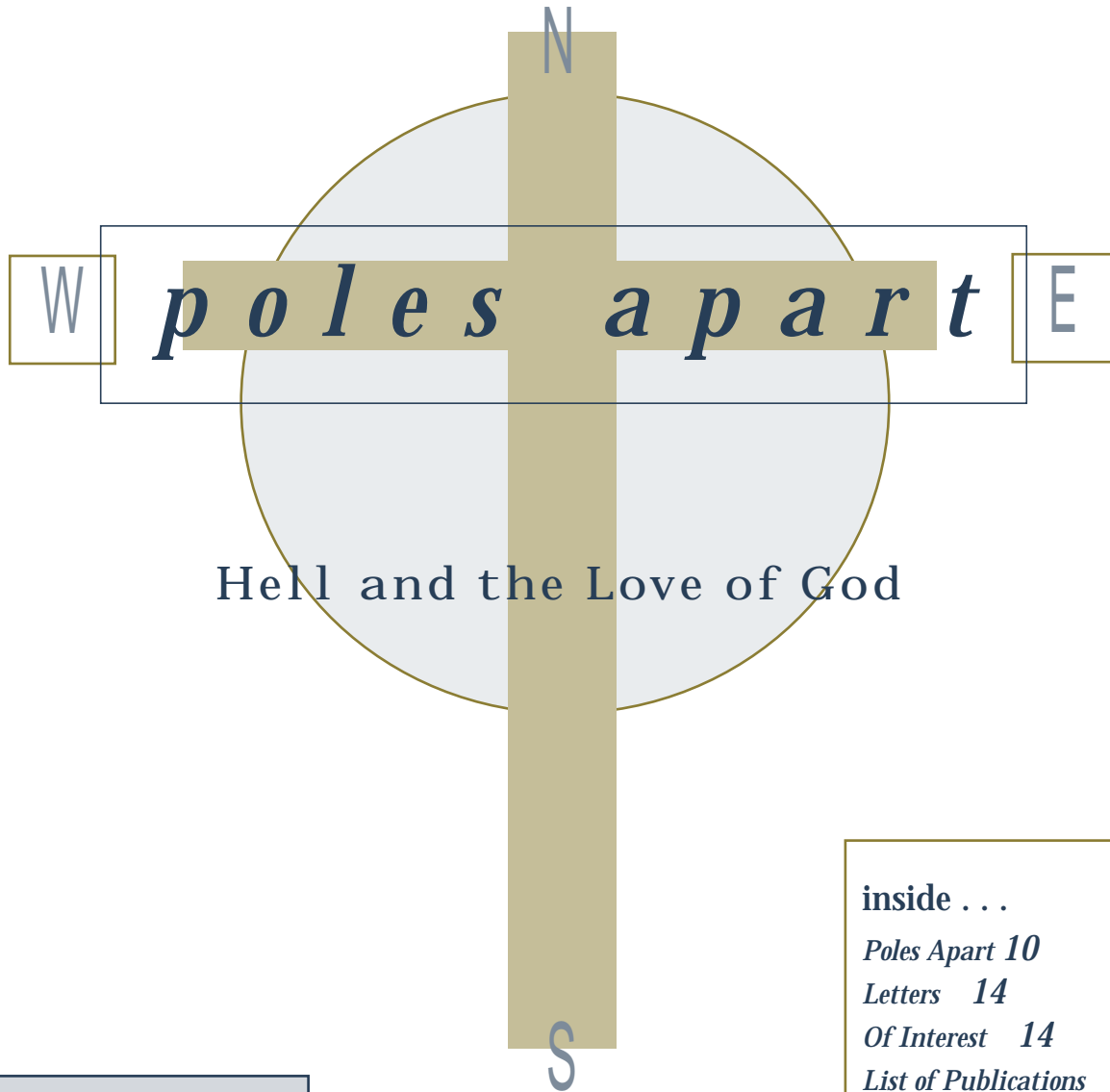


The BIBLE STANDARD

AND
HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM



"Lift up a standard for the
people" — Isa. 62: 10

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poles apart

— Hell and the Love of God —

THE THREAT OF HELL has held millions of people — Christians and non-Christians alike — in fear for centuries. Represented as the place of unspeakable suffering that awaits all who reject Christ, Hell serves as a bogey for unbelievers and a salutary warning to the repentant.

