Baptism-and the new life that begins with baptism-these are God’s reminders. Not once a year-not once a week-but continually, as our Lord lives out this new life in us.

Could it be that the enemy of righteousness, so intent on blurring these fundamental issues, has confused the minds of sincere men and women? Has he succeeded in fixing our eyes on days, on traditions, rather than on the real meaning of the resurrection-rather than on the cleansing and forgiveness that every man needs personally?

God knew that every attempt to bring peace to the human heart would fall disappointingly short unless an adequate provision was made not only to cleanse the human heart but also to assure man that it is done. The contamination of guilt and sin is so devastating to human personality, that man will go to almost any length to achieve a sense of forgiveness and cleansing.

The sadhus of India will crawl on hands and knees for miles. They will lacerate their backs. They will walk on burning coals. Sacrifice and incense they will burn. Anything to appease the gods. Anything to bring a sense of forgiveness. Anything to be clean!

And this everlasting search for cleansing is not confined to unenlightened peoples following mystic, tradition-bound, ancient ritual. Modern man has discovered his dire need of confession and cleansing. And where the testimony of the church has been weak and imperfect, psychology has stepped into the center of man’s need and attempted to fill it. It is endeavoring to do what the church in too many cases has failed to do.

But, thank God, there is a better way. The way to inner peace is not found in the sublimation of psychology, in the clever formulas of self-discipline, in the endless probing of the subconscious. Man cannot cleanse himself. However helpful the contribution of modern psychology, nothing, absolutely nothing, can take the place of the cleansing that God has provided through Christ. Only He can say, I will; be thou clean.”

Man’s need for cleansing, you see, is met in the three events, the three acts, that make Christianity different-the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. The empty tomb.

Ever since the tremendous impact of this simple yet profound difference between Christianity and every other form of religion was felt in my life, baptism for me has been transformed from just another meaningless ritual, a nonessential form, to a priceless privilege, a meaningful occasion.

Come with me, then, back over the centuries to the day Christ showed us how. The tidings of the wilderness prophet, John the Baptist, had spread like wildfire through all Galilee and Judea, to the smallest town and village. On those burning sands-his cathedral floor-with the muddy Jordan, his baptistery-the prophet could be heard pleading, “Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

John the Baptist has always intrigued me-his deep conviction, his straightforward honesty, his penetrating wisdom. He knew the needs of the human heart. He knew how hearts were cleansed. Repent-and be baptized. That was his message.

And then one day as John was baptizing, a young man about thirty years of age-tall and strong-walked through the crowd and without hesitation stepped down into the water and requested that John baptize Him.

John understood that this was Jesus of Nazareth. John knew that this was the One for whose mission he was preparing the people. Realizing at once his own inadequacy in the presence of the Son of God, he hesitated, suggesting that Jesus baptize him. But no. The Son of God would give the example. He would lead His people into baptism. The picture is clearly drawn in Matthew 3:13-15:

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comes thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him.”

I had crossed the River Jordan many times. But on this occasion I was eager to see it from the air. In war-troubled Palestine picture taking from the air is not permitted. But I was nonetheless eager to see the whole sweep of the Jordan Valley and the winding river that God used as a setting for that memorable scene nineteen centuries ago.

A few moments before the Jordan River came into view, I learned in conversation with the hostess of the airplane that she had lost her way spiritually. She told me that she had trained in a Christian hospital in Baghdad to become a missionary nurse. But she had drifted away from Christ and was now bitterly entangled in a disappointing life of sin. We were talking earnestly about the release and cleansing that she so desperately needed when we winged our way over the Jordan River.

“There it is!” she exclaimed. And we looked down to the place where Jesus blazed the trail in one of the most satisfying ceremonies of the Christian church. As we turned, the plane banked a bit. There, even in January, the waters of the Jordan had made its banks glow with vintage. But it had lost something of its glory. John the Baptist was not there. Jesus was not there. Yet, as we looked down from the sky, the scene seemed to live again. It was there that Jesus stepped out of the water with dripping garments and

knelt humbly upon Jordan's bank. It was there that the God of heaven broke the silence of the ages as He said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well Pleased."

And I believe that as we flew high above the Jordan on the wings of modern technology, the God of heaven spoke to a prodigal daughter of forgiveness and cleansing-the cleansing that our Lord made possible nineteen hundred years ago.

Cleansing. I think you can see that as we follow our Lord by stepping down into the water, as we are buried beneath the water, as we come up from the water, we are participating in a symbol. It is a symbol that perfectly represents those three great acts of our Lord -and the miracle of cleansing that He stands ready to carry out in your life and mine.

True, it is only a symbol. There is no virtue in the water itself. It represents a miracle that takes place silently, effortlessly on our part, as we permit the Creator to implant new life within. Not by trying. Not by self-discipline. Not through any inherent power of our own. Man cannot remake himself. It takes a miracle.

But when we are cleansed, thoroughly and deeply, He asks us to bear witness of that fact before the world in the lovely ceremony of baptism. We are to show by that act that we have consciously died to sin, that we have been crucified with Christ, buried with Him, and raised triumphantly to walk in a completely new life. Do you see how perfect is the symbol?

As I think of John baptizing in the Jordan, as I think of the picture of baptism so clearly drawn in the New Testament as it relates the experience of the early apostles, I am led to wonder how the Christian church could have wandered so far from the original baptism of Jesus. Just how this vital ceremony could degenerate into a meaningless ritual and its true significance be lost, even within the Christian church, I cannot understand.

Could it be that this and other vital truths have been changed and made of little consequence during truth's hazardous journey through the centuries? Is this why we are told to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"?

One of the most thrilling chapters in the history of the Christian church is the reevaluation of the truths of the Word of God under the leadership of courageous Reformers, a protest that led to recapturing truths that had been buried under centuries of tradition.

But let me ask you, Is the work of the Reformation complete? Evidently not. For today I find baptism lightly regarded in many circles. Some say it has no more vital significance than taking a bath. And I discover that baptism is administered in a startling variety of ways.

If I should knock on the door of one Christian church and ask to be baptized, a little water would be poured over my head and my body. If I should knock on the door of another church and ask to be baptized, I would be immersed three times, face forward. If I should knock on the door of another church, making the same request, a little water would be sprinkled over my head. If I should knock on the door of still another church and ask for baptism, I would be led into the water and laid back until my face is entirely covered.

Evidently there is need for clarification here. For the Scriptures tell me plainly that there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." (Ephesians 4:5.) I can read them no other way.

Some years ago an Indian visited the home of a minister on the great western frontier of America. He expressed his desire to study the Christian faith. The minister was happy to give him instruction, and lent him a Bible to read. After some months the Indian returned and requested baptism. Naturally the minister was happy at this response. After questioning the Indian regarding his faith in Christ, he went to his cabinet and prepared a little silver bowl in which he placed a small amount of water.

At this the Indian objected, "Not deep enough!"

"Oh," replied the minister, "this is the custom of our church."

"Then gave Indian wrong book!"

That simple, significant answer ought to set every one of us thinking. For if we are to take seriously the direct statement of Jesus to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water.... he cannot enter into the kingdom of God say, if we are to accept this direct statement of Jesus, we shall need to discover how, when, and under what circumstances we are to be baptized.

Evidently the disciples and early followers of Jesus believed that the baptism described in Romans 6, immersion beneath the water, was the only baptism that could adequately symbolize the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. For how could any other mode of baptism, however sincerely followed, fully illustrate those three most meaningful acts of the Savior-and their counterpart in the life of the Christian?

It was over two hundred years after the founding of the Christian church before sprinkling or pouring was substituted in any measure. And it was several more centuries before the sprinkling of children had become an established custom. Baptism by immersion was still practiced, and its deep significance recognized, as late as the twelfth century.

Then what brought about the change? Why the radical departure that we see practiced in many of our churches today? We find no stronger defense than the fact that other modes of baptism are attended with less inconvenience than is immersion.

But can convenience satisfy the sincere man or woman who is seeking truth? The more I read the Word of God, the more I discover in baptism not only a symbol of cleansing, not only a reenactment of the three great acts in the drama of salvation, but also a matter of loyalty. And it is loyalty that can be exercised intelligently only by one who is old enough to know the difference between right and wrong, and old enough to understand the vital meaning of the ceremony.

Said Jesus in His last confusion to His disciples, "Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:19, 20.

Teaching them to observe-to do. Evidently an intelligent understanding of the Word of God is to accompany the miracle of conversion before baptism can be the meaningful ceremony, that Christ intended.

To be sure, a child ought to be dedicated, even as Jesus was dedicated in the Temple. But it is not until the child is old enough to recognize the moral distinction between right and wrong, not until his tender heart has learned what it means to die to sin and to trust in the merits of a crucified Savior-it is not until then that he is ready to publicly declare that he has joined himself to Christ, henceforth to be His.

You see, baptism is also compared in the Scriptures to the wedding ceremony, in which the bride takes the name of her husband, henceforth to be his and his alone. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Galatians 3:27. Can any man who sincerely loves his Lord delay to enter into baptism as Jesus, nineteen centuries ago, led the way? Will he not step unhesitatingly into the water and ask, as Jesus asked, to be baptized?

Loyalty! Yes, a man may be baptized and yet not be sincere. But I deeply believe, and I think you will agree with me, that an individual who is sincere, who does desire to be loyal, will not neglect to be baptized.

Let me put it this way. You stand on the crowded sidewalk as the parade passes. When the band is heard and the flag waves, a man may quickly snap to attention and salute-and yet be a traitor. But if he does not stand at attention, if he does not salute as others salute, even though he is loyal to his country-what then?

Do you see what I mean? It is altogether possible for an individual to go through the waters of baptism and not be sincere. But if you are sincere, if you love the Lord and want to be His, will you refuse baptism?

Yes, I understand fully that the problem of pride enters into our contemplation of this claim of Christ upon the soul. The thought of appearing before others except in polished, immaculate dress, is distasteful to US.

This problem was resolved in my mind, however, when I saw that the most noble Personage in heaven and earth, the Creator of the speeding worlds, the gracious Master who never did anything amiss, was willing to walk down into the muddy, murky waters of Jordan and kneel in dripping clothes upon its bank, to show me the way. As I caught a glimpse of His spotless character, as I fell in love with Him, could I do less than follow? And so I was baptized.

Never for a moment have I regretted baptism. Nor will you!

21. Fire Fall

LET the fire fall!"

And four thousand feet above the floor of the valley, a voice answers, "the fire falls!" Flaming embers are pushed over the precipice, into the darkness of the summer evening, and come cascading down the sheer white marble of the mountain wall-the famous fire fall of Yosemite.

There will come a day when the voice of God will call out, "Let the fire fall!" And like a million fire falls, flames will cascade down the skies upon an un-repenting planet. And in that day, for every man who has rejected the Savior there will be no place to hide!

That fire fall of the ages, that finish of the history of rebellion, will be what the prophet Isaiah calls God's "strange work, his strange act." (Isaiah 28:21.)

A strange act for One who taught men to love their enemies! A strange act for One who refused to let His disciples call down fire upon those who slighted Him. A strange act for One who healed the ear of a man who had come to take His life. A strange act for One who prayed while they crucified Him, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

A misunderstanding of this strange act, a misconception of the character of God, I fear, has produced thousands, even millions, of unbelievers and skeptics. Many have been driven to insanity by the harrowing thought of unsaved loved ones writhing in the never-ending torments of hell. I am convinced that the popular teaching that there is a subterranean cavern where the wicked are tossed about on mountainous billows of liquid fire, and that such a place actually exists at this very time, this very minute, and is destined to continue without letup, age upon age, is a doctrine that has done untold harm to the Christian cause. Men and women are simply not able to reconcile the doctrine of eternal torment with the wonderful truth of God's undying love.

Robert Ingersoll, for instance, might have become a prince of preachers instead of one of the foremost infidels, had it not been for his misunderstanding of this truth. His father told him when he was but a child that there were infants in hell not more than a span long, and that they were destined to burn throughout eternity. And Robert said, "If that is what God does, I hate Him." His logical mind could not conceive of such injustice, and as a result, that gifted intellect veered off into doubt and unbelief.

A friend of Ingersoll wrote him about what the Lord Jesus Christ had done for him personally, and asked, "Bob, how can you get up before an audience of intelligent people and run down a religion that will do this for a man?" That champion of unbelief read the letter to his audience one night, and then said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I am not running down a religion that will do that for a man. I am not preaching against a religion that will lift up downtrodden men, but I am preaching against a religion that some preachers preach."

But I ask you, Where in all the pages of Holy Scripture is the doctrine of eternal torment found? I have not been able to find it in my Bible. I do not believe you will find it in yours. I find there a hell-a literal, burning hell. But it is not the kind of hell that has been used to frighten men for centuries.

True, if there were at present a burning hell to which all sinners were consigned as soon as they die, then millions must be suffering torture there at this moment, for Jesus said, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." Matthew 7:13.

But my Bible tells me that punishment will not be meted out until the end of the world. Jesus said, in explaining one of His parables, "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world." Matthew 13:40.

Evidently the wicked who have died are not in hell now, but are reserved until the day of judgment to be punished. Said the Apostle Peter, "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." 2 Peter 2:9.

How could it be otherwise? Is it reasonable that God would send a man to hell before he has been judged? Would He let a man writhe in the fires of damnation for centuries and then in the day of judgment send someone to tap him on the shoulder and call him up to the bar of God to see whether he ought to be in hell or not? Can you not see what a libel upon the character of God such reasoning turns out to be?

Is it not blasphemy of the character of God to suggest that the endless groans and shrieks of suffering creatures held in the flames of hell would be music to His ears? Could the justice of God ever be vindicated if He would consign Cain, the murderer of one man, to thousands of years more punishment than some modern murderer of thousands? Yet those are the problems and inconsistencies inherent in the traditional teaching of eternal torment. When we realize with what false colors Satan has painted the character of God, how he has sought to clothe the loving Creator with his own spirit of cruelty, is it any wonder that a God of love has been misunderstood, feared, and even hated?

God will punish sin. There is no question about that. Those who (latter themselves that God is too kind and merciful to administer Justice have only to look at Calvary. They have only to look at the suffering Son of God, who bore sin for us, to know that "the wages of sin is death." And every soul who refuses the sacrifice made at such cost must one day bear in his own person the penalty of his transgression. God will punish sin. The power and authority of Heaven will be employed to put down rebellion. But the way it is done will be perfectly consistent with the fact that God is love.

But you say, I am confused. I know that somewhere in the Bible I have read about everlasting fire!

Yes, you have. And here is the text: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matthew 25:41. But now notice verse 46 of this same chapter: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal!"

What is the punishment of the wicked? Paul says, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life." Therefore we might read these words of Jesus thus: "These shall go away into everlasting Death, but the righteous into life eternal." Notice that it says "everlasting punishment" - not "everlasting punishing." The punishment is death. And the death will be everlasting. The state of being dead will never end. Do you see?

Another text that has caused perplexity in many minds is Revelation 20: 10. It says, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

Here we read that Satan, guiltiest of all, will "be tormented day and night for ever and ever!" Yet in the twenty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel, God, speaking to Satan and describing his future punishment, concludes in verse 19, "Never shall thou be any more."

Here we have an apparent contradiction of Scripture. But please know that God's Word never contradicts itself. Sometimes our preconceived ideas, our misunderstanding of its terms, may lead us to feel that it does. But the difficulty is in our own understanding. Just as we go to the dictionary for the meaning of English words, we must let the Bible explain its own terms.

For instance, in 1 Samuel 1:22 we find that Hannah lent Samuel to the Lord "for ever." Yet verse 28 explains, "As long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord!"

Does this not explain the meaning of the word? As long as the wicked live, as long as consciousness lasts, they will be tormented. For some it may be only a few moments. For Satan it will be longest of all. You remember that Jesus said in one of His parables, "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." Luke 12:47, 48.

God does not delight in punishment. It is His strange act. But sin must be eradicated. In fairness to the universe there is no other way to deal with sin-with rebellion. This planet, if one sinner were left on it, would be a deadly virus forever threatening the universe.

The destruction of the wicked will be quick and complete. Says Malachi, "The day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, said the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Malachi 4:1.

And it will be final. "They shall be as though they had not been." Obadiah 1:16.

The fire will be literal, and it will be unquenchable. No shield of neutrons will prevent the fire from falling. But when it has done its work, it will go out. We read in Jude 1:7 that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by "eternal fire." Those wicked cities of the plain, when their cup of iniquity overflowed, were destroyed by fire-by eternal fire-and yet they are not burning today. The effects of the fire were eternal-but not the burning.

Do you not see how kind and merciful and just God's plan is how much better than the way men have long misunderstood it? I have known men and women who were disappointed temporarily, until they thought it through, to learn that their loved ones who have died are not now in heaven. But I have never known a soul who was disappointed to learn that his unsaved loved ones are not

now in hell. Never forget that the two go together. If the one is true, the other is true. But how often I have seen the relief and joy that have come to men and women as they have realized that their unsaved loved ones are not writhing in torment at all, but are quietly sleeping.

Where, then, did the whole idea of an eternally burning hell originate? It is a falsehood that was fanned into flame in the early centuries of the Christian era. It spread from paganism by way of Judaism into the Christian church, to be passed on to our unsuspecting generation as gospel fact. But it did not originate with the pagan philosophies of those early centuries. It dates back to those intentionally deceptive words of Satan in the Garden of Eden, "You shall not surely die."

"You shall not surely die" - you are immortal-you cannot die. That is the falsehood with which he trapped our first parents. And do you see where that reasoning leads? If you are immortal, if you cannot die, you must suffer eternally for your sins. That is where the whole idea of an ever-burning hell originated.

But God says, "The wages of sin is death"-not life, even in hell. Death is the penalty that man fears. Eternal death is the penalty he seeks to escape. He looks for a place to hide from it-no matter how uncomfortable that place may be. He wants anything but death. No wonder he has tried to find a refuge in the subtle suggestion, "You shall not surely die."

