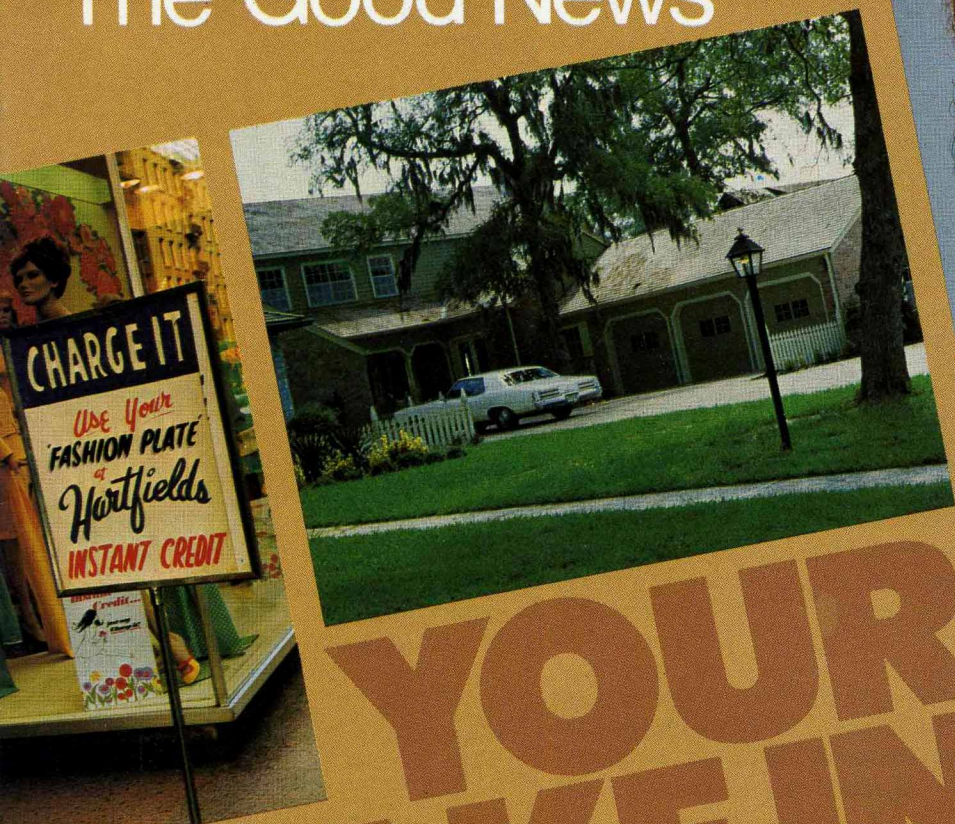
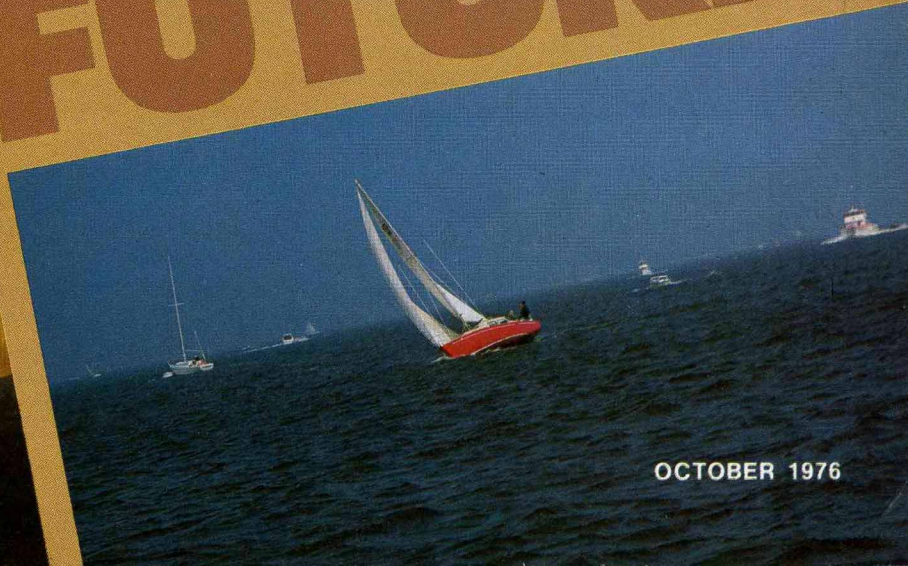