We are glad to see that some 21st century enlightenment is being shed on this subject. Thoughtful Christians have revisited the topic and are drawing conclusions at variance with their Evangelical predecessors. When as prominent a thinker-teacher as John Stott, the highly respected Anglican Divine, casts doubt on the traditional view, others pay attention.

How, they have begun to ask, can we reconcile the love of a Fatherly God with the unpleasant implications of torment? The feeble response that God's Justice can equitably decree such a fate is unsatisfactory.

In general, there are two classes of hearers on that side of the debate: one class throws up its hands and rejects not only the idea of Hell-fire and brimstone but the whole of Biblical theology as well; the other class seeks an alternative answer. The latter have come to the conclusion that this doctrine is a horrible blasphemy against God's character — a "doctrine of devils" (1 Tim. 4: 1).

Most Christian denominations hold onto the doctrine, though its grip on individual believers is weakening. Many who would otherwise voice their doubts about it are afraid of the criticism this would bring and that they would be branded heretics. Reformed theology, in fact, demands that one hold this doctrine in order to retain a good standing within the chosen Christian community. For this reason, groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists who have rejected the notion are, for the most part, ostracized by the Christian community at large. Yet the adherents of these groups continue to increase. Regardless of one's like or dislike of their doctrinal position in general, it is hard to deny the appeal of a belief structure which has embraced an apparently more humane view of man's fate.

DOES BELIEF IN HELL PROMOTE FAITH?

An important question, seldom asked, is "has the belief in eternal torment promoted true Christian faith?" That it has promoted *conversions* (of a certain kind) is no doubt true. But does the holding to such a belief inspire one to holy, sanctified living? The scourge of torment, the incentive of fear, is said to be necessary to restrain men from vice, inspire them to

morality, and secure their admission to heaven. But has the Hell doctrine in particular accomplished the end in view? As a tool for salvation, it is a poor one. In everyday life, a father-son relationship built upon a premise of fear would be considered dysfunctional. How much better than this is the relationship of the Heavenly Father with His children.

FEAR A POOR SUBSTITUTE FOR GRATITUDE

The Prophet Isaiah wrote: "Their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men" (Isa. 29: 13). Again, the Apostle Paul: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1: 7).

The fear generated by the doctrine of eternal torment has spawned un-Godly and inhumane practices in the church, as history attests. It certainly has not accomplished the long-cherished goal of world conversion. Conversely, under its influence and its misrepresentation of the character of God, every device of tyranny, persecution and torture in the name of God and religion has flourished and brought about the extinction of much truth and righteousness.

The crude, abusive, and devilish persecutions of past centuries were — in many cases — carried out by those who believed that any cruelty toward the heretic in this life was warranted *if it saved the soul from even greater sufferings in the hereafter*. The flaw in this reasoning is apparent: cruelty against the heretic is now seen by most intelligent people for what it was — barbaric and unconscionable. Why, then, are similar cruelties imagined to be in store for the unbeliever, but *perpetrated at God's permissive will*, dignified as an important — and digestible — article of Christian theology?

Many thinking Christians, in the light of today's generally more enlightened and compassionate civilization, concede that this unfortunate — indeed, blasphemous — teaching lacks a foundation either in common sense or Divine salvation.

THE NATURE OF GOD'S LOVE

God's love for man is not merely sentimental. It is robust, yet just. As the Scripture tells us, God does not desire that

All Scripture references are to the King James Version (KJV), unless otherwise noted.

any perish; indeed He prefers that all be saved (2 Pet. 3: 9). We acknowledge that many do not believe and may never obey Christ. The question to ask is whether their unbelief warrants the degree of punishment which many teach awaits them.

