



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man mature in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 43
Issue 1053

Does Hell Make Sense?

by – Steve Martin

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

Key Points:

The idea of eternal punishment for actions committed in a short lifespan seems unfair and inconsistent with the notion of a loving God.....8845

[The concept of hell is incompatible with the idea of unconditional love and the ultimate plan of God to restore every-](#)

thing.....8847
[Eternal torture is a human invention, not part of God's plan. God will restore all creation with no one left out.....8847](#)
[Real love does not operate through fear or punishment. In the end the salvation of all is the only thing that makes sense..8847](#)

*M*y journey out of believing in hell started in prison.



As a volunteer chaplain, I spent time talking to inmates. Many were repeat offenders, following in the footsteps of fathers who had also been in and out of prison. They were haunted by the fear that their sons would continue the cycle.

We talked a lot about making good choices, but the truth was, they didn't have the tools or the foundation to make better decisions. It seemed inevitable – they'd end up right back where they started. Watching this pattern, I began to ask deeper questions: *Why does God let Satan keep winning? Why does He allow generation after generation to be trapped and destroyed, only to end up in hell?*

Then, that got me wondering: *Does hell even make sense?*

The idea of eternal punishment for actions committed in a short lifespan just didn't seem fair. How could a loving Father create billions of people, knowing that most of them would suffer forever? Love and endless punishment didn't add up.

I thought about people like a Muslim grandmother in Iran, whose greatest joy was loving her grandchil-

dren. Or the little girl who was sexually abused, turned to drugs to numb her pain, sold her body to pay for the drugs, and eventually took her own life. Were they both destined for hell, for things they couldn't control?

Then I considered the Holocaust. Millions of Jews were tortured and killed, and Christian teaching suggests that they're now in hell alongside Hitler. That didn't sit right with me.

So much of what we do – how we believe and behave – is shaped by where we're born, how we're raised, and what we know. How is it fair to punish someone forever for things they never had the power to change?

The more I thought about it, the more I realized how absurd it seemed that saving souls was left up to us. After 2,000 years, it hasn't gone so well. Take a min-

[\(continued on page 8847\)](#)

Does Hell Make Sense?	8845
God's Perfect Plan Through an Imperfect Dad	8848
Obituary: Brad Truitt	8849
Book Review: The Names and Order of the Books of the Old Testament	8849
Our Mailbox	8850
A River (poem)	8851
All Serves Him (quote: Jeff Bohlender)	8852



How to Access Our Resources

Our Main Website:

<https://pilkingtonandsons.com>

Daily Email Goodies Signup:

<https://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/emailgoodies.htm>

Bible Student's Notebook Electronic Issues:

<https://www.biblestudentsnotebook.com/volumes.html>

Bible Student's Notebook Article Audios:

<https://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/audios.htm>

Bible Student's Notebook Bound Volumes:

<https://www.biblestudentsnotebook.com/volumes.html>

Bible Student's Notebook Master Index:

<https://www.biblestudentsnotebook.com/bsnindex.html>

Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/1424241>

Audios:

<https://www.biblestudentsradio.com/audios.html>

Themed Blogs:

<https://pilkingtonandsons.com/ourblogs.htm>

Bibles:

<https://www.studyshelf.com/bibles.htm>

Books by Clyde Pilkington:

<https://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/clp.htm>

Books by Author:

<https://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/author.htm>

Books by Subject:

<https://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/books.htm>

Newest Book Releases:

<https://pilkingtonandsons.com/>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/clyde.pilkington>

Facsimile Project:

<https://www.studyshelf.com/facsimile.htm>

Donate:

<https://pilkingtonandsons.com/donate.htm>

Bible Student's Resource Index:

<https://biblestudentsresourceindex.blogspot.com/>

A Directory of Multi-Media Biblical Resources.

Bible Student's Version:

<https://biblestudentsversion.wordpress.com/>

A Continuing, Composite Translation of Scripture.

Standardized Scripture Terminology:

<https://standardizedscriptureterminology.wordpress.com/>

Clarifying Confusing Scripture Terms.

Online Key:

<https://studyshelf.com/abbreviation-key.pdf>

Definitions of abbreviations/acronyms.