# GN

The Good News



# YOUR STAKE IN THE FUTURE



OCTOBER 1976



# GN

## The Good News

Vol. XXV No. 10

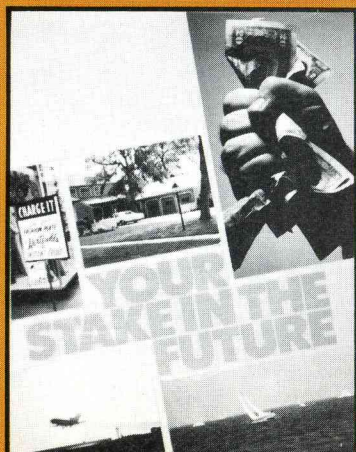
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#### ABOUT OUR COVER

*Is this temporal life something more than the much sought after mammon of material goods? Does money really bring security and satisfaction? This month's lead article discusses your stake in the future, and those values which endure for eternity.*

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# YOUR STAKE IN THE

# FUTURE

Today there is an increasing desire for total security. We want our five acres somewhere — land, home, something permanent. But is this temporal life something more than the much sought after mammon of material goods? Is there such a thing as a commitment to spiritual values that far transcends a paycheck?

by Garner Ted Armstrong

**D**o not fold, bend, spindle, staple or mutilate." If you happen to work for a large corporation, that's probably printed somewhere on your salary check. Ever stop to think about what would happen if you did indeed bend, fold, or staple it? Undoubtedly, the worst that could happen would be nothing more than an uptight clerk who couldn't process your paycheck through the computer.

But it's amazing how many people equate permanence and security with a piece of paper that says pay to the order of John Q. Public. Their real love and affection is placed upon a promise to pay them so much money for services rendered to their particular company. Money in the bank is automatically equated with people's desire for self-perpetuation and self-preservation. Self-determination and self-gratification are two more perfectly natural parts of the same old syndrome.

**The Great Experiment.** The wisest man that ever lived — King Solomon — explored the self to the full.

He had the money, the position and the time to indulge himself in all aspects of self. He possessed what most can only covet mentally. And he learned some vitally important lessons in the process — lessons you shouldn't have to learn by the same cruel teacher of experience.

Solomon began his discourse like this: "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. . . . I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, *till I might see what was that good for the sons of men*, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life" (Eccl. 2:1, 3). Solomon was conducting an experiment. He wanted to know what was the very best way to live in order to get the most out of this life.

He continued: "I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards . . . also I had great possessions of great and small cattle. . . . So I was great, *and*

*increased more* than all that were before me in Jerusalem. . . . And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy" (verses 4-10). Solomon had it all! Money was no object. He possessed what practically all the rest of the human race wants. And there was nobody around to tell him: "No, you can't have that."

Now *you* wouldn't come to the same conclusions he did. No, you'd be different! You wouldn't do it that way. Materialism wouldn't ruin your life; you simply wouldn't let "the unrighteous mammon" turn all your spiritual values upside down. Or would you?

## **The Conclusion of the Matter.**

Solomon concluded: "Then I looked on [considered] all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, *all was vanity* and vexation of spirit [utter frustration], and there was no profit under the sun" (verse 11).

"Vanity," in the original Hebrew language, simply means "a pursuit



after wind." Ever try to grab a handful of wind? It's exactly like trying to get *any permanent satisfaction* out of all of these projects that accumulate wealth.

The king continued his contemplations: "Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity" (verse 15). Solomon was thinking about his personal future — about the impermanence of life and the continual striving to achieve real satisfaction through a feeling of total security and well-being *by the things* he built and planted, the things he bought and possessed. He found out, through the crucible of hard experience, that all of these activities constituted little more than a vain pursuit after wind.

He became a candidate for suicide. He wrote: "*Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit*" (verse 17).

#### **Can You Learn the Lesson?**

Think of all the permanence you'd like to possess: the success, the security, the money, the fine home, etc. Can you take a lesson from Solomon? And if not him, one of the wealthiest men this world has ever seen — J. Paul Getty? He is reputed to have said: "I'd give away all my millions for just one successful marriage." Or could you take a lesson from the fabled Howard Hughes, who died a recluse after earlier years of amazing accomplishments in the field of aerodynamics as well as the acquisition of multiple millions?

Solomon summed up a great spiritual principle that all of these rich men (after they had basically lived their lives) would probably nod their heads in assent to. "*Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit*" (Eccl. 4:6). I know the upper-middle class or wealthy American wallowing around in affluence probably doesn't believe this principle. But it's true! And before they die, many of them will realize it!