But that refuge will be swept away. The day will come when in mercy to the universe sin must be finally dealt with. The war for the control of the minds and souls of men must be brought to its finish. Satan has enthroned himself as the god of a rebel race. He must be dethroned and his character exposed before the universe for what it is. That strange day in which God brings ultimate judgment upon sin and sinners is called in Scripture "the day of the Lord." "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." 2 Peter 3: 10.

Follow carefully as we trace the events of that strange day. We read in Revelation 6:15-17: "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

The Savior of men descends the blazing skies. In that day, position, power, prestige, possessions, will not cover. Strong men, weak men, unprepared men, will actually cry for the inanimate rocks to protect them-not from physical destruction, but from the searching eyes of One whom they have neglected or rejected. But from those loving eyes there will be no place to hide.

No place to hide! And "the wicked perish at the presence of God." (Psalm 68:2.) The very brightness of His appearing destroys them. And, according to Revelation 20:5, they "lived not again until the thousand years were finished."

The thousand years. Here is not a millennium of peace, as some have thought. And the wicked, far from having a second chance during that time, simply sleep through it. But they live again at the end of the thousand years.

The Scriptures paint a clear picture. The righteous are with their Lord in the City of God. The wicked sleep. And Satan is confined to this empty world, bound by a chain of circumstances that he is powerless to break. For with all the righteous in heaven, and all the wicked dead, he has no one to tempt. He must wait in death row, condemned to die, for a thousand years. But "after that he must be loosed a little season." (Revelation 20:3.)

But you ask, "Why does not God finally destroy sinners at the second coming of Christ? Why does He wait a thousand years to do it, and then resurrect them only to destroy them?" Simply this: God will not carry out His strange act until all the universe understands why He must do it-until you understand.

There must not be a question in any mind in regard to His justice. That is why Paul speaks of a time when "the saints shall judge the world." (1 Corinthians 6:2.)

The guilt of the wicked has already been decided before Christ Comes. But the saints become a kind of jury, which does not decide upon the guilt or innocence of men, but which vindicates the judgment of God. They become a jury, not because their help is needed, but because they need to understand God's dealings, need to know why men and women-some of them perhaps their own loved ones are shut out of the kingdom.

And now at last the hour comes. No longer is there possibility of misunderstanding. No longer must God wait to make the universe clean. "The City of God descends to this earth. The wicked are called to life, now to meet their God.

Satan is loosed from his prison. And now, with the wicked again under his influence, he instills in them his own hatred of God. The spirit of rebellion, like a mighty torrent, breaks forth again. He leads them over the desolate, war-ravaged earth in a last desperate attempt to take the City of God and establish himself as king of a rebel world.

But suddenly they stop in their tracks. For before every eye is thrown the panorama of his own evil life. Before every eye are portrayed the scenes of the life of the Savior, the mysterious agony of Gethsemane. Every eye is powerless to turn away.

Men and women stand in full view of the City that might have been their eternal home. Hearts look back upon their strange infatuation and cry out, "Take my money. Take my sinful pleasures. Take away procrastination and delay. These are what kept me from deciding for Jesus!" But it is too late. Their characters are fixed. A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for the harmony of this earth made new. Its purity, peace, and praise would be torture to them. They would welcome death that they might be hidden from the face of the Savior.

The whole world stands arraigned before the bar of God on the charge of high treason against His government. But the destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from the joys of heaven is voluntary with themselves. And now they fall to their knees, acknowledging that God is just. "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Philipians 2: 10, 11.

This is not true repentance. This is not real acceptance. Rebellion still would conquer if it could. They have played with eternity. But they do not repent of their choice. They only regret its fearful result. Their confession now is the confession of Judas, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."

No longer must God wait. Not a soul, now, will misunderstand His strange act. He calls out, "Let the fire fall!"

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." Revelation 20:9.

That is God's own description of hell. Remember the words of Peter? "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." 2 Peter 3: 10. And the prophet Nahum. says "The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein." Nahum 1:5.

Do these scriptures sound like atomic energy? Will God use atomic power to destroy every trace of rebellion on this planet? It could be. For He who made the atom knows well its secrets and control.

Our minds turn to volcanoes-those mountain pranksters that blow their tops and send columns of flaming smoke into the sky. Showers of rain and fumes and ashes-livid rock out of the heavens rivers of fire. And then-silence!

Take giant Krakatoa, for instance, off the coast of Java, whose eruption in 1883 was the loudest noise ever recorded. It was heard three thousand miles away and blew a cubic mile of solid material into ashes, which rose in the form of a dark cloud seventeen miles into the atmosphere, completely hiding the sun over a vast area and finally encircling the earth. Huge waves up to fifty feet high were generated and rushed along the low-lying coast of nearby Java and Sumatra, destroying 1,295 towns and villages.

Sounds strangely like the power released in the man-made fusion of hydrogen atoms-except that man's biggest and most spectacular explosions are still only miniatures when compared with this. History's spouting Krakatoa's are burning evidence that there is fire stored up.

Remember the first judgment-the Flood of Noah's day. Just as in that day waters from within the earth united with water from heaven to destroy the earth, so in the coming judgment fire from within the earth will unite with fire from heaven at God's command. The fire is there. Study of the present formation of the earth indicates that a thousand and more Krakatoa's, Mauna Loa's, and Vesuvius's have been shaking and tearing at its foundation-most logically as the result of the Flood. The rocks bear evidence that these things have happened. The thoughtful person, therefore, in contemplating world judgment through God's control of forces latent in the universe and stored within the earth, can begin to understand why the prophet compares the Flood of Noah's day to the day of judgment in ours. Listen!

"Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment." 2 Peter 3:6, 7.

That is the divine record. But, friend, intermingled in this statement of last things we read that "the Lord is longsuffering. Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (Verse 9.)

Said Ezekiel, "As I live, said the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: For why will ye die?" Ezekiel 33: 11.

What is God thinking as the flames envelop the earth? What is in His mind? Is it the exulting of a Conqueror over an enemy bent before His power? No, it is the cry of a rejected Savior, "Why will ye die?" It is the pathetic cry of a loving Father who called His children and they would not come. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathered her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

22. No Place to Hide

A NUMBER of years ago a young couple in a large city found themselves in serious marital difficulty. Eventually it was decided that if a child could be born to them, it might tie heart to heart and solve their problems. The baby was born and soon grew into a lovely child. But finally estranged relations returned. Quarreling continued, and at last in an angry rage the man left his wife and child.

Some months later the little child became seriously ill and died. Word reached the father through a mutual friend. Naturally, his heart was broken, but stubborn selfishness kept him from returning to his wife.

Shortly after the funeral, however, he could not resist the urge to visit the resting place of his little boy. He made the trip back and found his way to the cemetery. He followed the winding path and turned beside a bank of shrubbery. There he saw his wife, standing with bowed head over the little new-made grave.

At first he rebelled. But something held him there. She seemed to sense that someone was present and looked up. Slowly he walked to the other side of the grave. Both wept in silence. And then quietly, after a few moments, two hands reached across that little grave and joined in a warm, understanding handclasp. In a moment they were in each other's arms, reconciled by the death of one they both loved.

There has been an estrangement between God and man. Not only this planet, but every man and woman in it, has been in rebellion against God. And He, in one supreme effort to reach the heart of man, placed a cross over the gulf that sin had made. Standing beside that cross, He says to every man, "What will you do with Jesus?"

Yes, God and man stand beside the cross. Will the estrangement be made permanent? Or will it be forever healed? That is the question every man must answer. And on the basis of his answer, his eternal destiny will be decided. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." 2 Corinthians 5: 10.

No one can escape it. Saint or sinner, rich or poor, ignorant or educated, young or old—all must stand before the judgment seat of Christ. You and I are summoned to appear before God to say what we will do about the cross of Calvary.

God's last call to men, so clearly outlined in Revelation 14, includes the announcement that "the hour of his judgment is come." But that call is also the everlasting gospel. The two cannot be separated. Judgment-day thinking is gospel thinking. In fact, there is no more beautiful and inspiring picture of the gospel, no more appealing expression of the heart that gave birth to Calvary, than in the truth about the judgment.

You see, the judgment is not simply a solemn, terrible day that calls forth fear in the hearts of men. It is, "What will you do with Jesus?" It is being reconciled—or refusing to be reconciled. It is not merely a calling into court to be pronounced guilty or not guilty. For the judgment is not primarily what God will do about the estrangement, but what you and I will do about it.

There is no more solemn question for any soul to ponder. For one day soon your decision and mine—whatever that decision may be—will be made permanent. The divine decree will go forth in the heavenly court, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Revelation 22: 11.

Yes, every man, woman, and child who has ever taken the name of Christ, sincerely or insincerely, has a case pending before the high tribunal of the heavens. And not only that. For the serious fact, the startling fact, the astounding fact, is that the judgment day is not scheduled for some distant hour. No, the Scriptures tell us that the heavenly court that decides your case and mine is in session now, at this very moment! Oh you say, "how could that be?" I answer, Both reason and Scripture indicate that it must be so.

In Revelation 22:12 I read, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." And I ask you, How could the Lord Jesus Christ bring His rewards with Him unless there had been an investigation of the records? Is it not reasonable that every case must have been decided before His return? How could some be caught up to be with their Lord, and others left to sleep until it is too late, if the verdicts of life and death had not been handed down from the heavenly court? Some phase of the judgment must be in progress prior to His return.

Listen to the words of Revelation 11:18: "And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged." It must be that the dead are to receive some sort of judgment before the end of time, while the nations are angry.

And God does not leave men unwarned. His last call to the human race is introduced by these words: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Revelation 14:6.

Here is the everlasting gospel. Here is also a call to judgment. For these words follow: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come." Verse 7.

Here is not an announcement that the judgment will come, but that it is come. Evidently the judgment will already be in session when men hear this message. This can only mean that God's judgment—not the meting out of punishment, but the deciding part of God's judgment—will be carried on in heaven during the closing period of earth's history. These are the climactic moments that even now are ticking themselves into eternity.

But now to the thrilling picture of this tribunal, this court session in the heavens. Picture, if you will, God the Father seated upon His throne. The angels are arrayed in thoughtful attention. And the interceding Christ stands before the throne as our Advocate—or Lawyer. There He stands, your Savior and mine, to plead for the sinner.

Someone is saying, "This scene has everything in it as in the trials we know except—" Except what? There is God the Father, the Judge of all the earth. There are the angels as the witnesses to every act. And there stands the One who will intercede. Everything except the one to be tried!

Turn to Revelation 20:12. Here in the panorama of the total judgment procedure is described how these decisions are reached: "And another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

We are judged by our records, you see. Every word, good or bad; every act, selfish or selfless; every thought; every unfulfilled duty; every Heaven-sent warning rejected; our influence exerted for good or evil, with all its far-reaching results—all these are recorded by God. And when our lives come tip before Him, this panorama in all its living detail—the sin as well as the forgiveness—will come in review. But it is the forgiveness that counts in that day.

Shall we picture what happened as this investigative judgment began? God the Father is seated upon His glorious throne. The angels are in their places, and the Lord Jesus Christ in all His attractiveness stands to represent the race He died to redeem.

Think of it! Like any court, here are a judge, witnesses, and unchanging statutes by which the accused are to be judged. But what other court has an attorney with wounded hands, ready to plead his own blood for those he represents? Never let anyone tell you that the man who preaches judgment is being legalistic. It, too, is gospel, pure and simple!

But now watch the court in session. We can safely conclude that the first name to be considered is that of Abel, the first righteous man to die. As page after page is read from his record, failure and weakness and sin appear. But there is also the record of forgiveness, and that is what counts. And Abel's last act, you remember, was an act of obedience and worship.

Jesus immediately steps in between the broken law and God the Father. He holds out His hands and says, "My blood, Father, My blood! Abel accepted Me, and My sacrifice pays his sin debt." And all heaven rings out, "Keep his name in!" And his name is kept in the book of life.

The tribunal makes progress through the years, until David's name is brought into the judgment scene. Here is a record of scarlet sin, for David was guilty of blood. But his wonderful prayers for forgiveness overshadow even the worst. Jesus steps forward and Pleads, "My blood, Father, My blood! I died for such as he, and he accepted that death in place of his own." And David's name is kept in the book.

Then the names of generations pass until Judas's name appears. His was not entirely a wicked life, yet he refused to make complete surrender. There were moments when he was drawn to God, but stubborn pride forbade him. At last, led on from one weakness to another, Judas sold his Savior for thirty pieces of silver and in desperation went out and hanged himself.

Think of the disappointment of Jesus as all this comes in review. He cannot say, "My blood, Father, My blood." No, Judas did not accept the sacrifice. He refused to be reconciled. Jesus can say nothing. And Judas's name does not appear in the book of life.

And so on, down through the years. Then the judgment, in a time just before the end, turns to the living. And when the last soul is sealed for eternity, human probation will close. Jesus will take off His priestly robes and prepare to return to this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords.

A wealthy woman found herself in serious legal difficulty. The time for her trial was set. Her friends urged her to seek the added counsel of a prominent lawyer. But she refused. She felt secure. At the last moment, however, she did turn to him for help.

That lawyer in solemn dignity leaned across his massive desk and looked her squarely in the eye as he said, "Madam, yesterday I would have been happy to agree to plead your case, but only this morning I was appointed your judge."

If we do not accept Christ as our Advocate, we must face Him as our Judge. Is your case securely placed in His hand? Will He Plead for you when He comes to your name? Or will He be forced to stand silently by, unable to speak, because you have neglected or refused or waited too long? I beg of you, put your case in Christ's hands now.

Let me commend to you the Savior as the most able and efficient Advocate. Attorneys have their specialties. Some excel in patent cases, some in insurance, some in criminal cases. Friend, Christ can do many things, but His specialty seems to be to take the case of the worst sinner, plead it before God, and get eternal acquittal. But you ask, "What plea could Christ make for me? I am guilty."

Yes, it would be inappropriate for Him to plead our innocence, for we all are guilty. There can be no excuse, no alibi, for the Lord found us in our sins and in the very place of our iniquity. He cannot plead insanity and urge that we are irresponsible on that account, for we sinned against light, knowledge, and our own consciences.

But our Lord Jesus Christ, with your consent, will say before God and before a broken law, "Look at these wounds in My hands. By all these sufferings in his place I claim his release from sin and death. Let him go free. Who is he that condemns?"

Wonderful provision! If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2: 1.

Do you begin now to understand God's dealing with sin? However terrifying, however literal, however final the fires of judgment, remember that this is what has gone before. He who has stood before the Father with wounded hands, He who has called His children out of the burning, and they would not come-it is He who finally calls out in bitter disappointment, "Let the fire fall!"

Such is the strange act forced upon infinite love by man's free choice! For those who have rejected His grace there will be no place to hide. But the City of God, with every soul who has made the Savior his hiding place, will defy the flames, as the ark once defied the waters, while God destroys the last trace of sin from this planet, and leaves it clean, beautiful, and new!

Who will be able to stand in that day? The answer is found in Psalm 91: "He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shall thou trust." "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with your eyes shall thou behold and see the reward of the wicked."

That, friend, is true protection. Your God and mine desires more than anything else that you receive it.

I think of the Australian lumberman who built a little cottage at the edge of the forest. One day as he returned, he was shocked to find that a forest fire had swept through the section and destroyed his little home. There was only a heap of charred remains, twisted timber, and a few pieces of metal blackened by the flames.

He went to where the old chicken coop had stood. It, too, was a mass of ashes and burned wire. At his feet lay a mound of charred feathers. He idly kicked it, and four fuzzy babies scrambled out. Four little chicks lived because of a mother's love.

God says He will "cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shall thou trust." Do you want to be covered when the burning falls? You can be. You can be covered in Christ. There is a place to hide-in Him!

23. Destination Earth

IN A DAY that you and I can easily remember, the moon was, to most people, only a ball of reflected light that created a pleasant evening, or, surrounded by an ominous ring, predicted a storm. Some farmers planted their crops by it. Men leisurely discussed what it might be like. But nobody thought of going to see.

The stars were an object of admiration and an aid to mariners. Some people thought their lives were in some mysterious way influenced by them-as if lumps of matter out in space could control a man's behavior. Venus and Mars were members of our solar family to be identified by schoolboys. But nobody, not even the astronomers, ever thought of going there.

Today man wants to go. He is determined to go-even if he has to go in a cumbersome space suit, take his own air with him, and take a chance on getting back. He wants to set his foot on some distant world, whatever the cost in money and research. The moon and our planet neighbors have become very, very real. Science fiction is so mixed with fact that we almost forget it is fiction at all.

But strangely enough, about all most people know about heaven is that it is up somewhere. Ask the first ten people you meet, and you will discover that the majority of men and women who have thought about it at all have no clear idea what it is like.

Heaven is up. There is no doubt about that. And heaven, where God dwells, is as real as anything the astronomer has ever viewed. But such fantastic ideas exist about what it is like that we need to open the Word of God on the sane, sensible, and thrilling prospects of the life to come-prospects that are so little understood.

You see, many think of heaven as a land where disembodied spirits float around in space. Or where we sit on wispy clouds playing on semi-material harps forever and ever. A place where St. Peter is supposed to go around clanking keys-which are quite material or they wouldn't clank-and letting in whom he chooses through some sort of gate into the so-called eternal bliss of the saints.

Heaven, to many people, is a mixture of fairy story and imagination, with a covering of puritan boredom that leaves it with little appeal. In fact, because of these popular misconceptions, many good people have rejected the whole idea of a future life, preferring to believe that life here and now is either heaven or hell, depending on what you make of it.

But in the Word of the living God we shall discover that heaven is not a ghost land or a spook country. It is not a figment of the imagination. It is not a dream. It is not a filmy fiction made of harps and clouds.

Heaven, though it hangs yet beyond the reach of our telescopes, is a world as real and tangible as our own. It is not a story land at all. The place is as real as any you have ever seen. The people will be as real as any you have ever known. People you know will be there. You may be there-if you choose.