Online Order Form:

<https://studyshelf.com/orderform-studyshelf.pdf>

e-Books:

<https://www.amazon.com/s?k=clyde+Pilkington+kindle>

Study Bible Project:

<https://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/StudyBibleDonations.htm>

Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume 43, No. 1053 – January 13, 2025

Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3-4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice,

misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);

- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6);
 - adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of saints intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

Bible Student's Notebook™

PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963

Office: (800) 784-6010 – Local: (814) 701-0063

bsn@studyshelf.com

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor-in-Chief
André Sneidar – Executive Editor

Associate Editors: J. Blake Botner, Chris Carnahan, James Fine, Joe Marcello, Steve Martin, De Trefethen, Mark Vogt, Dean Wilkinson

Copyright © 1989-2025 Bible Student's Press™

istry in India, for example, striving to reach a million kids for Jesus. It's an incredible goal, but it represents only 0.0714% of the population. Is everyone else doomed?

And what about unconditional love? Can it really be unconditional if there are conditions attached? If Jesus died for all sin, why would eternal punishment still exist for anyone? If God's ultimate plan is to fix everything, how does eternal torment fit into that?

Hell just didn't make sense anymore. It seemed like a terrible, nonsensical idea.

But logic alone wasn't enough for me. I needed answers. So, I dug into the Bible – reading different translations, studying the original languages, and devouring books on the topic.

I won't bore you with all the theological details – you can find plenty of resources for that; but here's what I discovered: my deepest questions lined up with Scripture. God isn't cruel. He's love – our Father – and He's in control.

What I came to realize was this: Life isn't a test, it's

preparation. **Eternal torture? That's a human invention, not God's plan.**

God's purpose is to restore *everything* – not just people but all creation – back to Himself. Nothing will be wasted. Everything will be made right, and no one will be left out. As my friend Dean Wilkinson says, "No one is being cheated."

The pain and suffering we experience now will eventually give way to something beautiful – a display of God's infinite love and power.

God is love. Real love doesn't operate through fear or punishment. In the end, everything will be good. All will be well.

The salvation of all? It doesn't just make sense – it's the only thing that truly does.

Everything starts with God, moves through God, and returns to God. Always. **BSN**

TOPICS:

Major: Hell; Love; Sovereignty

Minor: Consummation; Salvation; Suffering



***Rightly Dividing Israel's Prophetic Kingdom – With Special Emphasis on the Overlooked Pre-Millennial Kingdom of the Heavens* (A Comprehensive Compilation)**

Editors: Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., André Sneidar

There are enormous amounts of prophecy that were given to Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures that are yet to be fulfilled. Most believers simply follow some version of Christendom's eschatology, futilely attempting to force the enormity of Israel's prophetic scene into a few extremely abridged time periods. From this shallow vantage point, it is believed that more time has passed in God's ages than remains. This couldn't be further from the truth. Multiplied millennia remain, more than have yet transpired, for the fulfillment of all of the glorious plans that God has revealed in His Word. Far from being near the "end" of something prophetic, the span of God's eonian plan is immense, and our placement is early in its timeline. Much more of God's prophetic program remains than man's feeble eschatologies allow.

342 pages
1st Ed., A4 (8.3" x 11.7"), 87 chapters, with charts and appendices, from 22 authors.

See [order form](#) under "Compilations."

The intention herein is to present an alternative view to the confusing message of the traditional Evangelical concept of prophecy, thus opening the door to a consideration of the idea of a Pre-millennial Kingdom as the fulfillment of many of God's promises to Israel to have their kingdom in the Earth.

All of the material in this book, taken together, is a wonderful resolution to the confusion of the conventional religious theology that has muddled the minds of sincere Bible students for centuries. While we may live in the Secret Administration, that doesn't necessarily mean that God's Word regarding His plans for Israel must be a mystery to us.



God's Perfect Plan Through an Imperfect Dad

[Click here to listen
to this article](#)

by — Steve Martin

My dad was a good father and a great provider. We never had to worry about having enough food, and our home was always comfortable. We took great vacations – one memorable trip was driving a car and trailer all the way to Guatemala. I worked in the family business, and my parents' love for each other created a sense of security for us kids.

But like all parents, my dad wasn't perfect. We grew up in a very conservative and strict Mennonite community, with lots of rules to follow. I'll admit, I was a bit of a handful as a kid and teenager, and I didn't care much for all of the rules. This caused tension between me and my dad, especially as I got older. He was strict about who I spent time with, how I dressed, what music I listened to, and where I went. I was often punished – spankings when I was little and more restrictions as I got older.

We went to church constantly, and at one point, I was even sent to Bible school to "straighten me out." This dynamic continued into my adult life, especially after my wife and I began to move away from the strict lifestyle we were raised in. My dad often reminded me how "worldly" and "liberal" I'd become, insisting I was on the wrong path. Even a month before he died, he was still telling me how wrong I was.