Notice Ecclesiastes 5:10: "He

that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity." When will the large hotel and motel chains finish building? When will the quick-food vendors decide they have enough sales outlets? When will multimillionaires decide they have "enough"? No, satisfaction simply doesn't come through having "*enough*." If you're already big, you just naturally want to grow to be still bigger yet. So there's this constant treadmill of continually doing, striving and pushing for the future — and never with any real lasting, permanent satisfaction!

Verse 11: "When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the

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**"When goods increase,  
they are increased that eat  
them: and what good  
is there to the owners  
thereof, saving the  
beholding of them with  
their eyes?"  
(Ecclesiastes 5:11.)**

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owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?" What can anyone do with all the goods they might accumulate — except look at them, fondle them, think about them, and perhaps boast just a little?

Truly, "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing" (Eccl. 1:8). When is the very last time you want to see a beautiful sunset? When do you tire of an absolutely magnificent, national forest scene so beautiful it takes your breath away? When is the last time your eyes want to behold sharp, sheer cliffs, rushing brooks, crystal-clear lakes and dozens of varieties of wild flowers?

Solomon goes on to say in chapter five: "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer [allow] him to

sleep" (verse 12). A man who works hard with his hands doesn't have to sample the world's best restaurants to be satisfied. He can get by with hardtack and beans and still get a good night's sleep. But the white-collar executive who is basking in a six-figure income? He is often the most unsatisfied and unhappy of persons. He lies awake at night constantly striving, plotting, planning, figuring — trying somehow to obtain yet more. He suffers from the agonies of sleepless nights, ulcers, constant worries and jumpy nerves. He is subjected to dozens of corporate fears and pressures — he continually struggles against intolerable odds — striving for that one big break that means he finally has "enough."

Verse 16: "What profit hath he that hath labored for the wind?" Do you labor for the wind? Or Montgomery Ward? Or Sears? Or BankAmericard? It's all the same — a kind of futility and frustration. There's nothing to show for it but a few more material goods, a little more temporary comfort, a few more steaks, and finally an empty death.

If people knew the true values in life, they wouldn't be playing the game of impulse buying, with the resulting endless battles with creditors, the juggling of bills and all the other daily frustrations that plague multiple millions of security-obsessed Americans, Britons and other citizens of the Western world. But it doesn't have to be this way!

There is a better way! There is a way by which you can obtain *eternal dividends*. There is a way you can assure your personal stake in eternity!

**New Testament Advice!** Jesus Christ of Nazareth said: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*" (Matt. 6:19-21). Jesus is talking about an attitude and an approach toward life. Worrying yourself to death about



financial security and your share of this material world is just not going to make you happy in the long run.

Jesus continued: "*No man can serve two masters*: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. *Ye cannot serve God and mammon*. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment [clothing]?" (Verses 24-25.)

*The New English Bible* renders it: "Therefore I bid you put away *anxious* thoughts about food and drink . . ." *The New International Version* has it: "Therefore I tell you, *do not worry* about your life, what you will eat or drink . . ." *The Living Bible*: "Don't worry about things . . ."

Jesus Christ is *not* telling you: "Don't even think about your life; don't plan; don't prepare; don't lay up anything for your grandchildren." The force of the original Greek is to take *no anxious thought*, or as we might say in the vernacular: "Don't worry about it so much." The message is: Don't set your heart on material things.

Elsewhere in the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon tells us to enjoy the things that we have. But you can't enjoy your possessions if you're constantly worried about getting more. Lying, cheating, stealing, cutting corners just to grab a little more of a material future? It will destroy you; ruin your life; give you psychosomatic diseases; cause sleepless nights — everything you don't want. If you're *constantly* thinking: "How can I get that tractor?" "How can I get that new truck?" "How can I succeed in business?" "How can I get a vacation?" "How can I get a raise?" — you're eventually going to destroy yourself spiritually and make most of your loved ones unhappy in the process.

But understand the balance! The Scriptures bear down fairly hard on security seekers, but they do not mean, taken in context with the many, many other plain scriptures on the subject, that a person can-

not with honesty and hard work build up and increase his material possessions and even be the recipient of a well-earned, generous salary increase. That is fine in God's sight!