The sentence upon mankind is death. This is plainly and unequivocally stated in Romans 6: 23:

The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Note the contrast: death vs. life.)

The sentence of death was incurred at the fall of Adam, the progenitor of the human race. His curse has become ours. The remedy is deliverance from death. In God's due time, so the Scripture tells us, He "sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4: 4). This was the *man*, Christ Jesus who gave His life — went into death — to lift the curse of sin and death from the human family (1 Tim. 2: 4-6).

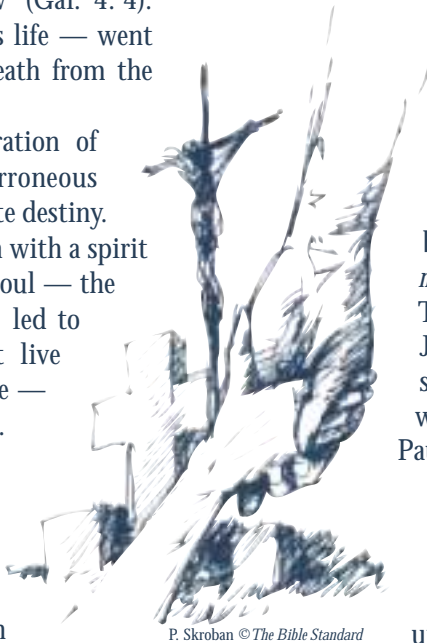
This simple, straightforward declaration of the Scriptures has been obscured by erroneous teachings on the nature of man and his ultimate destiny. Man has been recast as a dual being — human with a spirit soul. This doctrine of the immortality of the soul — the necessary handmaiden to eternal torment — led to the conclusion that an undying soul must live *somewhere, anywhere*. Here, then, was the divide — the good go to heaven, the wicked go to Hell.

FEAR IS NO FRIEND TO FAITH

A sound mind is a reasonable mind, governed not by superstition or prejudice, but reason. Reason, if not warped by false teaching, leads directly to the fountain of truth in God's inspired revelation. Not that it of itself can uncover the revelation. Rather, it propels the inquiring mind to search for the truth. God rewards this, as Scripture shows (Heb. 11: 6):

He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Such a faith, working by love, purifies the heart and transforms the character into the glorious likeness of the Son of God. Such is the power of love and of a sound mind. It serves God from filial love and gratitude, not craven dread. Perfect love casts out all servile fear and brings the servant of God into active co-operation with all His benevolent plans (2 Tim. 1: 7). Those who worship God acceptably must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4: 24) — in love and truth and not hypocritically through fear. Such results never have been and never can be produced by the doctrine of eternal torment.



P. Skroban © The Bible Standard

JUSTICE THE FOUNDATION OF GOD'S THRONE

We do not teach that God is so loving that Justice will *never* exert its power. Indeed, His Justice is so unswerving that His love will not — *cannot* — act contrary to it. So unchangeable and complete is God's Justice that it dictated the terms of the salvation process itself. As the Apostle Paul puts it in Romans 3: 26, God's righteousness, consistent with His own Law of Justice, required Him to be "just, and the justifier of him which believeth" (italics ours).

The lovely passage, John 3: 16 speaks volumes:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

God, out of His great love and compassion for fallen mankind, sent His Son into the world in harmony with His own justice, which cannot pardon the guilty (Num. 14: 18).

How the Ransom Was Paid

It is important to note that the necessity to balance Love with Justice determined the *manner* of the sacrifice which Jesus laid down. Though born of a woman, though a man, Jesus was perfect, sinless. As such He corresponded to Adam before he fell; as such, Jesus was an exact equivalent to Adam. The Apostle Paul reasons this through (Rom. 5: 18):

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

So, Adam, in whom mankind was condemned to die, was bought for Justice by the sacrifice of the perfect man, Jesus (1 Cor. 15: 22). In thus purchasing Adam, Jesus purchased the human family. In one brilliant stroke the Heavenly Father accomplished:

- The redemption of the entire human race;
- The deliverance of the Jews from the curse of the Law;
- The development and testing of the character of His beloved Son, making possible His exaltation to the right hand of God;
- The selection and ongoing development of the Church class, the Bride of Christ.