Follow me carefully. For this thrilling possibility promises fulfillment in your day and mine-long before men with their speediest scientific achievement could be ready for anything but the most primitive space travel. The story begins with the simple, straightforward, unconditional words of the Apostle Paul: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord!" 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. No rockets. No oxygen tanks. No space suits-except the robe of Christ's righteousness. But gravity will be powerless to hold back the King of glory as He lifts His people through the skies. Nature's laws are His laws. The Creator is in control.

I like to think what that trip will be like. It seems reasonable that there might be stops at other worlds along the way-worlds that have never rebelled against their Creator. And then the glorious climax as the Savior swings wide the gates of the city and says to His people, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation 'of the world.'" I am glad we can all go together with Jesus-not one by one across a mystic river.

John, in the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of Revelation, describes the city. It is a city as literal as any we have ever known. It is a city with gates, a city with streets, a city with foundations and walls. The throne of God is there. The tree of life is there. And in it there is no night, no death, no pain, and there are no tears.

But heaven, as real and wonderful and satisfying as it is, is not to be our permanent home. For Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Matthew 5: 5. The meek shall inherit the earth. We shall not spend eternity on some cloud on the rim of the universe, or even in heaven, tangible as it is. God gave His Son that this world might forever be the home of the saved.

You see, this earth was meant to be our home. "For thus said the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited." Isaiah 45:18.

This world was wrested from its original owners. But God gave His Son to buy back not only a lost race but also a lost planet-a world originally intended to be man's home.

I ask you, Would our Savior, the Son of the eternal God, consent to suffer, to bleed, to die, so that you might live on some mystic cloud in a thin, vapory, immaterial existence that you wouldn't want anyway? Hardly!

The meek shall inherit the earth. True, the meek are not in possession of much of it now. Much of it is in the hands of finance companies. But God promised Abraham, "Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou sees, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." Genesis 13:14, 15. And Paul said, If you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3:29.

If you belong to Christ, then you are an heir to the original promise-an heir to this world. Now this world at present might not be a very desirable gift. But God will give it to His people as a perfect gift, renovated and changed and new. Remember the words of Peter: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Peter 3: 10.

And now notice what follows, in verse 13: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." The world is imperfect now. But in the great day of the Lord, the day toward which all creation is moving, the earth will be cleansed, it will be changed, it will be made completely new.

A thousand happy years will have passed quickly-years spent with the Savior, spent in companionship with the angels and sinless beings from other worlds, spent in becoming acquainted with the wonders of God's universe. What a day for the scientist, the astronomer, the traveler!

And then the hour will come for the space trip of the ages. There will be no frantic last-minute preparations for take-off, no hurried repairing of spaceship doors that might leak precious oxygen out into space, no fear of radiation belts. The entire city, with the tree of life, will move safely out into space and begin its long journey. I like to think it will move down through the star-lined corridors of Orion, that giant canyon in the skies. Its destination-earth!

Says John, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Revelation 21:1

What a landing strip it will need! But the Savior Himself will prepare it. "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south." Zechariah 14:4.

Then will follow those final events in the awful history of rebellion. And when it is all over, the universe will be clean. One writer describes it this way:

"There are ever-flowing streams, clear as crystal, and beside them waving trees cast their shadows upon the paths prepared for the ransomed of the Lord. There the wide-spreading plains swell into hills of beauty, and the mountains of God rear their lofty summits. On those peaceful plains, beside those living streams, God's people, so long pilgrims and wanderers, shall find a home..

"All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God's redeemed. Unfettered by mortality, they wing their tireless flight to worlds afar-worlds that thrilled with sorrow at the spectacle of human woe, and rang with songs of gladness at the tidings of a ransomed soul. With undimmed vision they gaze upon the glory of creation-suns and stars and systems, all in their appointed order circling the throne of Deity. Upon all things, from the least to the greatest, the Creator's name is written, and in all are the riches of His power displayed.

"The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their un-shadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love."-The Great Controversy, pp. 675-678.

All this is in God's plan. Let me illustrate. In America's very early days a family lived in their wilderness home on the bleak New England shore. It was a home of their own making, with furniture carved out by their own hands. There were two adult children. One of them was a young doctor who was almost constantly away from home, visiting the little towns and isolated settlements along the coast. The other was a lovely girl about twenty years of age.

Each evening she would steal away in the quiet of the nearby wooded sections without the family knowing just where she went, and would have her quiet devotions alone in nature's retreat. Always she would sing:

"When softly falls the twilight hour,
Over moor and mountain, field and flower,
How sweet to leave a world of care,
And lift to heaven the voice of prayer."

One evening as she enjoyed her meditation, and just as she had completed the first two lines of her little song,

"When softly falls the twilight hour,
Over moor and mountain, field and flower,"

an Indian crept up behind her, struck her on the head with a tomahawk, and fled. She dropped to the ground, unconscious. Naturally, when the evening meal was served, the girl was missing. A party went out to search for her. She was found, but remained unconscious for several days. The doctor brother was called, and an operation was planned to remove the pressure on the brain.

When it was completed and she had regained consciousness, what do you suppose she did? Her lips began to move, and she finished the song so abruptly interrupted a few days before:

"How sweet to leave a world of care,
And lift to heaven the voice of prayer."

Her brain began to function just where it had left off. Just so, God's plan was interrupted-rudely interrupted. It was delayed, but not changed. The song begun in Eden will again be taken up and finished when the earth is restored to its original beauty and man to his original happiness.

The first three chapters of the Bible describe God's original plan and sin's rude interruption. The last three chapters of the Bible describe God's plan restored, the music continued. And all the rest of the Bible in between unfolds His program to bring man back to the happiness intended for him. Remember, "The meek shall inherit the earth." And, If you be Christ's, then are you heirs." It is just as simple as that!

And it will all be real. I hope if you get anything out of these words, it will be the conviction that the home of the saved, the future life, will be real. God is real. Christ is real. You will be real.

Our friends will be real. We will recognize each other. How could it be otherwise? The lovable little personality traits which make for happiness here will certainly not be lost. You remember how Mary stood in the garden, blinded by tears, on the morning of the resurrection. Through her tears she could not recognize her Savior. She did not expect to see Him alive. She thought Him to be the gardener. But Jesus quietly spoke one word -"Mary!" And the characteristic way in which He said it was unmistakable. Instantly she responded, "Master!"

The resurrection will bring changes, to be sure, but they will be changes for the better. God will take our poor, worn-out, imperfect bodies and make them perfect, immortal. Tired, broken, aging bodies -all will be changed. Wonderful news!

Let me read the description that God gives of the new earth. See how real and practical and satisfying it will be. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." "And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another cat." Isaiah 65:17, 21, 22.

Evidently it is going to be an own-your-own-home proposition. And think how satisfying it all will be. Today we build a lovely home for our comfort and the happiness of our family. We landscape the grounds, and it is not long until the home has the touch of our personality and love. Yet all too soon we die, and the home is left to others. How wonderfully different it will be in the new earth, for there we shall never die. In that perfect world we shall not build and another inhabit.

And did you know that there is to be health insurance as well? "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Isaiah 33:24.

Often the heart leaps with sadness, and even fear, when a little child says to his parent, I am sick," or when a husband or a wife says, I am sick." But here will be the finest health insurance of all perfect bodies with youthful vigor that will never diminish. "They shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Isaiah 40:31.

Sound appealing? No hospitals, for there will be no sick. No psychiatrists, for none will suffer with a tired mind. All their sins will be forgiven. And there will be no fatigue.

Friend, I can hardly wait. Can you? Imagination ever so wild could not begin to picture the joys and the wonders of God's glorious new world. Listen! "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9.

Best of all, Jesus will be there! Just think of taking hold of a hand and finding it God's hand-the Savior's hand! What would you give for a privilege like that?

Do I hear you say, "How can I be there?" Your question-and your answer-are found in Psalm 24:3, 4: 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?' And back comes the answer: "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart."

There is only one way to have clean hands and a pure heart. That is the way of forgiveness through a dying Christ-and the way of a new heart and power to live through a living Christ.

But now will you picture for a moment the day when this inheritance becomes yours? We might find an illustration in the inspiring day when twenty thousand Frenchmen approached the Arc de Triomphe as the armistice of World War I was celebrated.

A great choir sat on a special platform erected above the archway. They sang out the challenge, "By what right do you come to the arch of victory?" Can you imagine the inspiration and emotion as from the lips of twenty thousand Frenchmen came the chorus, 'We come by the blood-red banner of Verdun!'

Psalm 24 pictures a comparable scene, but one infinitely more glorious. When the Lord of heaven sweeps through the gates of the New Jerusalem with the redeemed of the ages, the question is asked, "By what right do you enter here?" And the answer returns in hold refrain, 'We come by the blood-red banner of Calvary!'

There is no other way to come. No other door. No other gate. Every man who enters the city will come by way of the cross. Will you lift its banner now-by an act of deliberate choice? There is no compulsion. Just an appeal. But it means life-eternal life. Will you accept it?

24. Does Liberty Wear Chains?

IT WAS July of 1776. The Continental Congress had met at Philadelphia to ponder a mighty issue-independence. A long, lanky Virginian-Thomas Jefferson by name-had been appointed, with others, to write the declaration-words that even today excite the patriotism of free men everywhere.

The carriages with their trim footmen had delivered many notables for that historic gathering. John Hancock was there, and at the crucial moment led off with his signature, writing it so boldly that George III might be able to read it without "putting on his specs."

Among the many legends of that day is one that tells of an old bell ringer who had been assigned to start ringing as soon as the word was out. Pessimistic, he waited with one hand on the rope in the old belfry and muttered, "They'll never sign it! They'll never sign it!"

But sign it they did! The story has it that a little boy was stationed outside the great colonial door. Watching through the huge keyhole, he saw the movement of chairs and heard the shuffle of excited feet. Running to the bell tower, he shouted, Ming, Grandpa, ring for liberty!"

That day made history for the cause of freedom. Visit the old landmark if ever you have the opportunity. Close the doors behind you and relive those memorable scenes.

Then there was Valley Forge. As a lad, I played over its hills. Those were precious moments-especially as I look back now and realize the significance of the rude cabins, the trenches, and the forts. Valley Forge recalls a winter filled with the terror of defeat. Soldiers were dying; frozen limbs were amputated in those crude cabin hospitals. But that winter ended in victory.

Victory! Not merely another battle won. This was victory for man's conscience. For centuries the tyrannical hands of despotic systems had raged in the Old World. We call those days the Dark Ages. A strange colossus-a combination of power both civil and religious-had forged its chains about the minds and souls of men.

The experience of those centuries has taught us that whenever religion reaches out for the state to enforce its dogmas, the rights of man are buried in the dust. The record is open for all to read.

But oppressed peoples will not always remain oppressed. Persecution spread over Europe to the British Isles. Finally a band of heroic men and women fled to Holland, seeking a place where they could worship God. And then one day they knelt with their pastor on the shore of an obscure Dutch port, and set out, a hundred-odd, first to Southampton, then to Plymouth, England, and finally to brave the Atlantic in the Mayflower. Pilgrims, we call them.

“What sought they thus afar?
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?
They sought a faith's pure shrine!

“Aye, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trod!
They have left unstained what there they found
Freedom to worship God!”

Felicia Dorothea Hemans.

Over three and a quarter centuries have passed since that day. And lest we forget, a second Mayflower was sent across the Atlantic, a gift from the free to the free.

I stood with the waiting crowds that made a circle of color about Plymouth Harbor. A few feet away was Plymouth Rock. This was different from that other day. The first Mayflower had come unannounced. The second was moving slowly in, escorted by a score of proud, clinging ships. The sound of the waves and the ships and the cheers was drowned out by the roar of a circling helicopter.

And then I rode out to this replica of the seventeenth-century ship. As we circled to her side, I felt I could reach out and touch the spirit of liberty.

Yes, three centuries and more had passed since those first Pilgrims crossed the Atlantic in a cramped, crowded, cranky ship to write liberty across the skies for all the world to read.

But has human freedom ever been in greater peril than today? Freedom, in spite of its proud heritage, can easily be sacrificed upon a careless modern altar. For even as you sit in the comfort and apparent security of your modern home, the enemies of freedom are devising handcuffs for the mind!

May I speak frankly? The God who gave you life gave you liberty. Your soul is free. No ruler can grant you religious freedom. You have it. That privilege to choose is a gift from your Creator. Rulers can only recognize it.

In fact, the right to think, to think for oneself, is a function of human beings no more to be permitted or denied than the right to breathe. Yet history's most savage tyranny-coercion, imprisonment, torture-has resulted from the desire of the majority to impose their opinions upon the minds of others.

Unfortunately many who sought a haven of political and religious freedom on the rockbound coast of New England did not extend the same right to others. Those early days were marked with much of the same intolerance from which the Pilgrims had fled.

It was James Madison who as a lad heard a fearless Baptist minister preaching from the window of a prison cell down in old Virginia. From that day there was implanted in him a burning desire to protect for his nation freedom of conscience, if ever his should be the opportunity. Tirelessly he worked, along with others who had the same determination, until the First Amendment was placed to the Federal Constitution. It reads simply and majestically:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

Freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of petition and protest-these were the guarantees.

In the matter of religion those Founding Fathers kept before them one guiding principle-that conscience never belonged to Caesar.

Conscience belongs to God. No one ever put it more clearly than Jesus Himself, in Matthew 22:21: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

That is what Jesus said. But men have not always done it. Too many Caesars have attempted to force the conscience. Too many groups large and powerful have attempted to suppress what they felt was wrong thinking. Strangely enough, such groups have generally had three basic ideas in common.

First, they have felt that they alone were right and that all who differed with them were in error. Naturally, such leaders would gather about them men of like opinion. You cannot imagine a dictator surrounding himself with counselors who do not believe in dictatorship-or a persecutor choosing his friends among those who doubt the rightness of applying the torch to heretics. Yet if history has demonstrated anything at all, it has been the frequency with which majorities, with power in their hands temporarily to suppress unwelcome opinion, have themselves been wrong.

The second idea held by those who would suppress what they label wrong thinking is that persons who differ with them are motivated by sinister objectives.

For instance, when Thomas Jefferson was attempting to encourage men to cast their ballot and take part in government, he was accused, by those who believed that the common people should passively obey the masters, of seeking to overthrow the government and destroy religion. The president of a large university called him an atheist because he urged free voting. And some nervous ladies in New England hid their Bibles under their mattresses when they heard the rumor that, if Jefferson were elected, he would confiscate all copies.

There seems to be an utter inability for some crusaders to see that a person who differs with them may be as sincere and honest in his opinion as they themselves.

The third and most dangerous error of these self-appointed guardians of correct opinion is the belief that they can prevent free thinking by persecution. To be sure, the expression of thought can be prevented by force. Obviously, standing a man up before a firing squad will put an end to his thinking!

But America was not so founded. Free people do change their opinions. But free minds are changed not by force but by the weight of evidence presented.

Chains or bars or flames may alter the outward conduct of a man, if he is weak. But they cannot change his thought. Take Galileo, for instance. When he published a work in favor of the Copernican theory, he was forced to his knees by the Inquisition and made to recant. Yet even in that moment of weakness he is said to have muttered under his breath, "But the earth does move!"

Convictions we must have. And a man ought to be ready to defend them with honest, open-minded argument in word and deed. Do not ever succumb to the lukewarm attitude that one position is as good as another. Have your convictions. Live for them. Die for them if necessary. But never forget that your neighbor's convictions are as sacred as your own.

I am thoroughly convinced, for example, that the earth is round, that the democratic form of government is superior, that the family is a sacred unit ordained by God, that true religion is indispensable, and that Christ is the Savior of men. But I have not the slightest desire to torture, imprison, or defame the man who does not agree with me.

The right to differ, whether a man is right or wrong, is a sacred legacy that must be defended at all costs. Unfortunately, sometimes the most intelligent defenders of political liberty are the first to put chains on religious freedom. Listen!

"Across the way my neighbor's windows shine,
His roof-tree shields him from the storms that frown;
He toiled and saved to build it, staunch and brown.
And though my neighbor's house is not like mine,
I would not pull it down!"

"With patient care my neighbor, too, had built
A house of faith, wherein his soul might stay,
A haven from the winds that sweep life's way.
It differed from my own-I feel no guilt!
I burned it yesterday!"

Molly Anderson Haley.

That is the intolerance that has painted crimson the pages of history. I urge you, never become a party to coercion of the conscience in matters of faith and morals. Why? Let me illustrate.

Suppose that zealous, well-meaning Christians in a free land should campaign until they get a law enforcing baptism. Now baptism is certainly right. It is Scriptural, for our Lord Himself said in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Suppose, then, that I manage to get hold of a man who is smaller than I. I tell him he is going to be baptized. But he says, "No, I'm not." I say, "Yes, you are. The law says so." He replies, I don't even believe in Jesus." But I say, "Never mind. The law says you must be baptized."

You see at once the folly of it all. You see that even things right in themselves become wrong if forced upon the conscience.

Another illustration. Suppose I call across the fence to my neighbor and say to him “The next time I hear you swearing, I am going to turn you over to the law.”

No, I am not talking fiction. For in my own state of Maryland, in the year 1723, there was a law providing that a man who was caught swearing or speaking blasphemy, cursing God or denying Christ, would for the first offence be bored through the tongue and fined twenty pounds of sterling.” For the third offense the penalty was death.

Nor was it only swearing that was punishable by law in those early days. Before the principles of liberty and freedom were embraced in the Constitution, there were also numerous laws requiring a strict observance of Sunday, the first day of the week. In Virginia, for instance, in 1610, it was required that all attend divine services on Sunday morning. The man who chose to stay at home lost his allowance for the whole week following. He was whipped on the second offense. And for the third offense he was to suffer death.

So you see, our baptism illustration was not so ridiculous after all. These things actually happened. And they can happen again!

I wonder if you realize that on the statute books of most of the states today you could discover what we call “blue laws,” Sunday laws. Many of them are old and inactive, to be sure. But many of them are new, enacted in recent months and years-in spite of the Constitution!

And there are deeper issues involved in these laws than appear on the surface. Legislation regarding a day of rest may appear harmless, commendable, humanitarian. But do you not see the danger? Do you see what could happen-even in America? And when it does, to what country shall our children flee?