If God has blessed you with a fair share of this world's material goods, David's advice is: Be thankful but don't set your heart on them (see Psalm 62:10). They could be taken away from you in a moment's time. Witness earthquakes and tornadoes. Job experienced just such a disaster, but maintained his spiritual balance. He said: "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away."

Job understood that his real security was not in *any thing* that he possessed. Jesus said: "... A man's life consisteth *not* in the

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**"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:16).**

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abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

**Your Real Stake in Eternity.** The people of God are called, in the Bible, pioneers that have no certain dwelling place; people who are seeking a heavenly Kingdom and placing their values on the permanence of spiritual things — looking towards things which cannot be seen with the naked eye.

Peter gives us a spiritual description of God's people: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people [not odd or weird — but different — a select, unique people]; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of [spiritual] darkness into his marvellous light" (I Peter 2:9).

The people of God are of every color; they are from many different nations; they are of every conceiv-

able calling in life; of every type of ability; of every range of emotion. What binds them together is the common belief in God and in His Son Jesus Christ. They believe, to a man, that He will soon return to this earth as a great conquering King to rule it with a rod of iron. This is their stake in eternity!

Jesus Christ of Nazareth said: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for *your redemption draweth nigh*" (Luke 21:28). Their expectance, their hope and their eagerness is not in a very shaky, questionable future based on something physical or material, but in a completely secure, fully guaranteed future, whether they live to the coming of Christ or not. They know that even if they die, they are going to be called right out of the grave to a fantastic, incomprehensible life for all eternity. (Write for our free booklet entitled *After Death — Then What?*)

**Your Passport Into Eternity!** As I've written before, there exists a fully certified cashier's check with your name on it. The date is the day of your baptism. The payment is in eternal life. The signature, written in royal red blood, is *Jesus Christ of Nazareth!* It's your passport into eternity!

All you have to do is turn the check in when He comes, and you have your stake in eternity. Your record and the character you've built, the real you, is going to last from the ages unto the ages — if our finite minds can remotely understand it.

Called-out Christians are called pilgrims and pioneers. We're to be innovators. We're to dream the great dream and, with faith in God, bring it to pass. We are the kind of people that are willing, like Abraham, to "get out of our country and our land into a place that God will show us." We are to be willing, like Jeremiah, to go to jail for our beliefs.

Very likely, Jesus Christ lost all of His personal property through confiscation by the government. What did He lose? Nothing! He gained eternal life!

What about Paul? He was beaten and whipped and he wandered



about Asia Minor like a stranger having no certain dwelling place. He learned how to be totally satisfied — no matter what his state for the moment: "For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (Phil. 4:11-12).

Was Paul continually worried about his loss of status in the world of the Pharisees? About perhaps being unceremoniously kicked out of the Sanhedrin? About the uncertainty of his next meal or place to sleep? No! He wrote: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:7-8).

The apostle Paul knew his real stake in eternity. He continued: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (verses 10-11).

**A Great Cloud of Witnesses.** But Paul is not the only example. He wrote of a great company of men and women who never threw away a single principle of God's Word just to hang on to some physical amenity or piece of property somewhere. Abel gave his gifts to God (Heb. 11:4). Abraham was willing to give up all that he had seen and known (verse 8-9). Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (verse 26). "Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not

accepting deliverance; *that they might obtain a better resurrection*" (verse 35).

These people of old knew where their stake in eternity was! "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; *being destitute, afflicted, tormented*; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (verses 37-38).

you the kind of person whose loyalties only run as deep as your paycheck — your physical roots in this world? If so, when those things are taken away from you, you will probably abandon the principles, beliefs and spiritual values that you once thought were so important.

Paul despaired of the fate of such people: "For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. *Their destiny is destruction*, their god is their stom-

ach, and their glory is in their shame. *Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven.* And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly [vile, KJV] bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Phil. 3:18-21, NIV).

Jesus Christ will change our vile bodies when He returns — but not our vile character. We've got to do that first!

**Surest Prophecy.** No one is sure when it is going to happen, but the second coming of Jesus Christ is the surest prophecy in all of the Bible. The heavens will be opened up and there is going to be a brilliant shining light that will strike terror into the

hearts of millions. Then a great trumpet blast will precede the sight of a huge army with a Great Being sitting astride a white horse coming in a blaze of glory — with millions of glorified former human beings behind Him to take over the reins of rulership on this earth. It's like that song they've been singing in recent days: "*I really want to be there.*"

Those spiritual roots go down in every direction and on out into the entirety of space. I'd like a stake in that kind of security — that kind of future! What about you? □

**What Is A REAL Christian?**

Most people — even "professing Christians" — know little or nothing about what it means to be a true follower of Jesus Christ. Yet the Bible is quite clear on this subject. If you want to know more, write for these two free booklets, *What is a Real Christian?* and *What is Faith?* See the inside front cover for the address of our office nearest you.