It is the forensic, legal nature of the ransom sacrifice that we wish to emphasize here. It is relevant to our consideration of Hell. Jesus gave His life and spent part of three days in the tomb — dead (1 Cor. 15: 3, 4). It is this

HELL IS COLD — NOT HOT

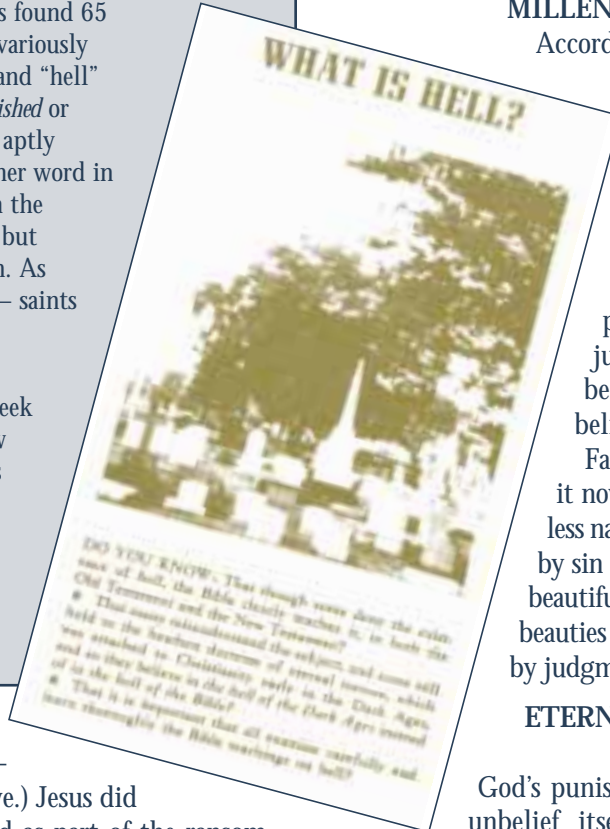
The word “hell” came to embody the doctrine of eternal torment during the Dark Ages. This blasphemous belief maintained that God had created a great abyss of fire and terrors to which the vast majority of mankind were consigned. Only the saints would escape this fate.

It is necessary to understand that the Scriptures have largely been translated from Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament) in order to determine the meaning of the word hell.

The Hebrew word *sheol* is found 65 times in the Old Testament. It is variously translated “pit” (3), “grave” (31), and “hell” (31). *Sheol* signifies *hidden, extinguished or obscure*. The word “oblivion” more aptly describes its meaning than any other word in the English language. It is used in the Scriptures to describe not a place, but rather a condition — that of death. As such, it is the place in which all — saints and sinners — sleep, awaiting resurrection.

Hades, the equivalent Greek word, is used 10 times in the New Testament and in every instance is translated by the word hell.

For a detailed study of this subject, request the free leaflet, *What is Hell?*



fact which should determine our view of Hell. Hell is the condition of dead ones. (See box above.) Jesus did not go into Hell to be tormented as part of the ransom price. Were this so He would be there still, if, as it is argued, Hell is torment forever. The fact is He was *dead* and had to be *raised from the dead* in order to live. Not only so, He was the firstborn from the dead, thus setting the pattern for those who followed Him, especially the Church class, the Little Flock, who, during the Gospel Age, slept in death, awaiting their change (1 Cor. 15: 20, 23; Acts 7: 59, 60).

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

The principle of Justice threads its way through the salvation process. Through Christ alone is the salvation attainable, through faith in His blood. Without such faith we would fall into the hands of raw Justice — there is no mercy there (Heb. 10: 26–31).