It was clear that I was a disappointment to him.

For years, I carried a grudge. I was angry that my teenage years felt so restricted. I didn't get to experience life like many of my peers. I was hurt that my dad couldn't accept me for who I was. As I grew older, I felt sad that we couldn't have open, honest conversations or a close father-son relationship.

I tried to excuse his behavior, knowing that he had experienced the same things with his own father. I could even feel some compassion for him, but the resentment lingered.

Since his death, I've slowly grown more appreciative of my dad. But the real breakthrough came recently.

Clyde Pilkington and I were having a conversation for the *Freedom Journey* podcast. We talked about how every circumstance – good and bad – comes from God. Our loving Father has written our life stories, and they all end in perfection. Every detail, even the painful ones, serves a purpose and is ultimately for our good.

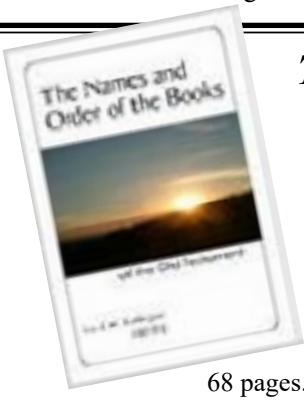
As we discussed relationships, Clyde said something that struck me deeply: The hurtful things that people say and do aren't really from them. They're caused by

[\(see **P**ERFECT, last page\)](#)

The Names and Order of the Books of the Old Testament

by — E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

To get back to the "original" is ever the endeavor of the careful Bible student. To find that he has followed in the study of the Holy Scriptures some man-devised classification of the Sacred Writings is disheartening, yet such is the condition of all who have based spiritual thought and exegesis on the names and order of the books of the Old Testament as they appear in our Bibles. The "authority" for them is a human one dating back to about 300 B.C. How seriously the original order and the original names were tampered with in this change is shown in this book, and the true names and order of all of the books are clearly set forth as they appear in the original Hebrew, and in harmony with the Divine imprimatur of Luke 24:44. It will be seen at once that the information contained between the covers of this book is of vital importance as fundamental knowledge for the Bible student.



68 pages.

See [order form](#) under
"Bullinger."



OBITUARY.

Brad Truitt (1935-2024)



Brad was a diligent student of the Scriptures and a faithful Bible teacher. Many years ago he was an instructor at the Baltimore School of the Bible. He had served as a deacon in several churches, and as the pastor of visitation in an assembly in Havertown, PA, ministering to elderly shut-ins.

Brad was a graduate of Baltimore Polytechnic Institute and worked for Baltimore Gas & Electric Co. for 40 years. When he retired, he and his wife Carol moved to Morgantown, NC.

He and Carol both were born in the same county

here in Pennsylvania where I live (Somerset), having lived in the towns of Meyersdale and Salisbury. After years of phone conversations, in 2013 he and his wife hosted a meeting in Morgantown where we finally had the great joy of staying in their home. Brad and Carol (who died in 2019) were kind and gracious lovers of truth, and of the salvation of all.

“Good night, dear brother. We will see you in the morning!” **BSN**

TOPICS:

Major: Obituary; Truitt, Brad

Book Review:

by:
Charles H. Welch (1880-1967)
Things to Come, Volume 21, Number 1 (1915)

The Names and Order of the Books of the Old Testament

by – E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

To get back to the “original” is ever the endeavor of the careful student. To find that he has followed in his study of Holy Scripture some man devised classification of the Sacred Writings is disheartening, yet such is the condition of all who have based spiritual thought and exegesis on the names and order of the books of the Old Testament as they appear in our English versions. The only authority for them is a human one dating back to about 300 B.C.

How seriously the original order and the original names were tampered with in this change is shown in the book before us, and the true names and order of all of the books are clearly set forth as they appear in the original Hebrew, and in harmony with the Divine imprimatur in Luke 24:44.

It will be seen at once that the information contained between the covers of this work is of vital importance as fundamental knowledge for the Bible Student.

It is presented in very simple language and form, so that, while the facts required scholarly research to prepare, they can be very easily absorbed by the average reader, and all of their significance fully appreciated.

Incidentally there are suggestive lessons drawn from these facts which will serve as helpful outlines for addresses or Bible studies.

This is one of Bullinger’s books which is luminous throughout with sparks of spiritual enlightenment from the anvil of truth.