**What is a REAL CHRISTIAN?**

**What is FAITH?**

A view of the beautiful and inspiring stony mountain not far from Capernaum from which Christ probably preached the "Sermon on the Mount."

Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations [secure ones], whose builder and maker is God" (verse 10). Every one of these men and women died in faith, not having yet received the great promise of the resurrection. They "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (verse 13). "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for *he hath prepared for them a city*" (verse 16).

**The Futility of Materialism.** Are



**Does God look like a man or a woman? Is God a male chauvinist? Did he make women second-class human beings? Whose idea was sex anyway? This article addresses these questions directly — it is not for men only!**

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**A**ccording to the theology of many, sex in the Garden is equated with the "fall of man"! Sin in Eden is the indictment of our protoparents for understanding carnal knowledge. Following this theology, woman becomes the bane of man, the cause of his downfall, the thorn in his side. This theory goes on indicating Adam was created first with Eve sort of thrown in as an afterthought!

With theology like that, no wonder we have the traditional "battle of the sexes"!

But is that what the Bible really says and teaches?

On the other hand, some of the fem-libists of today would have us believe that God is the Mother-of-us-all. One of the leaders of the movement, when asked how her relationship with God was, quipped: "She and I have a very fine relationship!"

**The Likeness of God.** The seeking of equality doesn't really require the put-down of one to raise up the other, but rather a balanced understanding of the way things really are. Let's cheat a little, read the Book, and find out the plain truth about women (and men) — in God's eyes.

"In the image of God . . . male and female created he them." So says the record of the book of Genesis (1:27). Therefore "in the image of God" does not demand one sex or the other. Each is equally "in the image of God." To be male doesn't make one more in the likeness of God than to be female — each equally reflects God.

Let's reason a little. If male and female are equally "in the image of God," then what is that image? It must be what both male and female share in common. Two arms, two legs, a human body shape, a head with two eyes, two ears, a nose, a

mouth — and most important of all a *mind*!

Not just a brain — A MIND!

Ten toes and an equal number of fingers just about rounds out the complement. Color of skin is not a factor, any more than color of eyes, hair or the bottoms of the feet. A different arrangement of hair, length, texture or degree of curl, alters not one whit the basic "image."

But what about those embarrassing differences? What about sex? Male reproductive organs are outrageously different from female. Women develop, to different degrees, mammary glands on the

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# IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

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by David Jon Hill

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chest that remain dormant (but obviously there) on the man. Hair grows on most men's faces, while on most women's it does not. Fat, muscle and bone are arranged in slightly differing patterns between male and female. But do any of these differences make one "in the image of God" and the other not? No!

The generally easily recognizable differences between the sexes are physically caused by minute chemical differences. Modern science has helped us understand how "fearfully and wonderfully made" we are, as David noted in awe in Psalm 139:14. There is a great deal of female in every male, and vice versa. Subtle changes in hormone

makeup produce overt changes in outward appearance, and striking differences in the internal workings of the body. Tiny differences in chemical formulas, preprogrammed at conception when each individual destined to be "in the image of God" begins its existence as a single cell, demand time-released alterations in the bodily construction that ultimately produce the delightful difference that make us man or woman.

Neither chemical change makes us more or less "in the image of God"; neither change makes for superior or inferior.

All changes only accent the uniqueness of God's image: *man-kind*! All changes only make possible the reproduction of God's image, in infinite variety for a possibility of unending generations. All changes provide for absolute compatibility, demand interdependence, produce a strong desire for the opposite sex.

**Along Came Eve.** God says the difference of sex is "very good." "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, *it was very good*!" (Gen. 1:31.) In the detailed record of what God made on that sixth day of creation, preserved for us in Genesis two, God explains to Adam: "It is *not* good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." "Meet" is an old English word meaning, "suitable, fit, proper." The whole flavor of the word "meet" is to fit, join, combine, agree, be in union, be together. Only antagonism of spirit and mind cause a "meeting" to have the spark of hostility.

God created, out of the ground before Adam's eyes, the land animals and the birds — each of which was obviously *not* "meet" for Adam, and it was still "*not* good," because Adam was still "alone." The exercise also made it clear for all time that one made in the image of God should not cohabit with one *not* made in the image of God.