Many a man sincerely believes and practices the command of our Lord to worship on the seventh day, just as it is enjoined in the fourth commandment. And the seventh day, of course, is Saturday. Has any nation, any state, the right to force the keeping of Sunday, the first day of the week, upon the consciences of men who believe otherwise? Would not such legislation place many a Christian of deep conviction in a circumstance where he must say with the Apostle Peter, “We ought to obey God rather than men”? Acts 5:29.

Do you see? The real issue is more than baptism, more than refraining from swearing, more than a day of worship-as important as these are. The real issue is the conscience. The conscience is at stake!

That is the sacred inner sanctum into which God Himself will never enter uninvited. It is that sacred inner room in which the soul decides. God impresses. God guides. God has written. But God does not force. He will not go in, nor will He allow anyone else to go in, except by the choice of the individual.

Satan would like to force his way in. Sometimes loved ones would like to enter-loved ones who do not understand. Sometimes the power of the church, and sometimes the power of the state, would like to enter. But God Himself guards that door. His flaming sword forbids coercion from friend or foe. The soul is free. Christ made it free-on Calvary.

And so He says to the assembled universe, “See that man. He is about to make a decision. All the evidence is in. He has had full opportunity to know the facts. By that decision he may live or die. But he alone must make it. Stand back! The soul must be free!”

And God Himself waits in the courtyard. He pauses at the threshold. He stands at the door and knocks. “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.” Revelation 3:20.

Why doesn't He go in? Because the soul is free. You must make the decision. But I have every right under heaven to urge you to make it-to make it now. Make it in favor of Him!

25. Flags Make a Difference

I WAS standing on the stage of London's Stoll Theater. Beside me stood Frank Jeffries, a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society-astronomer, scientist, mathematician. For many years he was charged with time determination at famous old Greenwich. Imagine that audience, seated in spellbound silence, as this quiet, thoughtful intellect expressed his convictions.

“Friends,” he said, “the greatest thinkers throughout the ages and up to modern times have utterly failed to give a satisfactory explanation as to how and when this earth came into existence. Whatever theory they have evolved, they have all eventually come face to face with the necessity of a First Cause which they cannot define. So forever they stumble along groping for it, drawing millions after them. And all the time walking patiently behind them, hoping that they will turn around and look Him in the face, is the First Cause, the Lord God of heaven and earth!”

Reminds one-doesn't it?-of words found at the opening of the Book: “In the beginning God.” There is no other place to begin.

The universe has long been a mystery to man. While he knew so little of it, perhaps it was natural to spin his own ideas of its origin. Men unacquainted with divine revelation might, with the limited vision of five centuries ago, believe that the earth was square and held up by a mythological giant. Even a century ago some thought it easy to bypass the Creator. Man knew so little of creation.

But then came this strange twentieth century. And all was changed!

In the last year of World War I the famous British scientist Ernest Rutherford, when reproved for failing to attend a committee, retorted, “Talk softly, please. I have been engaged in experiments which suggest that the atom can be artificially disintegrated. If it is true, it is of far greater importance than a war.”

Who can say who first split the atom? The whole family of scientists seemed impelled to the one end. And when it was accomplished, they stood aside in fright at what their hands had done. One of them said, "The only way I can tell that a new idea is really important is by the feeling of terror that seizes me."

Then came the building of the bomb. And many of the men who made it never knew what they were constructing until the morning of the first atomic test at Los Alamos. Even the scientists did not realize the immensity of what they had done until they saw the whole area lighted by the searing light and heard the awesome roar. Said General Farrell, "The explosion. . . made us feel that we puny things were blasphemous to dare tamper with the forces heretofore reserved to the Almighty." How could anyone present that day doubt that there is a Creator?

Albert Einstein concluded that the splitting of the atom is in reality creation in reverse. It is releasing the very power of God. Can you not see how this breathtaking discovery makes belief in the Scriptural record of creation not at all difficult? For if man can turn matter into energy, could not the Creator have turned energy into matter? It is now possible not only to believe-as faith has always believed-but to understand at least dimly how the Creator works. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." "For he spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Psalm 33:6, 9.

There is a Creator. And if you follow me carefully you will see that the Creator of this world is none other than the One who gave His life for it. The first chapter of John describes the Lord Jesus Christ as He preexisted from the days of eternity: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." "He was in the world, and the world was made by him." John 1: 1, 3, 10.

These words refer unquestionably to the Lord Jesus Christ, your Savior and mine-refer to Him as the Creator of all things. Says Hebrews 1: 1, 2: "God has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, by whom also he made the worlds." And Ephesians 3:9 openly names Him: "God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

There need be no confusion here. The Scriptures speak one clear, consistent message. This world has a Creator. That Creator is Jesus Christ. And that message extends through to the fascinating Book of Revelation, the book of last things, the book of special significance to men living today. This remarkable prophetic book describes a revival of faith in creation in the last days of this world's history. And it calls it the everlasting gospel. Listen to these words of John:

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth." Revelation 14:6, 7.

"Worship him that made." Who was it that made heaven and earth? We have learned from Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator. And Jesus Christ is the very heart of the everlasting gospel.

We have worshiped Him as Savior. Now we see that the same Savior is also our Creator-the Creator who walks at our side waiting to be recognized. And here on the verge of His coming, in a day when creation stands vindicated as never before, we are called upon to acknowledge Him as our Creator.

How can we acknowledge Him as our Creator? How can we worship Him that made heaven and earth? Let the Scriptures answer. In the very heart of our Lord's commandments is revealed the way that men may worship Him as Creator. These words have been familiar to you since childhood, no doubt, yet they may contain a surprise:

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. . . for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exodus 20:8-11.

Do you see it now? "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God"-for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth." Honoring the Sabbath is God's appointed way of acknowledging His creatorship.

Someone may be saying, "That does seem reasonable. But does it have to be the specific seventh day? Will not any day-any convenient day of rest-honor Him?"

Let me answer your question this way. Seated in the dining car on a train during World War 2, I noticed on the back of the menu an engraving of the Stars and Stripes in full color. As a loyal American, I honor the Stars and Stripes. So you can imagine my surprise and my perplexity as beneath the flag I read these words: "Just a piece of cloth. That's all it is; just a piece of cloth. You can count the threads in it, and it's no different from any other piece of cloth."

My patriotism would have rebelled if I had not read on: "But then a little- breeze comes along, and it stirs and comes to life and flutters and snaps in the wind-all red and white and blue-and then you realize that no other piece of cloth could be just like it. Yes, that flag is just a piece of cloth until we breathe life into it. Until we make it stand for everything we believe in and refuse to live without."

I might take an ordinary piece of red cloth. You could count the threads in it, and find it no different from any other piece of red cloth. But if I take that piece of red cloth and a piece of white cloth and a piece of blue cloth and sew them together into the Tricolor of France, Frenchmen would die for it! If I sew them together into the Union jack, Britishers would die for it! Or if I sew those same pieces together into the Stars and Stripes, Americans would die for it.

Just so, God took an ordinary day, no different from any other day. But then He made a Sabbath out of it. He breathed life into this day. He made it stand for everything precious and vital, an emblem of all He wants Christians to live for and refuse to live without.

You see now why it is important. Flags make a difference!

Come back with me across the centuries to a day nearly two thousand years ago, to the humble little village of Nazareth. We make our way down the narrow cobblestone street, past the little shops with their open fronts. We see the workmen plying their trades as we pass one shop after another. There is a leisurely atmosphere about it all.

And then we come to a shop that is different. The front is neatly whitewashed, and the street has been swept. We enter and find a kindly, stalwart man plying the carpenter's trade, and by his side a young assistant perhaps twenty-one years of age. The young man is planing a piece of wood, making it true, making it straight. He rests a moment and wipes His brow. As He turns, we see that He has the bearing of a prince, of a king-for He is none other than the Prince of heaven. King Jesus, come to cast His lot with the toilers and the poor, to live among men and die in their place.

We hurry on. But we come back again, for we are fascinated by the little shop. We come back on Thursday. We come back on Friday. We come back on Saturday. But on Saturday the shop is closed. The tools have been carefully put away. The shavings have been gathered up from the floor. All is quiet.

We notice that the people are all walking toward a conspicuous building in the center of the village. We follow them and find our seats in the rear of a well-filled auditorium. We wait a moment. Then imagine our surprise as we see the carpenter's Son make His way into the pulpit, open the scroll, and begin to read. The record says of a day some years later: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read." Luke 4:16.

The example of Jesus is clear and consistent. His custom was a Sabbath keeping custom. There is no confusion. There is no contradiction. There need be no speculation. Your Savior and mine, from the first to the last of His ministry, kept only one day-the seventh day of the commandment-as the Sabbath.

Yet in spite of this, we find a strange situation in the world today. For though we have the same Christ as our example, the same Bible as our guide, yet we find two Sabbath days kept by Christians. The sincere heart cannot help asking, "Which is right?"

Multitudes have been told, and honestly believe, that the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath was abolished at the cross and that the first day of the week-the day we now call Sunday-became the Lord's day in honor of the resurrection.

Another group of Christians, equally sincere, believe that the original seventh-day Sabbath that came from the hands of the Creator, that was kept by the Savior as our example, is the true Lord's day and that it should be observed by all-even this side of the cross.

Now I know that many sincere, devoted men and women are walking where their forefathers walked without once thinking to question why they keep the first day of the week. Yet we must learn one vital truth-that we must have Scripture support for every Christian practice that we follow. If we are wrong on the Sabbath question-wrong either way-God's Word will certainly reveal it. And every honest man wants to know the truth, even if it turns out to be different from what he expected it to be. If the Scriptures reveal that I am keeping the wrong day, then I ought to be perfectly willing to change.

Some time ago I was driving through Ohio in what I thought was an easterly direction, en route to New York City, when suddenly I saw a bus, loaded with people and plainly marked "New York City," speeding toward me and going in the opposite direction. It was disconcerting, to say the least. Either that bus driver was wrong or I was wrong, and it troubled me. I soon discovered that he was right, for evidently I had driven into a service station and turned back the wrong way.

Now I had been riding along in perfect confidence, without the slightest thought of any problem. But I saw immediately that I needed to turn around, and I wasted no time in doing it. Then I was on my way to New York City.

Could it be that we have lost our way without knowing it, without ever suspecting it, in this matter of the Sabbath? Could it be that we have never understood the full extent of the falling away that took place during the Dark Ages and before? You may be surprised as we open the Scriptures, and then the pages of authentic history, to discover what actually happened during those centuries.

I know some say it makes no difference what day a man keeps, so long as he keeps one day in seven. But I am convinced that when Jesus comes through the blazing heavens, some things are going to make a difference-things that people thought did not matter.

Does it make a difference? Is just any day acceptable to God? Turning to His Word, we discover that the Lord has a day. John says, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet." Revelation 1: 10.

Here is a simple statement of fact. John was in vision on the Lord's day. Evidently there is a difference in days. Evidently the Lord has a day. But which day is it?

Jesus said, "For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day." Matthew 11:8. There must be something different about the Sabbath. Through Isaiah God speaks of the Sabbath and calls it plainly "my holy day." (Isaiah 58:11) Nowhere in Scripture does He designate any other day as His.

The Lord, then, has a day. And that day is the Sabbath. But which of the seven days is the Sabbath? We turn for our answer to the very heart of the Ten Commandments. "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." Exodus 20:10. Putting these scriptures together, we see that the Lord Jesus has a day and that day is the Sabbath. The Sabbath, according to the Ten Commandments, is the seventh day.

But someone may be saying, I don't quite follow. Did Jesus have anything to do with giving the Ten Commandments?"

I want you to notice two texts, and then decide. Here is the first: "All our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." 1 Corinthians 10:1-4.

“That Rock was Christ.” Here Paul says plainly that it was Christ who, through Moses, led His people out of Egypt.

Now notice the story as Nehemiah tells it: “Thou did see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt and showed signs and wonders upon Pharaoh. And thou didst divide the sea before them. Moreover thou led them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire. Thou came down also upon mount Sinai, and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: and made known unto them thy holy Sabbath.” Nehemiah 9:8-14.

Surprising words? The same One who led His people out of Egypt is the One who gave the commandments on Sinai-including the Sabbath commandment. And Paul says it was none other than Christ.

Who, then, gave the Ten Commandments? The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as He preexisted before His birth in Bethlehem. Therefore the Ten Commandments are Christian commandments. They are Christ’s commandments. Jesus had every right to say, “The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day,” for He Himself had made it. He had every right to say, “If you love me, keep my commandments,” for He Himself had given them.

Some, without thinking it through, have told us that the seventh day Sabbath is Jewish and therefore not for us. But Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man.” Mark 2:27. And that means all men. The Savior Himself made the Sabbath back in the Garden of Eden some two thousand years before there was a Jew. He gave the Sabbath along with marriage, and the Sabbath is no more Jewish than is marriage.

The Sabbath and marriage, two roses plucked from the Garden of Eden, have come down to us from a sinless world. And the enemy of God is determined to distort and destroy both.

The Sabbath, you see, forever reminds man of creation and of the Creator. It was made for that purpose. Modern man has largely bypassed the simple statement with which Scripture opens, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” It has seemed too difficult to believe. Men, honest men, are spending their lives trying to discover the origin of the universe. They look into the atom and watch the behavior of cosmic rays. Yet all the while the Creator stands beside them and whispers, “In the beginning God.” And splitting atoms echo a loud “Amen!”

God’s last call to men is a call to recognize the Creator. “Worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” Revelation 14:7. And how better can we worship Him as Creator than by honoring the day that declares to the world our allegiance to Him? It is a matter of loyalty. Flags make a difference!

The deeper you study into this thing, the more thoroughly you investigate, the greater will be your conviction that something is wrong somewhere. You will be convinced that in some very vital issues we have been just slipping along, following the crowd, never thinking to question.

I think I know how you may feel about this. With thousands of others you may be facing this truth for the first time. It may seem not only new but startling.

I shall never forget the Lutheran man and his daughter who came up to me after a meeting in which this truth was shared. They had waited until others had gone. He was a big man, twice my size, and he took me by the lapels of my coat. He simply shook, and the tears rolled down his face as he said, “Pastor Vandeman, tell me it isn’t so! Tell me it isn’t so!”

I knew what a shock it was to him. But I could not tell him it isn’t so. I dared not hold back truth. The gospel minister whose eyes have seen the truth of this Sabbath question, who feels his responsibility before God as he leads men and women forward to judgment and eternity, cannot tell any man it isn’t so. He can only say, “God has spoken. Will you follow?”

You see, we can read the Bible as long as we like, but we shall not find it any other way. We may pass the little carpenter shop as often as we like, but we shall never find the Carpenter of Nazareth closing its doors on any other day. His example stands unchanged.

It is true that Jesus spent little time, if any, in exhorting the people of His day to strictness in Sabbath keeping. But I think you will see that such emphasis was hardly necessary.

Try to imagine how Jesus must have felt as He saw the Sabbath, His gift to man, buried under the cumbersome, unreasonable restrictions of the Jews of His day. What must have been His reaction as He heard them quibbling over the carrying of a handkerchief on the Sabbath, and making their august decision that a handkerchief pinned to the clothing was not to be considered a burden! Is it any wonder that by teaching and example Jesus attempted to clear away the rubbish of their tradition in order to let the Sabbath shine out as He had made it, in all its beauty and loveliness?

It is evident, however, as we study the Gospels, that the example of Jesus encouraged carefulness in Sabbath observance. Listen to these words: ‘And that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment. Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre.’ Luke 23:54-56; 24:1.

These verses immediately follow the account of the crucifixion. The Creator of heaven and earth had just been laid in the tomb. Could not this be called the hour of the world’s greatest emergency? If ever carelessness in Sabbath observance might be excused, would it not be in this hour? Yet the example of Jesus had been clear. His followers left the work of caring for His body and “rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment.” His example had left no question.

At this point you may be saying, I believe you are right. Evidently the seventh day is the right day to keep. But how can we know that the day we now call Saturday is the seventh day of Bible times?”

You may be surprised to know that the verses we have just read answer that question. There was no confusion in Christ's time about which day was the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Luke says clearly that it came in between the day Jesus was crucified and the day He was resurrected.

There is nothing better established in religious circles than that Jesus was crucified on the day we now call Friday, and that He was resurrected on the day we now call Sunday. And of course, Saturday is the day between. It is as simple as that!

What about lost time? Any astronomer will tell you that no time has been lost between Christ's time and ours, that no calendar change has affected the continuity of the week. Saturday is still the seventh day. There need be no confusion.

That brings us face to face with a very reasonable question: Why do men and women keep Sunday? What reason do they give for keeping it? The usual answer is simply, I keep Sunday in honor of the resurrection."

But I ask as earnestly and sincerely as I know how, Where is that command found in God's Word? Where does Scripture tell us we are to keep Sunday in honor of the resurrection? Where is the change recorded?

As strange as it may first appear to the sincere Christian who has been faithfully observing the first day of the week, we must face the truth that neither Jesus nor His disciples observed the first day of the week or commanded a change in the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. The text commanding! the change in honor of the resurrection is simply not there.

As glorious a truth as the resurrection is, God never intended that we make a Sabbath out of the resurrection day, thereby setting aside one of His commandments. We honor Christ by obeying Him, not by substituting man-made requirements in place of His. And please remember that Christ's Ten Commandments are the same this side of the cross as they were the day He gave them. The cross has only spotlighted their unchangeable nature, for if the law could have been changed, the Creator of heaven and earth need not have given His life for the fallen race. If the commandments could have been set aside, then Calvary was unnecessary. The only memorial God ever gave to commemorate the resurrection is baptism. He never intended the resurrection to be celebrated only once a year with Easter bonnets, or once a week with an hour in church or beside the radio or television set. Instead, He gave us baptism. He asks a constant memorial of the resurrection, continuous walk in an entirely new life following baptism. No other memorial of the resurrection did God ever give.