Justice and the Unbeliever

What of those who do not believe, who do not accept Christ as Savior and King? These, Jesus tells us, are dead already — that is, they are still “in Adam” (1 Cor. 15:

22). Not having been lifted out of Adam by a justifying faith they lie under God’s wrath as expressed through the curse of sin and death (John 3: 36). In this condition, being dead already, were God not to intervene, they would simply *pass out of existence*.

Not all have faith — it is a gift of God (Eph. 2: 8, 9). As with Thomas, some must *see* in order to believe. *There is no additional condemnation implied in not believing*. However, God’s love is such that He has provided a solution for the difficulty of unbelief.

MILLENNIUM = JUDGMENT DAY

According to Acts 17: 31, God has set aside a period of time in which He will judge the world. That time is not now, it is future. To accomplish this, those in Hell — the state of death — will be resurrected (John 5: 28, 29).

Once we see the difference between the elect and the non-elect, the picture clears. Now is the day of judgment — for the believer. Then will be the day of judgment for the non-believers.

Faith will not be as hard to come by then, as it now is. Then the way will be clear, the way less narrow. Then, the light of Truth, unclouded by sin and imperfection will shine brighter. The beautiful chapter of Isaiah 35 expresses well the beauties of that day. That will be a day of blessing by judgment.

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT vs. ETERNAL TORMENT

God’s punishments are not directed merely against unbelief itself — they are directed against the unfaithful — those who have the light and yet refuse to obey it. To those who suggest that the light is shining sufficiently bright in this present world, we answer that if this were true the elect would be a most unremarkable people. Their faith (and faithfulness) would be nothing out of the ordinary, were it possible for any to believe. It is a perverse logic of a Christian mind which condemns the benighted world to eternal agony for the singular failure to live by faith, and yet concedes the difficulty for oneself of doing likewise!

In mankind’s day of judgment, God will punish the refractory and the persistently wilful. Those who absolutely refuse to bow the knee and to proclaim Christ as King will eventually end up in death — the *kolasin*, the cutting off, of Matt. 25: 46. This will be their eternal punishment — they will be eternally dead, unconscious, out of existence, obliterated. As the King James Version of Obadiah 16 puts it, simply, they “shall be as though they had not been.”