Then came Eve!

God didn't permit Adam to see Eve being created. He put Adam into a deep sleep, made him unconscious, while He performed a most loving and thoughtful, predesigned act of creation. Beginning with a



part of Adam himself — flesh, bone and blood — God “built” the first woman. I’m sure you’ve heard the expression “well-built woman.” Well, believe it or not, that is the precise term the Bible uses.

**Built for a Purpose.** When Adam was created, God began with a clump of clay, dirt, earth: and the word in Hebrew used for the verb “formed” is the common word for the shaping and molding of pottery. But the Hebrew verb used in reference to God’s creation of Eve is different. Unfortunately, the translators of the King James Version ignored the difference and used the commonplace and unspecific, as well as unimaginative word “made” to refer to the Lord God’s act of finishing half of His creation of mankind “in his image.”

God inspired the word “built” — or “builded” as the margin of your Bible may indicate. The same word is used to refer to the building of houses, temples, cities. Surely, from the hand of God Himself, Eve must have been the best “built” woman! But more important than the interest or humor involved in this word “built” is the overall meaning.

You do not “build” by mistake. You conceive, plan, blueprint, calculate and finally produce the finished product of something you build. Things are built for a purpose. Reason and forethought are integral and necessary elements of building. Building doesn’t just happen. Woman was the deliberately designed climax of creation, the purposeful finishing touch, the last half, fifty percent, of the creation of the “image of God!”

When Adam was revived and presented with this crowning achievement of God’s creation, he was in no way disappointed. “Now this is just right, she is *just like me!*” Adam happily declared. Who knows, maybe he said, “Wow!” At any rate, what we are told he *did* say is most important.

**One Creation.** Earlier called on to name other creations of God, Adam had an immediate name for what Eve obviously was. Not her given name, Eve, but what *KIND* of creature she was. Hebrew is simpler than English, and more plainly ex-

plains exactly what a woman is: *ish* is Hebrew for *man* — Adam said, “Now here is bone exactly like my bone, and flesh exactly like my flesh; because she was built from what was taken from me, I will call her *isha*: a female man!” (Gen. 2:23 paraphrased.)

Adam merely added a single letter to the word which stood for himself, to define the quality of difference: sex. And God confirmed Adam’s understanding that they were both *exactly alike* despite the obvious outward differences: “In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; *male and female created he them*; and blessed them, and called THEIR name ADAM, in the day when they were created” (Gen. 5:1-2). To both God and Adam, it was *one* creation, “in the image of God.”

*Ish. Isha.* Male. Female. Both Adam. Both mankind. Both “in the

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### Color of skin is not a factor, any more than color of eyes, hair or the bottoms of the feet.

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image of God!” “And God saw *every thing* that he had made, and, behold, *it was very good!*” Still no evil in Eden. Nothing bad yet allowed — and one more good thing happened before any record of evil is entered. “And they were both naked, the *man and his wife*, and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25).

Once the physical creation was complete, what more joyous occasion could there be than a wedding? The very first social ceremony of newly created *mankind* was the one which united them as *one* flesh. No inequality even considered. No superiority, inferiority alluded to. No hint of second-class creation. And above all, *no sin*.

God “blessed” this union of *Ish* and *Isha*, this *one* creation He called Adam. God discreetly withdrew after the ceremony of wedding (which means joining together), and not only allowed, but encouraged the consummation of

that marriage with a direct command. Before God said that every thing He had created was very good, we are told His instruction to that first pair of newlyweds: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth”!

Now, you know, and I know, and Adam knew, and Eve knew, and God knew that there is no way you can “multiply” and “be fruitful” without engaging in sexual intercourse. This, God made possible by the very design of His creation. This, God commanded to be performed. This, God blessed — AND THIS WAS “VERY GOOD”! And in addition to that, God knew ahead of time, Adam and Eve quickly found out, and you and I now know, that obedience to this command of God is a great enjoyment!

**Subtle Serpent on the Scene.** So, the perfect pair, Adam and Eve, were off to a perfect start in wedded bliss, naked, unashamed, blessed by their Creator — all was well . . .