We specially commend it to all Bible Students who have not hitherto realized the importance of the matter with which it deals. **BSN**



The Daily Email Goodie, [Take What You Can Use](#), is much appreciated. I don't give much attention to writers/speakers who call themselves the world's greatest Bible scholars/teachers. Most of them rarely admit their own lack of understanding of the truth for fear of losing their base of readers/viewers. Your heart is in the right place and how refreshing and rare that is in this current state of biblical truth. Keep up the good work. – **FL**

I have been reading some of my books that I bought from your store, and thought I'd buy some more. They are very interesting and informative, and important to learn about. ... You guys are doing a good thing for the Word, and supply a good service for people. It's appreciated. – **Australia**

The wonderful articles I read in the *BSN* have always been a blessing to me. The series by Stephen Hill¹ are of high quality and a joy to read. – **OH**

Thank you! Enjoying your encouragement EVERY day! – **AZ**

1. [Editor:] "The Celestial Realm: Seeing the Unseen, A Study of Our Real Enemy," *Bible Student's Notebook*:

- Part 1: [Issue 1048](#)
- Part 2: [Issue 1049](#)
- Part 3: [Issue 1050](#)

Stephen Hill's three-part article on the celestial realm was fascinating and so clear.² My congratulations on a job well done! – **PA**

I just wanted to say that I found your article in [BSN 1041](#), "The Primitive Image of God in the Hebrew Scriptures," to be one of the best ever! You did a great job talking through the progressive revelation of God, especially through the Old Testament. Thanks so much for that article! – **KY**

This is a wonderful issue of the *Bible Student's Notebook* [1037]. I truly appreciate the page toppers, and especially liked Steve Martin's insightful article, *Trusting the Journey: Misunderstandings and God's Ultimate Surprise*.

Last night I watched one of the shows that you and Steve Martin³ recorded, and it was really enjoyable. – **NY**

"A Sense of Humor" [Reader's Question Box; [Bible Student's Notebook 1029](#)] was fantastic. I really enjoyed your in-depth study of these words. I greatly appreciated it. It was timely. – **SD**

I really enjoyed the podcasts of Steve Martin and yourself⁴ – and learnt from it. I hope there will be more to come. – **South Africa**

Gelesnoff's *The Triumph of Love* ... WOW – every time I read his work I am edified and encouraged.

2. *Ibid.*

3. [Editor:] [The Freedom Journey](#), YouTube channel: [Biblical Resources](#).

4. *Ibid.*



Check Out Our New Feature: Listen to our Audios!

Enjoy listening to the audios of our *BSN* articles, podcasts and Bible Students Radio archives, provided freely for those who like to hear our content.

Feel free to download and listen at home, or during your travels. We will continue adding recent articles, podcasts and other content, and, as time permits, older articles will be added.



This is the best article I have ever read explaining our present-day challenges. I will add that if Father gives you understanding of the opportunity that our current existence affords us, as outlined in this excellent article, you can walk away with so much more power and confidence than the escape of the snatching-away, which belongs to the persecuted nation of Israel at the end of the seven-year tribulation, ever afforded to a misguided and escapist

mindset. Thank you again for diligently seeking truth above all else. – **IN**

Thank you for all you do in getting God's goodness and grace out to those who are searching for truth. ... It has been a long journey for me, and God has brought me to you. You are so easy to read and understand. When I read your books, the truth comes alive to me. – **AL** **BSN**

A River

A Poem

by — Darson Buckner

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

A river winds and weaves, down the mountain.
The journey begins, as a simple fountain.

It is violent and calm, as it carves its path down.
At rocks and boulders, it courses around.

Through the dirt and sand, it continues to carve,
Until the roots of trees, for dirt they starve.

Rocks and fossils, the river has revealed.
Which God has hidden, and kept concealed.

It turns to the west, and then to the south,
Every trickle commanded, by God's mouth.

From a single creek, to a canyon river,
Every drop of water, does God deliver.

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever He will (Proverbs 21:1).



God turns the river and triggers its swings.
God turns the hearts, of men and kings,

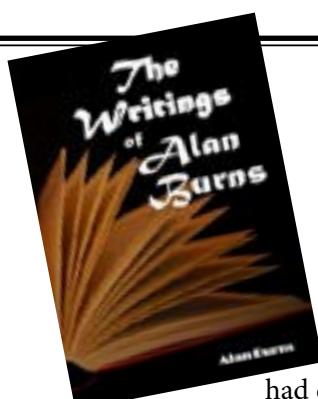
All for His purpose, all for His plan.
All was written, before time began.

Every desire, God puts in our heart,
Is for His purpose, His plan to start.

He doesn't just know where the river will end.
He knows each drop; the river will send.

He knows our beginning, He knows our end.
He knows everything, our heart does intend.