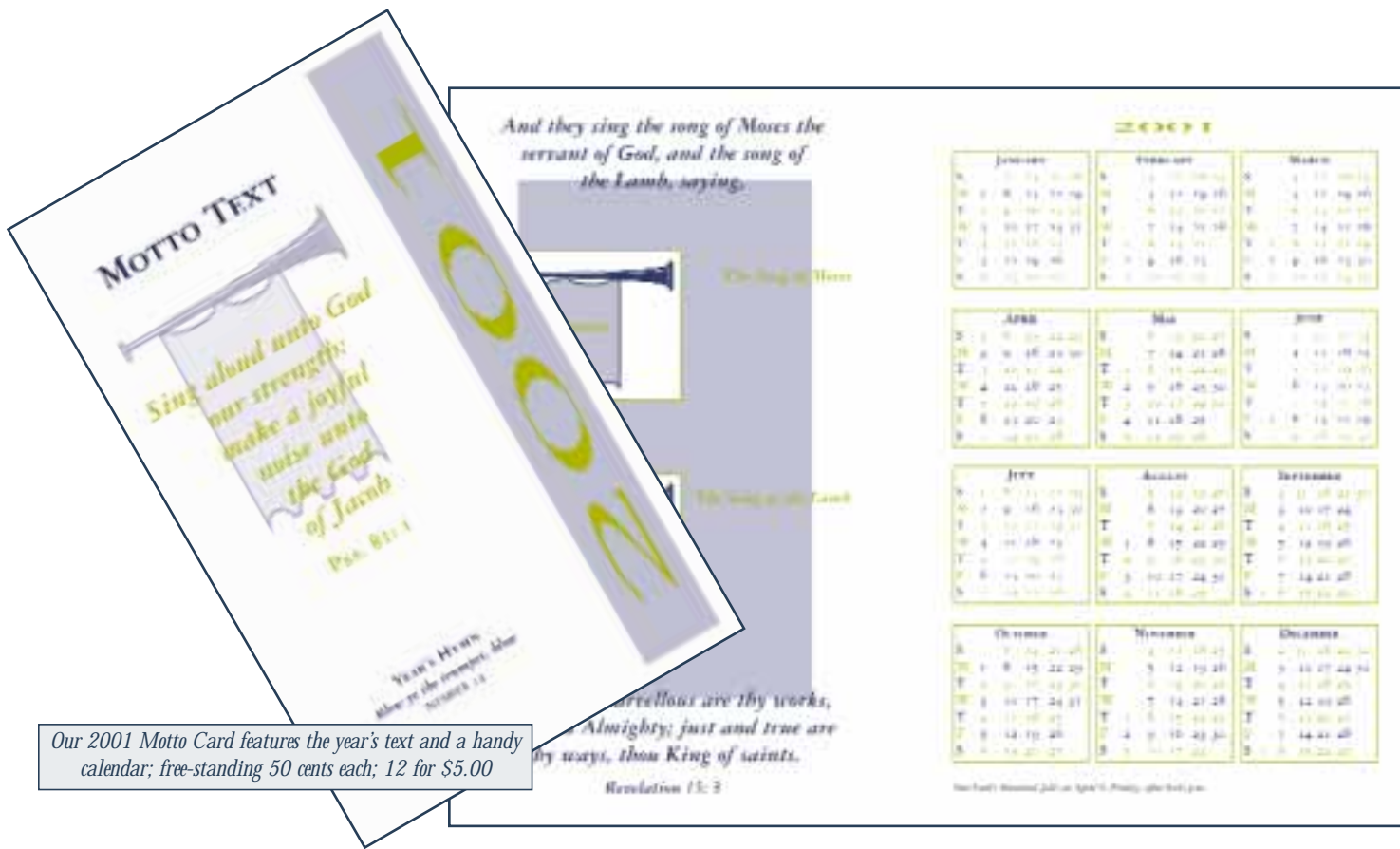
God's love is for all people. Given the great value of His Son's ransom sacrifice, *He will extract maximum benefit from it.* Though all people may not be saved eternally, all have an *opportunity* to be saved eternally. This opportunity will be commensurate with the understanding and conditions of life: for the believers (the elect), now; for the unbelievers (the non-elect), in the Age to come. This theme recurs frequently in Scripture. Abraham was told that through him all families of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12: 3); the angel at the birth of Christ proclaimed the news to be good tidings to all people (Luke 2: 10); the Apostle Paul in Gal. 3: 8 repeats the thought — the Gospel is for the heathen, the unbelievers.

*Hills of the north, rejoice;
 River and mountain-spring,
 Hark to the advent voice;
 Valley and lowland, sing:
 Though absent long, your Lord is nigh;
 He judgement brings and victory.
 Isles of the southern seas,
 Deep in your coral caves
 Pent be each warring breeze,
 Lulled be your restless waves:*

*He comes to reign with boundless sway,
 And makes your wastes his great highway.
 Lands of the east, awake,
 Soon shall your sons be free;
 The sleep of ages break,
 And rise to liberty.
 On your far hills, long cold and grey,
 Has dawned the everlasting day.
 Shores of the utmost west,
 Ye that have waited long,
 Unvisited, unblest,
 Break forth to swelling song;
 High raise the note, that Jesus died,
 Yet lives and reigns, the Crucified.
 Shout, while ye journey home;
 Songs be in every mouth;
 Lo, from the north we come,
 From east and west and south.
 City of God, the bond are free,
 We come to live and reign in thee!*

C. E. Oakley
 — *Hymns Ancient and Modern*

* * *



Our 2001 Motto Card features the year's text and a handy calendar; free-standing 50 cents each; 12 for \$5.00

LETTERS



Dear Sir: I received a copy of your publication from a friend, and was quite intrigued by what appears to be a strong pre-millennial view of prophecy, coupled with a belief in the sleep of the dead and an emphasis on the Kingdom of God on the earth, rather than the popular belief in floating off to heaven at the moment of death. I haven't encountered many with this understanding of Scripture beyond our own church denomination. I look forward to reading more of your literature.