Until Satan, the Snake, showed up. In about as much time as it takes to tell, he convinced our first parents to partake of the only tree in the Garden that God had commanded them not to touch. That meal changed their attitudes, their outlook, their feelings about the blessings God had showered on them. The blessing and beauty of sex the way God intended — husband and wife, naked and unashamed, bound to each other as one flesh — soured into a feeling of guilt. They hid themselves from God, ashamed. Satan had convinced them that good was evil and evil good, turned their world upside down, made a mockery of what God intended for them.

Deceit and lying entered the world. Death followed. Our parents had dishonored their only parent, God, stolen the one thing not belonging to them, lusted, believed Satan’s lies, bought human nature wholesale from the manufacturer! (See Ezekiel 28:15 and John 8:44.) The curses reaped caused the inequities between the sexes so prominent since. Life became a burden and a struggle. The beauty and equality of the Garden disappeared. Strife, guilt, shame and pain took over — Satan’s way held sway.



But it doesn't have to be that way for you and me. James gives the simple formula by which to return to the innocence and open freedom for an unlimited future offered in Eden. The gift of life is still available, no need to slave for the wages of sin: death. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:7-8).

Satan hates sex. He besmirches it with evil of every sort. He makes it seem sinful in every way, perverts it, glorifies its denegation. From one extreme to the other the devil broadcasts his hate: the best state of human beings is celibacy (God said, "It is *not* good that the man should be alone"); adultery and lusting after your neighbor's wife is encouraged by every artifice (God said, "Husbands, love your wives" and "Thou shalt not commit adultery"); sodomy and bestiality are nurtured as natural (God said, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith"). Satan says, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4) if you taste of these fruits of rebellion against the Creator God (God says in Genesis 2:17: "Thou shalt surely die").

Whom do *you* believe? Adam and Eve believed Satan — and so has each generation since. Except for individuals who answered the call of God and came to understand His gift of truth and freedom, who entered into life from death, who shed their guilt in genuine repentance and a change of heart and spirit.

Satan the Devil has deceived the whole world (Rev. 12:9). Deceived it in every aspect: religious, moral, governmental, even physically. Concepts and ideas practiced for the centuries since Eden which put women into the typical typecasts, which so many of them abhor today, are the result of this deception along with so much else that is wrong with the world. It was not God's intent that such inequality should exist, nor does He consider woman in a role one whit inferior to man.

**Simple Reasoning.** There are differences to be sure. Thank God there are differences! But it is all too

common a bad case of judgment to automatically decide that if something is different from something else it must be either superior or inferior. Sadly, that is just the human practice (inspired and goaded by that old Serpent) in so many areas. Race, nationality and sex are prime misjudgments. The races (or more accurately, the colors) mankind is by variety divided into are carefully classified (depending on the race or color) as to inferiority or superiority. The same with nationalities. In each of the former categories there is room for many strata. With sex there are only two (we will not, at this time discuss the opinion of some that there are three). Hence, one must be inferior, and the other superior.

Simple, AND WRONG reasoning.

Each living human being is different from every other. Differences do not make for an inferior or superior

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**It makes no difference  
to God whether you  
are male or female,  
why should it make a  
difference to you?**

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individual, they only make him a *different* individual. Women can have babies, men can't. That's a difference. Men generally have a stronger musculature than women — that's a difference. Neither attribute changes either from being a human being made in the image of God: *that's equality!* If differences make for strengths, they should be amplified; if they make for weaknesses they should be controlled. Trying to prove equality by playing the other fellow's game is not wise or logical, does not make sense — and proves nothing.

It is not necessary for women to become better (or as good as) men truck drivers, ditch diggers and warriors for them to prove their equality. It is not necessary (nor possible) for men to bear children and give suck to them to prove equality with women.

**Whence Equality?** Many will argue one of the main precepts this nation of the United States is founded

upon: "all men are born equal." They point out the differences of wealth, social status, physical or mental strengths and argue inequality. This is the old apples and oranges trick: disallowed.

Where, then, does the equality lie?

In Human Potential.