You may be thinking, "What about the past? Has not Christ accepted me? Has not God accepted those who have lived and died, carefully observing Sunday and never dreaming they were wrong?" Of course He has accepted you. He has accepted them. He accepts every sincere follower, even though his understanding of truth may be incomplete. But when additional truth comes to us, He simply says, "Come, take another step." And what can we do but follow?

We come now to the big question that demands an answer. Since the Bible is so plain that the seventh day is the Sabbath, how is it that the majority of Christians are keeping the first day of the week? Who changed it? When and how was it done? We turn to history for the surprising story of how it happened.

You see, in the early centuries after Christ there was a struggle between the infant church and paganism. Sun worship, Baal worship, Mithraism-these had counterfeited many Bible practices, thereby complicating the preaching of the gospel.

The first day of the week was honored by sun worshipers for centuries. On that day they conducted their most excited demonstrations in honor of the sun. But followers of the true God were keeping the seventh-day Sabbath.

In the early part of the fourth century Constantine was the Roman emperor. He was a sun worshiper, but he was also a keen politician. He wanted to please everybody. While still a pagan he decreed that all government offices should be closed on the first day of the week-"the venerable day of the sun."

The church, which had now been established in Rome, had been quick to see the temporal advantage of compromise with paganism. Could they not bring into the church some of the pagan customs? Would not such a merging of customs cause pagans to feel at home in the Christian church? Why not bring in the pagan day 'of worship? Would not the pagans follow their holiday into Christianity?

So it was that after a few brief years, when Sunday had gained a foothold, the Roman church in the Council of Laodicea set aside the clear command of God and decreed the change from the seventh to the first day of the week.

Now the Christian world did not come up to one particular Sunday and begin keeping it. It did not happen overnight, or with a single decree. The change was gradual. Sunday was brought in at first not as a day of worship at all, but as a holiday. For perhaps two hundred years both days were observed side by side-Saturday as the Sabbath, Sunday as a holiday. But as paganism filtered into the church, Sunday was emphasized more and more, the Sabbath less and less.

Keep in mind that in those early centuries copies of the Scriptures were not available to everyone as they are now. Only a few privileged persons could study God's Word for themselves. So it was that after centuries of conditioning, the church could tell the people that Sunday was now the Sabbath, and scarcely be challenged.

The Dark Ages followed-long centuries when the truth was kept from the people. Generation after generation came and went, with few ever knowing the truth as taught by the apostles. Then came Martin Luther and the other reformers.

Something was wrong. Truths long hidden were rediscovered one by one. But the Sabbath, buried deep under the tradition of the centuries, is only now in these last days coming to the attention of countless thousands who have never suspected that any confusion exists in regard to the day of rest.

You see now how it could happen. You begin to understand how those dark centuries have affected the faith of millions. Is it any wonder that the Christian world today is confused, when so many centuries have passed since the teaching of Christ and the apostles was known and practiced in its original, untainted form?

I want you to have the facts. I want you to read them for yourself. Yet how shall I know what to select, when the standard historical references describing what I have told you in the past few moments would fill a two-ton truck?

Take this, for instance, from J. H. Robinson, in his *Introduction to the History of Western Europe*, page 30: "From simple beginnings the church developed a distinct priesthood and an elaborate service. In this way Christianity and the higher forms of paganism tended to come nearer and nearer to each other as time went on. In one sense, it is true, they met like armies in mortal conflict; but at the same time they tended to merge into one another, like streams which had been following converging courses."

And no less than Dean Arthur P. Stanley, in his book *Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church*, Lecture 6, page 291, says, "The retention of the old Pagan name of 'Dies Solis,' or 'Sunday, for the weekly Christian festival, is, in great measure, owing to the union of Pagan and Christian sentiment with which the first day of the week was recommended by Constantine to his subjects, Pagan and Christian alike, as the 'venerable day of the sun.' It was his mode of harmonizing the discordant religions of the Empire under one common institution."

Now listen to this frank statement: William Fredrick, in his *Three Prophetic Days*, pages 169, 170, says, "At this time it became necessary for the church to either adopt the Gentiles' day or else have the Gentiles change their day. To change the Gentiles' day would have been an offence and a stumbling block to them. The church could naturally reach them better by keeping their day."

One shudders to think that such a superficial reason as this should be advanced. But that is exactly what happened to the true Sabbath!

It is not difficult to bring multitudes into the church. Any church willing to compromise can swell its numbers. An entire empire became Christian through compromise. And the terrible truth is that the Sabbath of the Lord Jesus Christ was sacrificed to the gods of popularity and compromise.

We turn now to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume 4, page 153: "The [Roman Catholic] Church, on the other hand, after changing the day of rest from the Jewish Sabbath, or seventh day of the week, to the first, made the Third Commandment refer to Sunday as the day to be kept holy as the Lord's Day."

And I read the following statement from the official Catholic publication *Our Sunday Visitor*, in the issue dated June 11, 1950-a statement upholding Catholic belief in tradition and pointing out the inconsistency of Protestant adherence to it: In all their official books of instruction Protestants claim that their religion is based on the Bible and the Bible only, and they reject Tradition as even a part of their rule of faith....

"There is no place in the New Testament where it is distinctly stated that Christ changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. Yet all Protestants, except the Seventh Day Adventists, observe the Sunday. . . . Protestants follow Tradition in observing the Sunday."

Has the spirit of the Reformation grown so dim that great bodies of Protestants must turn to the very tradition they reject to find authority for their day of worship? An embarrassing position, to say the least!

What, then, do our Protestant friends say about this matter? What have they said through the years? Listen to this from the *Augsburg Confession of 1530*, Article 28: "They [the Catholics] allege the change of the Sabbath into the Lord's day, contrary, as it seems, to the Decalogue; and they have no example more in their mouths than the change of the Sabbath. They will needs have the Church's power to be very great, because it hath dispensed with a precept of the Decalogue." - Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. 3, p. 64.

Amos Binney, a Methodist, writing in his *Theological Compendium*, pages 180, 181, says, "It is true there is no positive command for infant baptism." Then he continues, "Nor is there any for keeping holy the first day of the week."

We could read from other great Protestant communions. But here is one from Dr. E. T. Hiscox, a man who wrote a Baptist manual. In a paper read before a Baptist ministers' institute on November 13, 1893, he said:

"There is no Scriptural evidence of the change of the Sabbath institution from the seventh to the first day of the week....

"Of course, I quite well know that Sunday did come into use in early Christian history as a religious day, as we learn from the Christian Fathers and other sources. But what a pity that it comes branded with the mark of paganism, and christened with the name of the sun god, when adopted and sanctioned by the papal apostasy, and bequeathed as a sacred legacy to Protestantism!"

I will not read more. History gives us the facts. But I would rather read the words of Jesus. I would rather read the Word of God than read the record of unfaithfulness and change.

Let me just say this. The Word of God predicted many centuries ago that men would tamper with God's law. The prophet Daniel wrote of a power that would "speak great words against the most High, and think to change times and laws." (Daniel 7:25.) And Paul wrote that in his day "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." (2 Thessalonians 2:7.) But John wrote of a people in this last hour who would "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." (Revelation 14:12.)

Evidently the blaze of the Reformation that began centuries ago has not entirely dimmed. Evidently its brightest days are still ahead. The gems of truth that were lost in the rubbish of the Dark Ages and earlier are to be polished again and set in the framework of the everlasting gospel in this last time, in God's last call to men.

God is calling out a people. He is calling honest hearts everywhere. He is calling you, in the circle of your friends. He calls you to be a witness to those friends. He calls you to be one of those who will have the courage, in a day like this, to "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

You may say, "But the crowds! How can I do it?"

The crowds have seldom decided in favor of truth. It was the crowds that crucified Jesus. Only a very few, like the dying thief, had the courage that day to say, "I'll crown Him Lord of all." Truth can never be measured by the number who are willing to follow it. The question is not, "What is convenient?" but, "What is right?" It is not, "What is the crowd doing?" but, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Shall we watch the crowds for a moment? It is here that we see the majority. We see those who have questioned God's holy law. We see the multitudes who walk where their forefathers have walked, scarcely dreaming there is any question about the day of rest.

But away from the crowds, standing firm for the commandments of God, I find the patriarchs, the prophets, and every one of the apostles. I find a valiant line of faithful witnesses all down through the ages, for the light of truth has never gone out. I see here the noble group of truth seekers today-down in the end of time-who follow the Savior whatever the cost, who place His will above that of the crowd. And who is this who towers head and shoulders above the rest? Yes, it is the carpenter's Son-Jesus of Nazareth!

I hear a shout from the crowds, "Come, join us!" But I turn and see Jesus standing with outstretched hands as He says, "If you love me, keep my commandments." Flags make a difference. Is there any other choice for you-for me-except to say, "You may take the world, but give me Jesus. I'll close my carpenter shop. I'll adjust my business. I'll make my plans to follow Him?"

It is His appeal-not mine. It is the appeal of the Carpenter of Nazareth. And how can any man reject it?

26. My Confession of Faith

THERE CAME a day when in the quiet seclusion of an ancient German library a godly young man, soon to become a monk, discovered a Latin Bible. Reverently he laid his hands upon it. Fearfully he opened its pages. Never before had he seen such a volume. He had not known such a book existed. He had heard small portions of Scripture read at public worship, and supposed that this was all. Now for the first time he looked upon the whole of God's Word. With quickened pulse he turned the sacred pages, exclaiming, "Oh, that God would give me such a book for myself!"

That prayer began to be answered when he found a Bible chained to the monastery wall. Those medieval centuries that we call the Dark Ages were dark, filled with superstition and ignorance, largely because this Book was suppressed. The Dark Ages were dark because the light of God's Word was chained to monastery walls, or hidden as choice, rare treasure in the palaces of the wealthy and the courts of kings. The reading of the Bible, for the common people, was looked upon with suspicion and distrust. No wonder that during this time, without the safeguard of the Scriptures, there crept into the church, doctrines, rites, ceremonies, and forms of worship about which Paul or Peter never heard.

Imagine if you can the surging emotions within the breast of young Martin Luther as again and again he repaired to the Book on the monastery wall. In that historic search, to his profound surprise, he saw nothing of relics, images, worship of the saints. But he did see much of Jesus, His righteousness, His character, His love and power. He saw little emphasis on rites and forms and ceremonies, but an amazing revelation of how God looks upon the inner life. It was there that the young monk prayerfully gathered his message and vigorously turned to the world with some breathtaking questions that were to rock the thinking of that day to its foundations.

Protestantism was taking root. It urged the open return to the Word of God. It meant a clean break with the traditions of the past. It marked the beginning of a new epoch in our civilization. For with the searching, inquisitive spirit of the Reformation the old world died, the modern world began.

What brought about the Reformation? Thoughtful men will agree that it was the Word of God that did it, as it unshackled the minds of men to discover in its pages the long-hidden light of gospel liberty. And it was none too soon. For the hands of God's clock were fast approaching the final hours of history when divine revelation of it-would he desperately needed. And God saw fit to use a fearless young monk who gathered his message and his courage from a Bible chained to a wall. Thank God for Martin Luther!

But you ask, "If the Scriptures shed such light, how do you account for the hopelessly disunited state of Protestantism today?"

Is there not but one cause for the separate segments of Christianity, the diverging denominations that we know so well? Is it not the failure of Protestantism to live up to its own call to return to the Scriptures? Has the cry of the Reformation grown strangely dim because it all but died on the lips of each reformer in turn?

You see, when the followers of Martin Luther, after his death, discovered advanced truth in their study of the Word, there was a tendency to ask, "Did Martin Luther teach it?" Evidently it did not occur to them that had not the great leader died unexpectedly on that last trip, thus cutting short his work, his search for truth would have continued. They failed to realize that even a full lifetime was far too short to uncover all that centuries of tradition had buried. And so they set their stakes and wrote a creed, satisfied with the truth they had received from their revered founder.

Then, as further light dawned, other reformers moved out of established organizations, as had Luther. They could do nothing else, for dissenting voices were discouraged.

It was years later that two young men, deeply convicted that there ought to be something more methodical and personal in the practice of religion, came upon the scene. They had experienced the inner flame of new life, and they arose at 6:30 each morning for prayer. They organized a prayer meeting to meet every Wednesday night. It was because of their methodical, organized plan of

Christian living that they were first derisively called "Methodists." But what a mighty work God did through that early revival we know as Methodism! Thank God for John and Charles Wesley!

Luther, the Wesleys, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, and other great reformers-all were wise and good men unmistakably led by the Spirit of God. But I ask you, Can we safely conclude that all truth dawned upon their minds? They were only then emerging from the Dark Ages. Truth, in its hazardous journey through the treacherous centuries that followed the days of the apostles, had been buried deep. Can we assume that these early reformers rescued all the gems of truth from the darkness? Or were there more where they discovered the first? Evidently. For listen to this: "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day." Proverbs 4:18.

Yes, the Reformation was to be progressive, until the entire world should be warned in a blaze of light and glory that would burst into climax as the Lord Jesus appears in the skies. That is God's plan. And it will succeed. There is a message for His people in this generation, a message which gathers all the gems of truth into the framework of the everlasting gospel for this last critical hour. And God uses an interesting term to describe it. He calls it "present truth." I read about it in 2 Peter 1:12: "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be established in the present truth."

What is present truth? Is there a specific message for this specific hour? Truth, of course, is permanent, abiding, unchanging. Its fundamentals do not change. But for every major crisis in the history of mankind God has given a special message to meet the emergency, a message fitted to the needs of a particular generation. This is what God means by present truth.

Take Adam, for example. He might well have taught that someday a universal flood would cover the earth. And it would have been true. He might well have predicted the Savior's ministry on earth. He might have predicted that the second coming of our Lord would bring an end to the reign of sin and sorrow. All would have been true. But none of these were present truth for his generation. They did not directly concern his day. No great emphasis on these truths was needed at that time.

However, when Noah came upon the scene of action, he proclaimed a specific message for a specific generation. It was a message vital to every man living in that day. Who could say that it was not present truth? Those who heard his message, who heeded it, were saved. Those who rejected it were lost.

John the Baptist is another perfect example. His appeal was to prepare men and women for Christ's first coming. "Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Those who accepted his message were prepared to accept Christ when He appeared. Those who rejected John's message were prepared to reject the Savior.

But what about us? Has God sent present truth into this critical time? If ever we needed a message from God to meet specific needs, it is now. If we are approaching history's greatest crisis-and most thinking men declare that we are-is not God bound by His own promise to forewarn us? "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he reveals his secret unto his servants the prophets." Amos 3:7.

Has God left this generation unwarned? No. In brief, bold strokes He has described the particular emphasis that He intends this final generation to hear. And, appropriately, it is found in the book of last things, the Book of Revelation.

Nosy I understand full well that when the Book of Revelation is mentioned, some will say that it was never intended to be understood, that it is a closed book, a book of mystery. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Its very name means "that which has been revealed." Its first words indicate that it is a revelation from Jesus to show His people things that would shortly come to pass. Evidently it is possible to understand it. It is therefore with eager expectancy that we read from the fourteenth chapter, beginning with verse 6:

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

Thoughtfully reading these potent words, seeing how they package into one the message of Scripture, convinced me-as I believe it will convince any sincere man or woman-that here is a message of supreme importance. Could it be that these words describe God's last call to humanity, God's last appeal to the human heart, God's specific message for this generation? Could it be that here is a sound basis for my confession of faith? Or any man's?

I discover here the ring of urgency. It is a message that is to go to "Every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Every man is to hear it. Not a man dare he missed!

I find here the ring of the second coming. It is a message to prepare men for that event. It is timed for it. Verse 14 says, "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle." Evidently the message we have read immediately precedes that climactic event.

I discover here the ring of the everlasting gospel. That phrase catches my eye and heart. It is not something new or strange, not something some man has invented, not a queer, radical diversion from truth. It is the everlasting gospel. The same gospel Noah preached, the same gospel John the Baptist preached, the same gospel Jesus demonstrated before men, the same gospel the apostles taught-but in its current setting for our day. The everlasting gospel! I could stand upon no safer platform of truth. I am perfectly safe in making the everlasting gospel my confession of faith.

I find in these verses the ring of accountability. Daniel Webster, when asked what was the most serious thought that ever crossed his mind, replied, "My personal accountability to God." Therefore, in my confession of faith, judgment-hour thinking must make that accountability very, very real. For I read in verse 7, "The hour of his judgment is come."

I find here the ring of loyalty. For I discover that this everlasting gospel prepares a people who will "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." And who of us will not agree that this generation's most tragic need is to return to the saving formula of the faith of Jesus and the commandments of God?

Unfortunately, some have thought that the faith of Jesus releases men from obligation to His commandments. But how could this be? Does an examination of the commandments one by one reveal any conflict with saving grace? How is it, then, that one of them-I refer to the Sabbath commandment-is almost universally neglected?

"But," someone is saying, "are we not more and more enforcing a day of rest by legislation across the land?" Ah, yes, friend, but that is just the point. Are moral issues a matter for legislation? And even if they were, are you sure that the day being enforced is the Sabbath? Or is it only a manmade substitute? Just a question. But someday you may find that you have never been asked a more important one. An issue is involved here that touches every man's loyalty to His God. Yes, in God's last message to men will be heard the unmistakable ring of loyalty. And finally, I discover in this message of Revelation 14 the ring of warning. For in these verses are packed the most important issues of our day. Here is a warning against deception and counterfeits that are destined to ruin the beliefs of millions. Counterfeits that touch the great fundamental issues over which the last battles in the great controversy will be fought. Counterfeits that touch the sacred personal liberties of every man.

My friend, there are no more serious words in all of Scripture than those of Revelation 13 and 14. Certain things are taking place before our eyes today that this Book said would take place. In fact, when we place today's trend toward conformity beside the words of Revelation 13:16, 17, the impact of divine prediction is staggering. Can it be that the man who dares to be different may yet face the threat of boycott and worse?

Yes, here in Revelation 14 I find a sound basis for my confession of faith. As I probed deeply into these foundations of truth, I felt that certain vital questions had remained unanswered in the historic creeds-creeds generally right and sound, but which somehow have not kept pace with unfolding truth to meet man's present need.