I am also curious if we share the same understanding of God, the person of Christ, and their relationship. I consider myself a "Biblical unitarian" (not to be confused with the Universalist Church), believing in the one God of [Deuteronomy 6: 4](#) and the humanity of the Messiah, Jesus, Son of God by virtue of the miracle of the virgin birth [\(Luke 1: 35\)](#).

In service to our Lord, M.G., Ohio, U.S.A.

. . . I was rather disappointed in your recent *Bible Standard* article which linked Thanksgiving with the Pilgrims ["English Nonconformists and their Influence on America," Nov.-Dec., 2000], a story that has no factual basis. . . . My disappointment comes especially from your devotion to clarity of truth and facts in every other thing I have read of the LHMM. I would like to renew my subscription

Sincerely, T.T., Georgia, U.S.A.

Editor's Response: Thanksgiving Day celebrations are a feature of several countries. The first thanksgiving feast in North America occurred in Canada in 1578; the Pilgrim's feast, in 1621. The account of the Pilgrims and their giving of thanks at a set feast appears to be supported in the historical literature. The following account is by Edward Winslow, a partaker of that feast:

Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labours. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, Many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest King Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful as it was this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.

Quoted in Mourt's Relation

The essential purpose of our article — which comprised quotations from other sources — was to demonstrate the early influence of non-conformists on the spiritual life of this country. This heritage has played a large part in the development of the Christian ethic in the United States. The Thanksgiving holiday is still relatively free of commercial exploitation and is a happy and worthy social occasion.

The Bible Standard welcomes your letters. We reserve the right to edit all letters received for length and readability. As a rule, our practice is to indicate only the writer's initials, except where the individual is a known appointee of the Movement. Anonymous letters will not be published.

of interest . . .

A **University of Arizona** team has discovered a minor planet in the outer reaches of our solar system – 43 times further from the Sun than the Earth, in what is called the Kuiper Belt. Pluto is the largest body in the Belt (1,470 miles in diameter), and Minor Planet 2000 WR 106 is about half its size (330-750 miles in diameter). They are both related to a wide range of bodies, such as short-term comets. Inspired to keep up their two-decade-long "Spacewatch," it is likely that another minor planet as big as Pluto, or possibly larger, will be found by the team.

. . . **and speaking of Pluto**, the Rose Center for Earth and Space at the American Museum of Natural History in New York has decided that Pluto should no longer be called a planet. Claiming that Pluto has more in common with comets than planets as it is relatively small and made of ice, the Museum's display of the Solar System refers to Pluto only in a footnote: "Beyond the outer planets is the Kuiper Belt of comets, a disk of small, icy worlds including Pluto." The Rose Center says there is no standard definition of a planet. It divides the Solar System into the Sun and five families of objects.

There is a precedent to demoting planets. The asteroid Ceres was styled a planet in 1801 and demoted a year later. However, Pluto has been considered a major planet for more than 70 years. The American space agency, NASA, is considering whether to send a mission to investigate Pluto.

* * *

Research using rabbit hearts and tarantula venom point to an advance in the treatment of atrial fibrillation. When the human heart thus fails to beat normally, often killing the patient, medical aides give an electric shock to restore normal rhythm. The tarantula's venom contains a protein that in some cases has completely stopped fibrillation. Several drug companies are interested in developing this simple drug treatment.



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Generally we do not pay distributors of our literature. Samples of many of our items will be provided on request. Obviously our literature should first be studied and digested prior to distribution, so that you would be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you, with gentleness and reverence (1 Pet. 3: 15, NASB).