The river wrestles, with twists and turns,
To water God's trees, and all of His ferns. **BSN**



318 pages

See [order form](#)
under "Other
Authors."

The Writings of Alan Burns

by — Alan Burns (1884-1929)

Alan Burns was born 1884 in Philadelphia, PA, but spent his youth in Ireland, where he was associated with the Salvation Army and the Plymouth Brethren. At about twenty-one years of age he went to New York City. Being an earnest seeker after truth and a student of the Scriptures, he became interested in the teaching of Dr. E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913), and was strongly attracted to Vladimir Gelesnoff (1877-1921), when he began his ministry in New York. Gelesnoff considered him the best gospel preacher he had ever heard. With the help of a few friends who did the printing, Burns started *Grace and Glory*, a little magazine which gave promise of much good. For lack of support, it languished and soon ceased, to be followed, not long afterwards, by *Unsearchable Riches*, which virtually took its place. Burns became a valued contributor to the earlier volumes of *Unsearchable Riches*. The logical and powerful introductory articles in A.E. Knoch's (1874-1965) book *All in All* were written by him.



PERFECT (*continued from page 848*)

our heavenly Father in order to teach us and shape us.

That made me think about my dad. I began to see that my heavenly Father was using those experiences to teach me. Through my dad, I learned the difference between religion and freedom in Christ. I learned that the only approval I truly need is from my heavenly Father. I learned to accept others who don't believe like I do. I've also learned lessons about how to relate to my own children.

Today, I no longer feel any resentment toward my dad. As I look past my dad, to see God's hand in our relationship, I can see how my heavenly Father used him to shape me into the person I am today and who I'm becoming.

My dad did have a deep love for studying the Scriptures, and he passed that passion on to me.

I know some people have had far more difficult relationships with their fathers, and I don't want to minimize that pain. I encourage you to look past your earthly father to your heavenly Father. He loves you more than anyone else does, and uses life's pressures to mold you into the person He planned for you to be.

God has written each of our stories. They often in-



100 pages

See [order form](#) under
"Pilkington."

in the hands of every believer!" – **LA**

"It is rare to find someone who even mentions the topic of suffering, but you wrote an entire book on it, which I highly recommend to everyone!" – **Facebook**

"After being surprised by a very unexpected and major surgery for stage III cancer, your book on Suffering was most welcome, putting a lot of things in perspective." – **WI**

clude hurtful or challenging moments, but the ending will be glorious. **BSN**

Author's other articles in past *Bible Student's Notebooks*:

- *Chillax: The Power of Taking Time to Just Be*, [1024](#);
- *The Christianity Maintenance Program*, [1035](#);
- *Trusting the Journey: Misunderstandings and God's Ultimate Surprise*, [1037](#);
- *Twists, Turns and Truth*, [998](#).

TOPICS:

Major: Acceptance; Father, God; Love; Sovereignty

**THE PLACER OF
ALL, THE CREATOR
OF ALL, THE OPERATOR
OF ALL, THE FULFILLER
OF ALL, IS USING ALL TO
FULFILL HIS PLAN TO BE
“ALL IN ALL.” NO ONE IS
FRUSTRATING HIM. ALL IS
AND ARE SERVING HIM AND
HIS PLAN. EVIL IS HERE TO
SERVE THE GOOD.**

JEFF BOHLENDER

Suffering: God's Forgotten Gift

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Two gifts given to the believer are mentioned by Paul in Philippians 1:29. The first is “to believe on Him.” This is a glorious gift. Every believer has been given this gift from God. Those who possess it may not even fully recognize it as a gift from Him, but indeed faith is God's wonderful gift to us. Faith is a rich gift from God, but there is also another gift from God to the believer, mentioned by Paul in Philippians 1:29, that is equally as glorious. The second gift is “also to suffer for His sake.” This, too, is a glorious gift. Every believer has been given this gift from God as well, but those who possess it often do not fully recognize it for what it is. Indeed, suffering for His sake similarly is God's wonderful gift to us. Paul teaches us to embrace this second gift as well as we do the first!

“After over 40 years of seriously searching the Scriptures with the aid of writings from men of many varied walks, no literature has so profoundly changed my life as this book. It needs to be

in the hands of every believer!" – **LA**

"It is rare to find someone who even mentions the topic of suffering, but you wrote an entire book on it, which I highly recommend to everyone!" – **Facebook**

"After being surprised by a very unexpected and major surgery for stage III cancer, your book on Suffering was most welcome, putting a lot of things in perspective." – **WI**