As I explored the creeds and the traditions, I failed to find a consistent picture of the hereafter. The resurrection of Jesus intrigued me. What would I do without it-without its promise of my own resurrection and that of my loved ones in the last day? But I reasoned, My would there need to be a resurrection if, as is popularly taught, I go immediately to my reward at death? Would I, at some later date, need to leave heavenly bliss to crawl into this body again? Something was wrong here?

I watched the growth of the psychic cults down the centuries, culminating in a great surge of revival of interest in supernatural phenomena in our day. I felt that to meet the almost overmastering appeal of spiritualistic forces, this modern masquerade of the psychic, there must be a far more sound and reasonable explanation of the hereafter than is found in the creeds. And thank God, there is!

In the creeds of the centuries I looked in vain for a satisfying teaching of the second coming. I found it taught as a possibility, even a probability, but almost always in the far-distant future-far too distant to heal the wounds of this generation. The rapidly fulfilling prophecies of Scripture convinced me that His coming is "even at the doors." And I longed to hear the clear ring of a promise about to be fulfilled: I will come again."

I heard no voice in the creeds proclaiming, "The hour of his judgment is come." Were men to be left to step unwittingly into judgment day? Were men to be left unwarned?

The message of Revelation 14 exposed to view great fundamental questions of loyalty, great questions regarding soul liberty that have haunted the human spirit for centuries. Has there been a clear understanding of these vital issues? Evidently not, for I found that Europe's sod has been soaked with the blood of martyrs. And in the guarded, sometimes muted voices of prejudice and intolerance today there is an ominous echo of the voices that howled their hate around the martyr's stakes.

It could happen again. And Scripture indicates that it will. But when it does happen, Americans are going to be stunned. For it will come about in such seemingly innocent ways, and be concerned with such seemingly insignificant issues, that thousands will exclaim in surprise, I didn't know what was at stake!"

Is it possible that multitudes of sincere men and women are thoughtlessly bypassing a vital issue because it appears to involve only the personal choice of a day of rest? It could be. But more than a twenty-four-hour day is here involved. It is a matter of loyalty. Whom will you obey? Whom will I obey? Would it not be an unfortunate paradox if honest men, thinking to promote commandment-keeping, should be led unwittingly to legislate against commandment-keeping-and feel satisfied that they have helped the kingdom of God?

Yes, as I saw the conflicting, clashing loyalties pictured in Revelation 14, I was led to the deepening conviction that the compelling issues of our day will center in certain great doctrines that have been changed, warped, and their meaning lost. Surprising as it may seem, there is evidence that long-neglected teachings of Scripture regarding a day of rest may become the basic issue in the intolerance so soon to burst into flame. You can see that if ever we needed to be clear in our thinking, it is now!

Tell me honestly. Could I safely build my confession of faith upon anything less than the Scriptures-all the Scriptures? Where else could I find a platform of truth solid enough that I could confidently say, as did Martin Luther, "Here I stand, I can do no other"?

Where do you stand, friend? What is your confession of faith? However inadequate illustrations may be, I shall never forget the surge of loyal dedication that rose up in my heart for the Lord Jesus Christ as I first heard of an experience that took place during one of the most decisive battles in the history of the British Empire.

The Duke of Wellington had planned an operation to take a dangerous hill. That famous general knew that when he gave the command for his men to charge, very few would come back alive. Even his stout military heart wavered at the thought. He told his regiments, I will turn about, and every man that is willing at daybreak to make the charge on that hill, let him take two paces forward."

The general turned and waited. In a few moments an officer asked him to turn again. A look of disappointment momentarily crossed his face, for there was not a break in the lines. Yes, a look of disappointment momentarily-until the officer explained, "Every man has taken two paces forward!"

What else can a man do when he faces the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ? Mat else can he do but step forward? It is a matter of loyalty!

27. Wilderness Survival

"YOU MUST carry on!" Those words, spoken in the dim light of a campfire in one of the Piedmont valleys of northern Italy have haunted me ever since I first heard of them. In those words I caught the heartbeat of prophecy. In those words the Book of Revelation came to life. In those words I felt a challenge for the future that every man must meet.

It happened near the little Waldensian village of Torre Pellice. Here in these valleys the Waldensian people had lived for centuries. Here, this night, a group of Christian youth had gathered around their campfire to sing gospel songs and to tell mission stories. Visitors from the surrounding valleys and mountains had drifted into the village, and now they approached the campfire with curiosity. Who were these young people? They heard them praying. They heard them singing about the second coming of Jesus, in which their own fathers had once so ardently believed. They heard them telling mission stories, and it brought a strange nostalgia for their own past. Never had there been a people so missionary-minded as the Waldenses. One of the mottoes in their museum said simply, "you are not a missionary, you are nothing at all in this world." That, for centuries, had been the spirit of the Waldenses.

This night, after the singing and the stories were over, one of the Waldensian elders stepped from the shadows into the light of the campfire and spoke thoughtfully to the minister, "You must carry on!" He continued, "We, the Waldensian people, have a great heritage behind us. We are proud of the history of our people as they have fought to preserve the light of truth high upon these mountain tops and up and down these valleys. This is our home. Here we have e great monuments of our faith. Here we have the Chiesa de la Tanna. Here we have a monument to the Holy Word of God on which these words are carved in marble: 'Ta parole est la verite [Thy word is truth].' Of all this we are proud.

"We are especially proud of the school of the Barbes. That is where we trained our young people for the service of God. It is the oldest seminary of Europe, where the teaching of theological doctrine took place and where the truths of God's Holy Word were preserved. Inside this stone hut is a large stone slab that served as the table where the students worked translating the Bible into French. Upon the wall are the names of some of those who took their training here. From this place went out the Waldensian colporteurs, the sellers of silk, missionaries of the Word of God. After almost every name there is a little cross engraved in the granite slab, meaning that this man gave his life for the cause he loved most dearly."

Then this Waldensian elder, a layman in the church, said with conviction, "This is our great heritage of the past, but we really do not have any future. We have given up the teachings in which we once believed. We no longer believe that Jesus will soon come in the clouds of heaven. This belief we have abandoned. From all that I can observe, from what I have heard about your people, you must now carry on."

He pointed to a nearby mountain. "If you look up here on the mountainside, you will see one of our Waldensian chapels. You will notice on this chapel, as on all our chapels, these words: 'La lumiere luit dans les tenebres [And the light shines in darkness]."

No more appropriate passage could have been inscribed on these chapels where light shone out through the dark centuries of the past. But he added, "During the past years in these valleys so filled with sacred history, we have no longer the vision we once had. We have tried vainly to hold our young people in the church. Beside these chapels where it is written, 'The light shines in darkness,' we have built dance halls, thinking that in this way we might be able to hold our young people. But now they seem to have no more interest in, or love for, the church. Their interest now is down in the bright lights of the big cities. No longer do they want to remain here. Mat a miracle it is that your church still has young people who are interested in coming up here to our valley and in studying the history we love so much. But that is all in the past now. The sad thing is that we are not moving forward with courage for the future. You must carry on."

The words of that Waldensian elder bring to life the compelling, fascinating prophecy of Revelation 12. For nowhere was this prophecy more vividly fulfilled than in these valleys of northern Italy. Grasp, if you will, the impact of John's inspired words as we read them now:

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne."

Here pictured is a woman in white, clothed in the brightness of the noonday sun, standing upon the moon, and crowned with a diadem of twelve brilliant stars. Of what, or of whom, is she a figure? Is John here speaking of Mary, the mother of Jesus?

In the "man child" of verse 5 we have, undoubtedly, a portrayal of the birth of Jesus Christ. There is only one Child in all the history of our world who was to "rule all nations" and he "caught up unto God, and to his throne." That Child was Jesus.

But it is not Mary who is here so beautifully pictured by the prophet. Here, as everywhere in symbolic prophecy, we find that a woman is used to represent the church—a pure woman to represent the church loyal to its God, a fallen woman to represent the church unfaithful to Christ, compromising with error and the world. It was the prophet Jeremiah who said, I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman." Jeremiah 6:2. And who is Zion? God, speaking through Isaiah, says of Zion, "Thou art my people." Isaiah 51:16.

Again and again the symbol is used. The church is called the bride of Christ and Christ is called the Bridegroom. Paul says to the church, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." 2 Corinthians 11:2.

The story of Revelation 12 covers many centuries, much longer than Mary lived. It was the church that brought forth the Child of verse 5. The church became the object of the special hatred of the dragon, identified in verse 9 as Satan, because she brought forth One who was to be his Conqueror. Working through the instrumentality of pagan Rome, through the Roman governor Herod, the enemy brought about a decree that every child under two years of age, in and around Bethlehem, should be slain.

The dragon spent all his fury upon the Son of God. But every effort to destroy Him, every effort to turn Him from the work He had come to do for man, failed. Christ was "caught up unto God."

And now, having failed, the dragon turns his attention to the church, the object of Christ's supreme regard. "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days." "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." Revelation 12:6, 13, 14.

Please keep in mind that the church pictured here is not a church building or a denomination as such, which the term church often calls to mind. The word church in the New Testament is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which simply means "a called-out assembly." Church membership and church organization are important. But whether we are permitted to worship in a church or in the caves of the mountains, we are a part of God's church if we are among His called-out ones. The emphasis is upon being called out to follow God—God's truth, not tradition or the customs of men, however pleasant or attractive those traditions and customs may seem.

The church in the days of the apostles was made up of men and women called out from the prevailing worship of their day, tainted as it was with man-made tradition. The doctrines, of the early church were pure, just as received from the Savior.

But notice what happened. During the first few centuries the newborn Christian church gradually grew in favor. The pagan peoples that at first persecuted her became favorably impressed. At last the Roman Empire outwardly embraced the Christian faith. But with this newfound favor and popularity came a corresponding letdown in devotion and faithful doctrinal interpretation on the part of the church. Into the church crept rites and ceremonies, doctrines and practices, of which Paul or Peter never heard.

However, during this period of gradual apostasy there always remained a section of the church which was true and loyal to "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Thus we find a branching off, as it were, with the main body growing popular and more careless, while the original core of faithful Christians, lamenting the changes creeping in, remained true in spite of the growing persecution by their brethren. In the face of increased adversity, the faithful, represented by the pure woman in white, persevered. At last there came a time when the persecution grew so severe that the true church, the faithful nucleus of believers, was driven into the wilderness and into obscurity, where she would remain, hunted and harassed and oppressed, her members sometimes martyred, for many centuries. "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days."

Now in symbolic prophecy, as we learn from Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6, a day represents a literal year. For 1260 years the church was to be often persecuted and oppressed.

The church in the wilderness! Truth in the wilderness! Could the church survive? Could truth survive? In the gloom that settled upon the earth, would the light of truth be extinguished?

No, in every age there were witnesses for God. All through the dark centuries were men and women in many lands who held to the Word of God and resisted the power of tradition. But there is no more inspiring chapter in it all than the history of the Waldenses. For there, in the very land from which the persecution stemmed, the encroachments of falsehood and corruption were most steadfastly resisted.

For centuries the churches of the Piedmont valleys remained independent, until at last they were forced to submit. But there were men and women who refused to yield their faith. These either forsook their native Alps and made their way to foreign lands, or withdrew to the secluded glens and rocky fastnesses of the mountains, there to worship God.

Here was the church in the wilderness. The Waldenses early obtained a translation of the Scriptures. And because they possessed the truth in unadulterated form, they were the object of special hatred. But in the lofty bulwarks of the mountains they found a hiding Place. Here the light of truth was kept burning. In that illuminating book *The Great Controversy*, by Ellen G. White, is found a fascinating description of these fearless people, a description from which we are quoting both directly and indirectly.

Listen! "God had provided for His people a sanctuary of awful grandeur, befitting the mighty truths committed to their trust. To those faithful exiles the mountains were an emblem of the immutable righteousness of Jehovah. They pointed their children to the heights towering above them in unchanging majesty, and spoke to them of Him with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning, whose word is as enduring as the everlasting hills. God had set fast the mountains and girded them with strength; no arm but that of Infinite Power could move them out of their place. In like manner He had established His law, the foundation of His government in heaven and upon earth. The arm of man might reach his fellow men and destroy their lives; but that arm could as readily uproot the mountains from their foundations, and hurl them into the sea, as it could change one precept of the law of Jehovah, or blot out one of His promises to those who do His will.

"The mountains that girded their lowly valleys were a constant witness to God's creative power, and a never-failing assurance of His protecting care. Those pilgrims learned to love the silent symbols of Jehovah's presence. They rejoiced in their freedom to worship before Him. Often when pursued by their enemies, the strength of the hills proved a sure defense. From many a lofty cliff they chanted the praise of God, and the armies could not silence their songs of thanksgiving."

Such was the church in the wilderness-the church hid in the mountains. But the conflict grew even more severe. "And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood." Revelation 12:15.

Early in life the children of the Waldenses were taught their mission. Early they were taught to be guarded in speech. In their youth and manhood they were ready to go out in the disguise of merchant or peddler, with precious manuscripts hidden in their clothing, spreading the light of truth wherever they traveled.

Some of them enrolled in the great institutions of learning in the cities of France and Italy. Cautiously they shared their manuscripts with those who were seeking light. In some cases the principles of truth permeated the entire institution; yet even with the closest questioning their persecutors could not trace the so-called heresy to its source.

The spirit of Christ is a missionary spirit. The heart that has received longs to share. "The work of these missionaries began in the plains and valleys at the foot of their own mountains, but it extended far beyond these limits. With naked feet and in garments coarse and travel-stained as were those of their Master, they passed through great cities and penetrated to distant lands. Everywhere they scattered the precious seed.... Veiled and silent, the word of God was making its way through Christendom and meeting a glad reception in the homes and hearts of men."

They believed that the end was not far distant, that Christ was soon to come. They longed to share that hope. They saw men vainly attempting to obtain pardon by afflicting their bodies. They saw the consciences of men bound by man-made tradition. They saw men oppressed with the weight of sin, haunted by the fear of God's vengeance, suffering on until at last, exhausted, they sank into the tomb without one ray of hope.

The Waldensian missionary longed to bring hope to those who had no hope. Cautiously he would produce a portion of the Scriptures. And then, with quivering lip and on bended knee, he would read the precious promises. Often he was asked to read them again and again. Could it be true that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin"?

Sometimes the entire night was spent in this manner. The assurance of a Savior's love seemed too good to be true. They would ask, "Will God accept my offering? Will He pardon me?" The answer would be read again from Scripture, until the understanding could grasp it. And the response would be heard, I may come to Jesus just as I am, sinful and unholy, and He will not spurn the penitential prayer. "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Mine, even mine, may be forgiven!"

Joy filled the heart. All fear of prison or flame now was gone. They would welcome death if it would honor their Lord.

"The messenger of truth went on his way; but his appearance of humility, his sincerity, his earnestness and deep fervor, were subjects of frequent remark. In many instances his hearers had not asked him whence he came or whither he went. They had been so overwhelmed, at first with surprise, and afterward with gratitude and joy, that they had not thought to question him. When they had urged him to accompany them to their homes, he had replied that he must visit the lost sheep of the flock. Could he have been an angel from heaven? They queried.

In many cases the messenger of truth was seen no more. He had made his way to other lands, or he was wearing out his life in some unknown dungeon, or perhaps his bones were whitening on the spot where he had witnessed for the truth. But the words had left behind could not be destroyed. They were doing their work in the hearts of men; the blessed results will be fully known only in the judgment."

These Waldensian missionaries were invading the kingdom of Satan, and the wrath of the dragon increased. But "the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth." (Revelation 12:16.)

Yes, the earth helped the woman. For many years, there in the Piedmont Valley and the surrounding mountains, this prophecy was literally fulfilled. The lofty crags of the mountains, the caves and the rocks of the earth, provided a refuge for the faithful worshippers.

Today you can crouch down on your hands and knees and enter the Chiesa de la Tanna, the church of the earth, the secret Waldensian chapel. On hands and knee's you can make your way down the rocky tunnel into this chapel in the heart of the earth. The only light in this chapel is that of the sun shining through a small opening at the top of the cave. In this place of worship, perfectly camouflaged by nature, the Waldenses for many years sang and prayed and shared their testimony without fear. At last came the day

when. two hundred and fifty of them were caught in this very cave. A fire was built at the opening of the cave, and as the oxygen was consumed, they sang praises to God until breath was gone, glad to give their lives rather than renounce their faith.

Such is the story of the Waldenses. Thus they “witnessed for God centuries before the birth of Luther. Scattered over many lands, they planted the seeds of the Reformation that began in the time of Wycliffe, grew broad and deep in the days of Luther, and is to be carried forward to the close of time by those who also are willing to suffer all things for ‘the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.’”

Truth, in the wilderness, survived. The torch of truth, even in the winds of persecution, has never been wholly extinguished. It still burns today, to be carried on to the end of time by men and women who love right better than life.

Truth has come out of the wilderness the same as it went in, tarnished by the experience, to be sure, but needing only to be polished and presented again to the world as the truth “once delivered unto the saints.”

Have you ever stood on a mountaintop and watched a train across the valley winding its way along the shiny rails and into a tunnel? As the train disappears into the mountains, you turn at once to the other end of the tunnel, fully expecting to see it emerge just as it went in. If it went in a bright aluminum streamliner, you expect it to emerge the same.

Then may I ask, If the true church, resplendent with all the doctrines and practices given by Jesus and the apostles, disappeared into the wilderness, into the tunnel that history calls the Dark Ages, hidden by God from the persecuting power then raging-tell me, would it emerge from that wilderness experience, that tunnel of persecution and martyrdom, any different from when it went in? Would not its doctrines and its practices be the same? Will there not be a people today to witness for the faith that Christ and the apostles taught, to carry the torch of truth that the Waldenses, with other faithful peoples, carried for centuries? Will God allow the torch of truth to burn out, neglected and unrecognized by those who love their Lord?

The story of Revelation 12 is not ended yet. There is one more verse in this fascinating prophecy. Listen! “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 12:17.