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* * *

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announcements . . .

INCREASE IN SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

Due to rising costs in the publication and distribution of *The Bible Standard* we have raised our prices, effective January 2001. The single issue price is now 50 cents (\$6.00 for 12 issues); the annual subscription, \$4.00. Even at the increased rates we make no profit on the magazine. Any reader who cannot afford the cost may receive the magazine free. Please write to us and state your need.

MEMORIAL DATE FOR 2001

Our Lord's Memorial occurs on Friday, April 6, after 6:00 p.m.

GENERAL CONVENTIONS FOR 2001

At-a-glance

U.S.

California, Feb. 17-19; *Florida*, March 16-18; Massachusetts, April 28-30

Details

United States

California, February 17, 18, 19 (Saturday-Monday)

Site: Holiday Inn Select Riverside, 3400 Market Street, Riverside, Calif. 92501; telephone (909) 784-8000; Fax (909) 369-7127 *Rates and Reservations*: \$72.00 double occupancy; \$10 for each extra person in room; rollaway beds available for \$15.00 (first come, first serve). Tax at 11% will be added to rates. Group rate extends three days prior and three days after convention dates. This hotel recently finished a beautification process which included the design of all guest rooms, banquet space and restaurant facilities. *Transport*: Complimentary covered parking and Ontario International Airport shuttle with 72-hour advance notice; if reservations are made less than 72 hours in advance and/or for groups of eight or more, a \$2.00 fee will be charged per person per trip. *Florida*, March 16, 17, 18 (Friday-Sunday)

Site: The Days Inn, 1031 S. First St., Jacksonville Beach, Fla., 32250; telephone: (800) 321-2037 *Rates and Reservations*: \$72.00 plus tax (12.5%), for 1 or 2 people. Reservations may be made directly with the hotel or through Mrs. Beverly Blaine (Class Secretary), 3569 Anderson Drive, Ormond Beach, Fla. 32176; telephone (904) 441-9836.

SERVICES BY VISITING MINISTERS

Carl W. Seebald

Grand Rapids, February 4

California Convention, February 17, 18, 19

Ralph Herzig

New Haven, Connecticut, March 18

Please let us know if you would like us to send a free copy of this issue to a friend.

Richard Blaine

Fort Lauderdale, Florida, January 14

California Convention, February 17, 18, 19

New Port Richey, Florida, March 4

Florida Convention, March 16, 17, 18

Robert Herzig

Auburn, Massachusetts, March 11

John Detzler

California Convention, February 17, 18, 19

Florida Convention, March 16, 17, 18

Leon Snyder

Phoenix, Arizona, February 10, 11

Riverside, California, February 15

California Convention, February 17, 18, 19

Las Vegas, Nevada, February 21, 22

Boulder, Colorado, February 24, 25

Muskegon, Michigan, March 4

Cincinnati, Ohio, March 11

Iuka, Mississippi, March 12

Booneville, Mississippi, March 13

Florida Convention, March 16, 17, 18

Fort Lauderdale, Florida, March 21, 22

Marietta, Georgia, March 24, 25

Beechgrove, Tennessee, March 28, 29

Nelsonville, Ohio, March 31, April 1

Baron Duncan

California Convention, February 17, 18, 19

Florida Convention, March 16, 17, 18

Caribbean Trip: Jamaica, April 13-16; Barbados, April 20-22;

Trinidad, April 23-May 3

Evangelists' Services

Jon Hanning, Cincinnati, February 4; New York, February 18;

Chester Springs, Pennsylvania, February 21; Derry,

Pennsylvania, February 24; Akron, Ohio, February 25

Harold Solomon, Springfield, Massachusetts, February 4

Robert Branconnier: Pittsfield, Massachusetts, February 11;

Fort Lauderdale, February 18; Boston, March 25

Edward Tomkiewicz, Grand Rapids, March 31;

Muskegon, Michigan, April 1