The wrath of the dragon, in these last days, still is turned upon the church of God. We live in the days when the remnant, the last segment, of the church will carry the torch of truth. It is possible to recognize the woman in white. It is possible to identify the remnant? The remnant of the church, like the remnant of a bolt of cloth, will exhibit the same weave of doctrinal exposition, the same pattern of obedience, the same color of spirituality, as the original. It is the same truth that angered the dragon in the days of the apostles, the same truth for which the Waldenses, the Huguenots, and others, laid down their lives. The woman in white was forced to flee into the wilderness but God preserved her there. It is the greatest story of wilderness survival ever told. The church stands today, undaunted and unafraid, proclaiming truth, the same truth, to this last generation. Fearlessly she stands for the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus, facing the rising wrath of the dragon.

The Waldenses have carved for themselves a unique place in our hearts, for they, if we choose that it be so, are our spiritual ancestors. Here were a people above the corruption of their day, unswerving in their devotion to God in spite of the flood of persecution that reached out to destroy them. Here were a people who lived and died with a conscience sensitive to no other direction than that of their Lord. Man could not touch it, or make it afraid.

But the controversy is not over yet. Once again demands are to be made upon the consciences of men. Once again men will have to choose whom they will obey. The final battles will be fought not in the wilderness of darkness and superstition, but in the full light of this generation in which knowledge has increased to astounding proportions. In this enlightened age every man will decide.

The sequel to the story of the Waldenses makes a sad postscript. It makes solemn thinking to realize that the children of those whom corruption and persecution and martyrdom itself could not bring, to surrender should at last succumb to a life of ease until they could build dance halls beside their chapels and lose their vision, their children, and their hope. It is a sober thought that after centuries of unswerving devotion one of their own number should have to say of their own sacred history, “But that is all in the past now. The sad thing is that we are not moving forward with courage for the future. You must carry on.”

Such is the haunting appeal of the Waldenses. Someone must carry on. Someone must pick up the torch of truth laid down by a long-faithful people. The challenge will not be silent. Truth will triumph. You and I may triumph with it-if we choose!

28. Red Stairs to the Sun

ONE CANNOT visit the silent city of Petra-that “rose-red city half as old as time”-without feeling something of the pulse of the great controversy of the ages, the controversy between Christ and Satan. One cannot stand in the shadow of its temples, banquet halls, and tombs exquisitely carved out of solid rock without being reminded that this planet is in rebellion against its God.

For out of this mountain fortress, out of this unique and fabulous city of the dead, rise the red stairs to the sun. Stairs carved by generations long forgotten. Stairs that lead to the high altars of sun worship. Stairs that for centuries felt the endless tread of fascinated, compromising feet, climbing to worship a strange, forbidden god. Stairs that remain a silent, crimson symbol of the worship of the sun!

Here it was that generations made tragic, gruesome history about which many an Old Testament scripture has been written. Here was an ancient center of a heathen worship that for centuries challenged the true God and threatened His church. Here was a worship that involved human sacrifice to the sun.

The red stairs of Petra-and the high places to which they lead remain a symbol of a devilish, passion-filled worship that called forth one of the most drastic prophecies ever made. You will find it in the last words of the last chapter of the last book of the Old Testament. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Malachi 4:5, 6.

Here is one of the most striking predictions ever made about a human being. And it is made about Elijah.

Elijah stepped into the Bible picture at an hour of great spiritual decay and apostasy. Through him God sent a message of reform, calling His people out of the confusing, immoral, degrading system of Baal worship, with its traditions, back to the commandments of God and the faith of their fathers.

And then, almost as suddenly as he appeared, Elijah disappeared. And we hear little of him again until the Old Testament closes. But here in these cryptic words we read that the prophet Elijah is to return before the coming of the great day of the Lord.

Now Bible students are generally agreed that the great day of the Lord here mentioned is the day toward which all creation is moving the second coming of Jesus Christ. And Elijah is introduced into the picture.

What can it mean? Does it mean that the prophet Elijah himself will be sent again to the world in the last days? Does it mean that we are to look for a man to appear as Elijah did, with rugged, honest face, long, flowing robes, and a faithful message? Will Elijah himself stand in Times Square, or walk up and down Washington's Pennsylvania Avenue, or Market Street in San Francisco?

The Bible reveals a twofold repetition of the work of Elijah. It predicts a message of reform that would prepare the way for the first coming of Jesus, and a message of reform that will prepare the way for the second coming of Jesus. And we shall discover that the coming of Elijah refers to a message of preparation, rather than to the reappearance of Elijah in person.

How do I know this? I learn it by listening to a conversation between Jesus and His disciples. They had just come from another convincing demonstration that the Christ they were following was truly the Son of God.

"And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?" Matthew 17:10. In other words, the disciples were saying, "We believe that you are the Christ. But the religious leaders say that Elijah must appear first. If you are the Christ, then where is Elijah?"

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not." Now notice verse 13: "Then the disciples understood that he spoke unto them of John the Baptist."

Here is our Lord's own interpretation of the prophecy. The return of Elijah is a message rather than the return of Elijah in person. It is not the man Elijah but the message that we are to look for. Listen to John the Baptist himself. When asked if he was Elijah, he responded "I am not." And then he explained, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord." John 1:23.

John had a message. He was a voice. The angel who predicted John's birth stated it in these specific words: "And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Luke 1: 17.

There you have it! Almost the exact words of the Old Testament prophecy. And John fulfilled it then. But Elijah's message is to be repeated again before the second coming of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

Elijah's message will do for the world before the second coming of Jesus what the work of John the Baptist did before His first coming. Therefore one of the most important questions a man or a woman could ask is this: "What constitutes the Elijah message for today? If there is such a message, where is it?"

To answer that question, we must know what the message of Elijah was when he stood as the fearless prophet of Israel. Come back with me, then, over the centuries to the days of Elijah.

A loving God had shown divine favor in leading His people out of the bondage of Egypt and settling them safely in the land of promise-a strategic crossroads of the nations where they could have witnessed for God if they chose. But in the days of Elijah, Israel had forsaken the worship of the true God and turned to the worship of Baal.

You see, Israel was virtually surrounded by idolatry. To the north and west the Phoenicians worshiped the sun and the moon and the Planets. Here was a stronghold of heathen worship.

Egypt, to the west and south, for centuries had cultivated the practices of sun worship. The builder of the Great Pyramid of Giza, Khufu, left indisputable evidence of the rise of the cults of moon and then sun worship. Only recently has come the accidental discovery of the solar boats at the base of the Great Pyramid, believed to be the last tribute to the worship of the sun in Khufu's dynasty.

Not long ago as I sat in a book-lined study overlooking the Pyramids, the man who is considered the world's supreme authority on the Sphinx told me how the Sphinx itself had its roots in the beginnings of sun worship.

Then to the south of Israel was the fabulous Edomite capital now called Petra. Surveying this impregnable mountain fortress on horseback, walking through the ruins of this silent city of the dead, I realized a little of the greatness of its departed glory.

But could any civilization long survive that burned its children in sacrifice to its gods? Here were the red stairs to the sun, carved that an endless procession of tramping feet might climb to the high places of idolatry and sun worship. And during those weak moments of compromise and sin, God's chosen people, His own representatives, joined those tramping feet. Feet once dedicated to the service of their Creator went tramping, tramping, tramping after other gods.

Imagine how God must have felt. Here was a world He had created-a race lured into revolt by His enemy-a people for whom He would one day give His life. Strange, stubborn, willful planet in rebellion!

He saw ascending from this earth the smoke of battle. It was not the smoke of guns, for the most decisive battles are not fought with guns. Instead, it was the smoke of sacrifice-tell tale evidence of the loyalties of men. For while here and there a wisp of smoke rose to the true God, most of the smoke of sacrifice was directed to strange, forbidden deities.

Whom would man choose to worship? The smoke of its altars was Petra's answer. And God saw it, and felt its tragedy.

But Petra was not the greatest tragedy. To the north was another mountain-Carmel. Here lo rose the smoke of battle-the smoke of sacrifice. And the smoke of Carmel cut deeper into the heart of God, for Carmel was within the borders of His own Israel. Yet here, too, were altars to the sun.

This was the worship that had penetrated across the borders of Israel and struck at its heart. Cults so degrading and immoral that they beggar description had filtered through the nation, for sun worship carried with it gross immorality. Ahab, king of Israel, had married Jezebel, a wicked and licentious heathen princess. And the people had followed their weak leaders.

This was the people to whom the prophet Elijah was sent-a nation that had forgotten its Creator. "And they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal." 2 Kings 17:16.

Sun worship, you see, meant a rejection of the commandments of God. It could not be otherwise. The difference between true and false worship in Elijah's day was a difference in attitude toward the commands of God. And the message of Elijah was a call to decide. "How long halt you between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." 1 Kings 18:21.

Elijah called for decision. John the Baptist called for decision. Just so will the Elijah message of our day call for decision. You need not be surprised at the similarity of the appeal, for the Author is identical. The same God who spoke through Elijah and John to their generations will speak to this one, too.

But you ask, "Is there such a message today? Is there a message that will do for the world today what John's message did before the first coming of Christ?"

Yes, there is. It is found in the last book of the New Testament, just as the original prediction is found in the last book of the Old Testament. In fact, the entire Book of Revelation, the book of last things, is given to prepare men for our Lord's return to earth.

It is a call to revive the everlasting gospel in its particular, peculiar, current setting for our day. It is a call back to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus-the need of every man, the need of every home, the need of every nation.

It is an uncompromising call for decision-for the hour is late. The words that above all others seem to bum across the pages of this last book are these: "And, behold, I come quickly!" Revelation 22:12.

In this last hour-this significant hour-God has a message that no man can afford to consider lightly. It is the now familiar message that begins with these words: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people!" Revelation 14:6.

This message, this universal message, timed for earth's last hour, is called simply the everlasting gospel. And gospel it is, through and through. It is a call back to the commandments of God, to the faith of Jesus. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus!" Revelation 14:12.

The faith of Jesus and the commandments of God belong together. Together-and only together-they meet the need of this desperate hour.

We have moved dangerously from an already frightening nuclear age into a breathtaking space age. Our minds and our fingers have pried the atom apart and rocketed us into the frontiers of space. But fear has paralyzed our hands because our hearts are unchanged!

We are not ready for the power that we have touched. And mankind is afraid. Sane men everywhere are beginning to feel that the real question is not whether other planets are inhabited, but whether we can continue to inhabit this one.

I ask you, Will our entire planet become another Petra-only a dead caricature of a forgotten past? Are we, too, tramping stairs that will lead us to oblivion-because we are worshipping false gods?

Petra did not think it needed the commandments of God. We did not think we needed them either-with our test tubes and slide rules, and our new, easy code of morals.

But now our test tubes and slide rules have taken us farther than we were ready to go. And our easy morality has not worked. As a result, the world is desperately bewildered, desperately troubled, desperately unready for the age we have already entered.

And the God of the atom, the God of space, puts His finger on the cause. He tells us that the things we thought did not matter, do matter after all. He points to a timeless code that exposes our deepest need-in letters that burn into the conscience of every man:

1

"Thou shall have no other gods before me."

2

"Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image."

3

“Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”

4

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

5

“Honor thy father and thy mother.”

6

“Thou shall not kill.”

7

“Thou shall not commit adultery.”

8

“Thou shall not steal.”

9

“Thou shall not bear false witness.”

10

“Thou shall not covet.” (Exodus 20:3-17.)

But any newspaper will reveal the extent of man’s forgetfulness, for you read there: Careless irreverence. Worshiping the gods of gold and silver. Unashamed profanity. Forgetting a worship God says to remember. Shocking juvenile delinquency. Human life frighteningly cheap. Weakening moral reserve. Dishonesty to God and man. Deliberate disregard of truth. Maddening rush for gain.

These ten sins chargeable to modern man are little different from those of Elijah’s day. We have turned from the same timeless moral code to a sort of modern Baal worship. “Oh,” you say, “no one worships Baal today. Baal worship is long dead.”

I ask you, Is Baal worship dead? Is it dead so long as it taints our Christian worship-however sincere that worship? Is it dead so long as men, however thoughtlessly, place popular opinion, tradition, and custom on the throne where God should be? Are not men still turning aside to climb red stairs to the sun?

Is it any wonder that God said that Elijah would return in our day? Which will it be? The commandments of men-easy codes-convenient worship? Or the everlasting gospel-the commandments of God-and a fountain of cleansing that alone can cure, deeply and permanently cure, our modern sins?

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

Red stairs to the sun? Or a crimson fountain? To this generation God sends Elijah’s penetrating appeal, “How long halt you between two opinions?”

Picture the scene that gave birth to these words. The time-about 900 BC. The hand of God had intervened. It had not rained for three years in Palestine. And then Elijah emerged from seclusion.

They climbed Mount Carmel-eight hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and Astarte, one lone prophet of God, and a multitude to watch the outcome. Elijah proposed a reasonable test. God-and Baal - would stand on trial before them. The God that answered by fire would be the true God. And the people would decide.

An altar was built, and for hours the prophets of Baal implored that heathen deity, to no avail. Then Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord, placed the sacrifice upon it, covered the altar with water, and prayed a simple, heartfelt prayer. And God heard. Fire descended and consumed not only the sacrifice but also the altar and the stones and the water. For He who made the atom knows well its control.

It was there on Mount Carmel, standing alone before the high prophets of Baal and a wicked, unfaithful people, that Elijah cried, “How long halt you between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.”

That was Mount Carmel-900 BC. But here, on the threshold of the great day of the Lord, those same penetrating words are heard again. The call of Elijah cuts deep into the conscience of this generation, "How long halt you between two opinions?" And standing beside Elijah, His arms outstretched in loving appeal, the Savior says, "This is the way, walk you in it."

A planet still is in rebellion. And God still watches the smoke of battle, the smoke of sacrifice, to see whom men will worship. Will it be God-or will it be Baal? Will it be red stairs to the sun-or a blood red fountain that can cleanse and cure the sinner's guilt?

29. Conscience

WATCH DOG-guardian angel-tormentor of the soul! As elusive as your shadow-and just as persistent. It can be a comfortable companion. Or it can make a man turn pale at the lightning-or the rattle of a leaf. We call it conscience!

What is this mysterious extra sense in the soul of man? There have been scores of definitions-some philosophical, some abstract, some painfully practical. But simply said, conscience is that capacity within us that decides whether a thing is right or wrong and urges us to act accordingly.

It is the traffic light of the soul, if you please. It tells you when to go. It tells you when to stop. Or it may urge you to proceed with caution. Just as the traffic light is the signal for the laws that govern traffic, so conscience is the signal-the voice of direction-for God's moral law of the universe. And conscience, like our five senses, functions through the mind. There must be a mind alert to interpret its direction.

You may remember the tragic account of the New Jersey train that plunged off an open drawbridge. It was the accident that couldn't happen-yet it did. That commuter train actually sped through three red lights and plunged off the open bridge down into the Delaware River.

Why? The engineer had evidently suffered a heart attack. The signals were working, but there was no mind to interpret and act upon them. And for some reason that particular train had not been equipped with a dead man's switch.

Neither is conscience equipped with a dead man's switch! That is why the conscience cannot give adequate direction when the mental faculties are obstructed or impaired in any way. Or when we are unconscious. Or, unfortunately, if we are under the influence of alcohol or narcotics. Such artificial blocks effectively silence the conscience and lay open the sacred precincts of the human mind to the impressions of chance or evil.

No doubt you have heard the claim that conscience does continue to function during hypnosis. Unfortunately, this is not all the truth. Some of the most experienced authorities only smile at the claim that it is necessary for hypnotic suggestion to fit in with the subject's moral code. They tell us that, on the contrary, it is possible through deep hypnosis to force normally conscientious individuals even to commit crime.

You can see that this is completely logical. The hypnotist recognizes that he cannot expect a subject to carry out his suggestions while in full command of his reasoning faculty. Therefore, as one authority says, "the therapist must partially inactivate, temporarily, the center of conscious reason in the individual." He must silence the watchdog. And that is a dangerous practice!

No, it is simply not possible for the conscience to do its work under such conditions. The conscience cannot function normally without the conscious mind! Evidently there is something here that we need to understand.

Now the word conscience does not occur in the Old Testament. But from the beginning of the Bible record conscience is very much in evidence. Our first parents felt the emotions of shame and fear at wrongdoing. Cain complained that his punishment was more than he could bear. Joseph's sensitive conscience led him to meet temptation with the words, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Genesis 39:9.

Listen to this quaint way of expressing David's deep conviction of sin: "And David's heart smote him." 2 Samuel 24: 10. And Job, in his faraway day, determined, "My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." Job 27:6.

Happy is the man today who vows to keep his conscience clean! Someone is asking, "Is conscience the same as instinct?" No, not entirely. An animal is compelled by instinct to act in a certain way.

Not so with man. He is urged, but not compelled. He is free to choose-and then either to suffer or enjoy the consequences.

Then could it be that conscience is simply the result of accumulated experience and environment, and therefore must be subject to change from generation to generation?

We have just passed through a generation that thought so. True, a baby soon learns that things tipped over are broken. A man soon learns that if he does not leave home in time, he misses his train. A woman soon learns how to set her table if she is to be accepted socially.

But what such reasoning fails to take into consideration is that these things do not touch moral issues. They have little or nothing to do with conscience. Sin is more than personality deficiency, a mistake in judgment, or social maladjustment. The so-called conscience of this past generation answered to no higher authority than public opinion. No absolute standard was necessary, we were told. Standards were supposed to dwarf the personality. If a lad feels like breaking up the furniture, don't cripple his expression!

A famous psychologist once declared, "Damn the absolute creeds!" And all the minor voices of that philosophy ever since have echoed that decree. Millions of intellects were twisted; religious faith declined; confusion set in, in regard to guilt, forgiveness, and even prayer.

Then we began to reap. Our deepest problems today are simply the product of the past generation's twisted thinking.

Frightened cities are discovering that juvenile delinquency is almost out of control. But what could we expect? When we virtually silenced the voice of conscience in our boys and girls, we took away their guardian angel.

A frightening number of morally confused men and women are crowding the doors of our psychiatric clinics. But again, what could we expect? The idea that conscience is a creature of man's own making—that sin is only a built-up figment of morbid imagination, not something to turn from—is producing more conflict in modern minds than any other one thing.

Is it any wonder that millions of heartsick, bewildered men and women are seeking out an understanding counselor to whom they can talk-talk interminably about themselves? The talk itself is supposed to be healing, to bring composure. And sometimes it does, to a degree. But there is lasting help only if somewhere along the line the counselor, whoever he may be—psychiatrist, physician, or minister—can put down a ladder that will show a man how to get out of his mental and spiritual tangle.

And that ladder can tolerate no evasions, no bluffing, no acting as though nothing had happened. No attempt to heal the conscience by destroying it. Guilt must be lifted and the heart set singing through the forgiveness of God. There is no other way. The God who made the conscience tells us how to heal it.

‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ 1 John 1:9.

“Come now, and let us reason together, said the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Isaiah 1:18.

Guilt can be redemptively met only by Calvary. The feelings of guilt must be laid at the cross, or they will poison the springs of life. Guilt can be pushed back into the subconscious and fester and make you literally sick. Or guilt, if you let it, can take you by the hand, Place its burning finger on the need of your soul, and thereby lead you to God.

The healing of the conscience and the healing of the body, go hand in hand. Listen!

“There is no health in my limbs, thanks to my sins.” Psalm 38, Moffatt.

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed.” James 5:16.

“Thy sins be forgiven thee; Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk.” Mark 2:9.

A soul that is torn and sick with a sense of guilt, a conscience weighed down with the burden of sin, can find permanent release and healing only with the assurance of forgiveness before God. There is no other way. There is no other ladder out of guilt.

But someone is asking, “Suppose I do accept the forgiveness of God. Then will my conscience be dependable and accurate from that time on?”

No, not necessarily. The conscience now is deaf. Guilt has been removed. But your conscience must grow in moral sensitivity. It must be educated. Let me explain.

The conscience decides what is right and wrong. But it decides only on the basis of the information it has. It is not some sort of spiritual Geiger counter that peers into moral issues and decides them by some psychic power. Conscience simply prompts a man to act on what he believes to be right or wrong.

For instance, conscience will not reprove a man who picks up a glass of liquor believing it to be lemonade. When he finds out what it is, then conscience speaks. If a man had never heard of the effects of strong drink, conscience might not speak at all. Conscience must be educated.

Do you see the danger? It is here that we need a divine, infallible authority. Conscience can be trusted only when it is educated to speak in unison with the Voice in the Book. In fact, all teaching that denies the supreme authority of God's Ten Commandments in the soul of man, denies the authority by which conscience, if it is to be accurate, must judge.

On the other hand, the more a Christian studies the Word of God, the more accurate his conscience will be. The more willingly he approaches its pages, the more often the voice within him will say distinctly, “This is the way, walk you in it.” Isaiah 30:21.

Some time ago I was visiting, with an attorney friend of mine, in the home of a ninety-four-year-old mother. As we studied the Word of God together, her pet parakeet came and perched on my shoulder. As I would let the Scriptures unfold a point of truth, the little bird would say, “That is so!” And then as another gem of truth appeared in all its clarity, again it would say, “That is so!”

I am not asking you to read anything unusual into this incident. Just how or why that little mite said those words dearly that day, I do not know. He may have heard them said. But however that may be, what an illustration of the priceless approval that can be yours! As you peruse the inspired pages, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter sent to guide you into all truth, will whisper into your heart the confident word of guidance, “That is so!” And He will add, “This is the way, walk you in it.”

But—and this is the point—the conscience can also be damaged. It is a delicate instrument. We dare not abuse it, or even neglect it, if we expect to profit by its warnings. The Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 4:2 speaks of those whose conscience is “seared with a hot iron.” Here is not a condition in which conscience is completely erased, but where conscience ceases to function in the normal way because its voice has been disregarded.

Which one of you has not tried out a new alarm clock that on the first morning startled you out of bed? But if you should turn it off and go back to sleep, and repeat the process day after day, you would soon sleep through its warning. The bell does not ring any

less loudly. It is your relationship to the bell that is changed. Your consciousness develops a condition in which the bell can no longer be heard.

Just so, the Spirit of God can be grieved. His voice can be quenched. He can be resisted-until at last there is silence. And unfortunately, a man may not know that a tragedy has occurred. For even that empty silence is misinterpreted by some.

Alexander MacLaren describes the process by which conscience becomes seared and hardened in words that have haunted me ever since I read them: "An old historian says about the Roman armies that marched through a country, burning and destroying every living thing, 'They make it a solitude, and they call it peace.' And so do men with their consciences. They stifle them, sear them, forcibly silence them, somehow or other; and then, when there is a dread stillness in its heart, broken by no voice of either approbation or blame, but doleful, like the unnatural quiet of a deserted city, then they say it is peace."

God forbid it-in either your life or mine! For when a man has stilled the voice of warning placed within his bosom, when he has stilled the only voice of God to his soul, what more can God do?

It is only a divinely guided conscience, a conscience as sensitive to right as the needle to the pole, that will give a man courage to stand for conviction though the heavens fall. No martyr ever went to the stake with a weak, vacillating, spineless conscience!

I think of that winter night when a Roman legion was encamped in a little lakeside town in France. Forty spiritual heroes, unwilling to renounce their faith, were sentenced to die out on the frozen lake. Banded together in the biting, benumbing cold, they began to sing. The stern, proud commander, on watch from his comfortable tent, heard the words:

"Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee,
O Christ,
Claim for Thee the victory
And ask from Thee the crown."

Strangely moved by this unusual testimony, that hardened soldier, so used to cursing and frantic pleas for mercy, listened intently. These were men of his own company, men who had angered the emperor by their faith. These were his forty heroes. Must they die?

He moved out into the cold, gathered driftwood from the shore, and built a huge fire with flames leaping high into the night. Perhaps this would lead them to renounce their faith and thus save their lives. But no. Again the sound of the refrain met his ears, weaker now:

"Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ,
Claim for Thee the victory
And ask from Thee the crown."
Then suddenly the song had changed.
"Thirty-nine wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ."

And all at once, as the song still floated in across the ice, one of the prisoners climbed up the bank and dropped by the fire, a huddled mass. The song of the forty was no more. One of the heroes had turned coward.

On the shore, dearly outlined against the fire, stood the commander. Strange things were surging in his breast. Then suddenly his soldiers saw him take one brief look at the pitiful specimen before him and throw off his own cloak. Before they could stop him, he raced down the bank and across the ice to the freezing prisoners, casting back the words, "As I live, I'll have your place!"

In a few moments the song, with a fresh note of triumph, was wafted again to the soldiers who had gathered fearful and awestruck, on the silent shore:

"Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee,
O Christ,
Claim for Thee the victory
And ask from Thee the crown!"

It is only when the conscience speaks with such authority that such victory can be yours. And who knows how soon you will need it!

30. God and the Cities

New York and its city rivals. A little fog is enough to immobilize a city. A little frozen rain on its streets, and it is crippled. And no city is a match for a hurricane or a volcano.

Yes, it is a slender thread! And there is more at stake than we realize. Come with me, then, to the cities of the past. It may be we can discover how God feels about the cities of today-and what He is going to do with them.

Take, for instance, the city of Nineveh, one of the earliest centers of population. It was the capital of Assyria, possibly the most feared empire of all history.

Nineveh today is but a vast, irregular rectangle of mounds lying near Mosul on the left bank of the Tigris River. And as I stood on the central mound and looked out over the outlines of Nineveh, I realized why God called it a "great city." For those ancient walls, a circuit of seven and a half miles, encompassed 1,640 acres of land.

Scholars have been able to recover a little of Nineveh's original magnificence. For example, they found in Sennacherib's palace no less than seventy-one halls, chambers, and passages whose walls, almost without exception, had been paneled with sculptured slabs of alabaster. And we think we have arrived!

It was to this politically strong and powerful seat of empire that God sent Jonah. "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me." Jonah 1:2.

Heaven dispatched Jonah on one of the greatest missions of mercy ever recorded. And of course the story of Jonah's procrastination is familiar to almost everyone. But when he finally arrived, after a most unusual detour, how he did preach! And how Nineveh listened!

His message was a clear, simple call to repentance. "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Jonah 3:4.

Nineveh listened. Nineveh repented. Nineveh tells me that a city that will hear the voice of God is a city saved-just as Sodom tells me that a city that will not hear the voice of God is a city lost.

Sin in those early centuries was as deadly and disappointing as it is today. The absence of authority, the denial of obligation to God, has had the same results down through the ages. And tolling like a mighty bell through all the centuries, through all the Scriptures, is the word repent. That word stands like a mighty backdrop in the drama of the ages. It is God's call to the human heart!

Jonah had penetrated only a part of the way into that great metropolis. But the word spread, conviction deepened, and the city, from the king to the humblest servant, repented. And God withheld His hand.

What a record! What a story! Nineveh is remembered today, not primarily as the mighty city it was, or for its slabs of alabaster, but as the city that repented. It is a living encouragement to all who read the record.

Babylon is not so remembered. Babylon was indeed a mighty city, even by modern standards. Its hanging gardens are still classed as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. In fact, it lay in the midst of a valley so productive that Herodotus feared he would be considered a liar if he reported what he actually saw. From a human standpoint nothing could prevent it from continuing forever.

Yet even before Babylon had become the flower of kingdoms, Isaiah predicted its overthrow: "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellence, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation." Isaiah 13:19, 20.

But Babylon was to be warned. It was to have a chance to avert this tragedy. God had used a virtually unknown preacher to warn Nineveh. Babylon was to have the testimony and example of a prophet-statesman standing fearlessly in the highest circles of the empire.

You remember the story. Young Daniel, a captive of Judah, was lifted from slavery to stand next to the king. And God prepared him for his mission. God was going to speak to the heart of Babylon-to win it if He could.

Babylon was rocked by the voice of God through its prime minister-rocked, but not won. At last came the handwriting on the wall. And God wrote across the name of Babylon, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."

Nineveh rises to memory in vindication of the word repent. But Babylon goes down forever a pitiful example of love spurned too long.

Then Jerusalem-historic, loved, and lovable Jerusalem. No city on earth ever heard such earnest and faithful appeals from the actual lips of the Savior as did Jerusalem. I can never shake off the impression of the day when Jesus interrupted His own triumphal entry into Jerusalem to look out over the city from the Mount of Olives. The western sun was lighting up the pure white marble of the Temple walls and sparkling on its gold-capped pillars. And suddenly, like a note of wailing in a grand triumphal chorus, Jesus wept.

Evidently into one crowded moment swept the memory of the banker, the carpenter, the housewife, the priest, who had listened and been impressed by His ministry, whose sickness had been healed, but who yet would reject Him. These were Jerusalem. It was the sight of Jerusalem that caused the Son of God to weep. He had come to save her. How could He let her go?

He was soon to leave her Temple for the last time. He would cast one lingering look upon its marble walls and then exclaim, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killed the prophets, and stoned them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!" Matthew 23:37.

This was the separation struggle. This was the mysterious farewell of long-suffering love to a city that would not repent.

I think I can understand a little of our Lord's concern on that day. For my most helpless moments are when I confront a nominal Christian in a man-to-man appeal for absolute committal to the Savior, for complete surrender to Christ-and then see that half converted heart close like a steel door and turn indifferently away. Compare this, if you will, with the man or woman who faces the claims of Christ under deep conviction of sin and Ends his way to forgiveness.

Jerusalem tells me that nothing, absolutely nothing, is more deceiving than the subtle immunity that comes with the belief that a man is all right because of an outward profession of Christianity-no matter how superficial his contact with Christ may be. No man is more dangerously situated than the halfhearted Christian who is too proud to repent.

Too proud to repent! Could this be the reason Jerusalem has suffered so confused and contradictory a history? Today it is the enigma of nations, perhaps the most perplexing city in the world. Three cultures, three religions, three races, three languages, meet in that city. And conversations I have had with leaders in its guarded, suspicious offices have helped little to understand the contradictions, the intrigue, the explosiveness, in this tense, nervous city split in two with barbed wire.

But now for a moment we turn to the silent, sleeping city of Pompeii—a mute reminder of the deadly danger of procrastination. Deadlines have always been final. But the deadline of 1 PM, August 24, AD 79, was as final as the last night on earth!

I cannot walk through the silent streets of Pompeii without realizing that it spent its last night in sin. For a man sees there makes that city an illustration forever of reckless, head-on immorality.

Did God send no voice to warn Pompeii? He must have, for Amos 3:7 tells me that “surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he reveals his secret unto his servants the prophets.”

Who was the prophet of Pompeii? We do not know. It may have been only the Spirit of God speaking to individual hearts. There seems little doubt that Pompeii had the advantage of an appeal in some form from the newly born Christian church. It had been forty years and more since the crucifixion. Roman legions had destroyed Jerusalem and scattered Christians to all parts of the empire.

But of one thing we can be certain. The God who is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” did not forget Pompeii. God did not allow her to breathe the deadly fumes of Vesuvius until she had heard the word repent.

The Spirit of God must have pleaded most earnestly with Pompeii on that last night. The Spirit always speaks most loudly just before a man, or a city, is forever cut off. “My spirit shall not always strive with man.” Genesis 6:3.

One question has always haunted men. Where does God’s mercy end? How long does love plead with the human heart? Where is that line beyond which even divine love cannot go? The Holy Spirit of God can be grieved. Man’s truest Friend can be resisted until the heart is immune to His insistent call, until His message is silenced.

“There is a line by us not seen,
Which crosses every path;
The hidden boundary between
God’s patience and His wrath.”

“To cross that limit is to die,
To die, as if by stealth;
It may not pale the beaming eye,
Nor quench the glowing health.”

“The conscience may be still at ease,
The spirit light and gay;
That which is pleasing-still may please,
And care he thrust away.”

“But on that forehead God hath set
Indelibly a mark;
By man unseen, for man as yet
Is blind and in the dark.”

“Oh, where is that mysterious bourn,
By which each path is crossed,
Beyond which God Himself hath sworn
That he who goes is lost?”

“How long may men go on in sin?
How long will God forbear?
Where does hope end, and where begin
The confines of despair?”

“An answer from the sky is sent,
You who from God depart,
While it is called today-repent!
And harden not your heart!”

Yes, tolling like a mighty bell over the cities is the call of God, "Repent!" And the bell tolls loudest just before it is forever silenced!

Will God permit our cities-our proud, reckless, driving cities -to fall? No sober man these days doubts that it can happen. And God says it will happen. It will happen in our day. Listen! "And the cities of the nations fell." Revelation 16:19.

Yes, God will touch the cities. And the finest, most fireproof buildings will crumble like the ashes on the end of a cigarette. Buildings perfectly safe, by modern standards. But they will be consumed like pitch. Fire departments will be helpless when God allows the fires of judgment to be lighted.

That is what makes me restless. There is so little time-and so much at stake! The bell still tolls, "Repent! Repent! Repent!" It is the Jonah of today for the Nineveh's of today. It is the Daniel of today for the Babylon's of today. It is the rumbling of Vesuvius for the Pompeii's of today. It is Christ weeping over the Jerusalem's of today. The bell still tolls. But it is God's last call!

God is reckoning with the cities. And you-and I-are the cities. O Detroit-with your humming dynamos, with your idols of steel and chrome-God says, "Repent!" New York-with your jungles of cement, with your long fingers of light reaching high into the sky, God says, "Repent!" Washington-with your graceful avenues, with your equitable system of justice, with your government for the people and by the people-God says, "Repent!" San Francisco, Los Angeles, London, Paris-splattering your streets and your skies with crimson neon-God says, "Repent!"

"And the cities of the nations fell." Where will you stand when the bell tolls no longer, when never another heart shall be touched, never another mind impressed, when the God of heaven says, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still"?

As Dwight L. Moody spoke in Chicago on October 8, 1871, he repeated the words of Pilate in his moment of procrastination, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" And then he said, I wish you would take this text home with you and turn it over in your minds. Then next week we will come to Calvary and the cross, and we will decide what to do with Jesus."

Then Sankey began to sing. But his song was never finished. It was interrupted by the rush and the roar of fire engines. Chicago was ablaze. And Moody confessed, I would rather have that right hand cut off than give an audience now a week to decide!"

What will you do with Jesus? Have you answered that question? Not a week to decide-not tomorrow to hear the call. Now is the accepted time! Will you just now-whatever you are, wherever you live, whatever your task, whatever you profess, however you feel-give God your decision as man to man I ask you, "What will you do with Jesus?"

This is the moment to decide. Shut out from your mind every scene but Calvary, every voice but His. You decide in the full light of the cross. You decide on the edge of eternity. You decide while He waits!

Acknowledgements

More than a score of publishing houses have extended permission to use quoted material from books, periodicals, and songs. Acknowledgments for use of their materials are listed below under chapter titles. There are still some quotations, however, whose source is unknown to us. The same is true of several authors cited. In such cases the editors have simply indicated, "Author Unknown."

LIFE ON OTHER WORLDS

H. Spencer Jones, *Life on Other Worlds* (New York: The Mac-Millan Company). Used by permission.

FOOTSTEPS IN THE SKY

From *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*. Reprinted by permission of Harper and Brothers.

THE HINGE OF TIME

Robert Jungk, *Brighter Than a Thousand Suns* (New York: Harper and Brothers). Used by permission.

RACE TO THE STARS

Bertrand Russell, *Saturday Review*, December 21, 1957. Used by permission.

Leland Stowe, *While Time Remains* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Incorporated). Used by permission.

ABOUT DIVINE HEALING

From *Strange Altars*, by Dr. Marcus Bach, copyright 1952. Used by special permission of the publishers, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.

GOD AND I ARE PARTNERS

From *Baptist Leader*, copyright 1943. Used by permission.

MASQUERADE OF THE PSYCHIC

Sherwood Eddy, *You Will Survive After Death* (New York: Rinehart and Company, Incorporated). Used by permission. Ibid.

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH

Reprinted by permission of Funk and Wagnalls Company, New York.

www.CreationismOnline.com