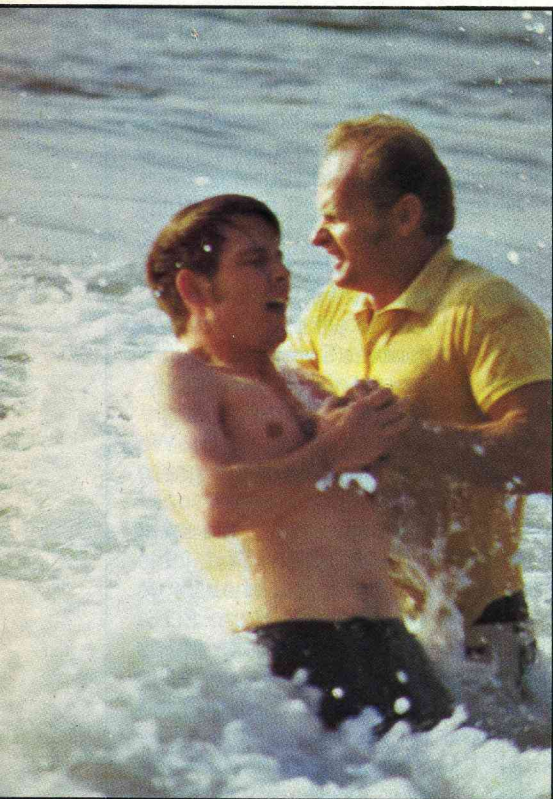
Every member of the human race, male and female alike, was created by God to become Sons and Daughters — members of His own family. "Ye shall be my sons and daughters," says God (II Cor. 6:18). We are all "heirs together of the grace of life" (I Pet. 3:7).

Each of us has a mind, the spirit in man(kind), to which God joins His own Holy Spirit and enables us all to call Him Father (Rom. 8:15-16). Each of us can partake of His divine nature (II Pet. 1:4). Each life is judged by the same God, granted the same forgiveness by the same God, has the same blood of the same Christ applied, is welcomed into the same family. Each is given the same law of love to govern life, the same spiritual rules and regulations. Lust, envy, malice and hate do not recognize any difference of sex. Love, patience, mercy and joy do not recognize any difference of sex. Character is a quality of Spirit equally available to either sex. Competition, strife and openness to Satan's deception know no sexual bounds. Life, love and the peace of God are equally available to *everyone*.

Equality is nothing you have to prove: you were created that way, it is God's will to grant eternal equality in His Kingdom to men and women alike — it makes no difference to God whether you are male or female, why should it make a difference to you?

But there are differences. How can you make the best of unique qualities granted by a just God for the purpose of gaining equality with God? What are the biblical examples of the women of God? And how can you apply them to make you a better human being, closer to the image God intended? There are many examples in the Bible, and some surprising detail plainly given. These will be discussed in the next issue of *The Good News*. □





Don Lorton

# "CAN ANY MAN FORBID WATER?"

by John R. Schroeder

**Did you know that John the Baptist temporarily forbade Jesus Christ from being baptized? But does any man — be he minister, prophet or layman — have the right to deny a truly repentant sinner the ordinance of water baptism?**

**E**ven before His ministry began, Jesus Christ journeyed to the Jordan River for the express purpose of being baptized in water. Matthew, the former tax collector, records this surprising account: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, *to be baptized of him*" (Matt. 3:13). His request was politely turned down! "But

John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" (Verse 14.)

Jesus could have said: "Okay John, you're right, let me baptize you instead. After all, I've never sinned. But you have and you need to be cleaned up by me personally." But Christ didn't say that. Notice what He did say: "... Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to *fulfil all righteousness*" (verse 15). Jesus of Nazareth actually called the ordinance of baptism — *a form ritual* if you please — *an act of righteousness!*

There is no biblical record of Jesus baptizing John. In fact, the Bible indicates that Jesus never *personally* baptized a single person. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, had this to say about the subject: "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus himself baptized *not*, but his disciples)..." (John 4:1-2). Apparently Jesus immersed no one! However, Peter, John, James, Andrew and the others did it by His authority and in His name. Their baptisms were every bit as valid as if Jesus had personally performed them!

People sometimes attribute a great deal of importance to the particular personality performing the baptismal ceremony, but the Bible itself attaches little importance to the human instrument.

**New Testament Commands.** After Jesus' resurrection to eternal life, commandments concerning water baptism are among His final instructions to His disciples: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, *baptizing them* in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the *world* [Greek, *age*]" (Matt. 28:19-20). Some would say that Jesus was *exclusively* instructing His personal disciples that He trained as a human being. They would deny any modern application. But the context of the scripture indicates otherwise. Jesus Christ said He would be with His Church even to the end of the

age. And He knew His personal disciples would die *before* His second coming (see John 21:18-19 and the parable of the pounds in Luke 19).

Although some scholars question the textual validity of all but the first eight verses of Mark 16, its instructions are even more explicit: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth *and is baptized* shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned [or judged]" (Mark 16:15-16).

Acts 2:38 is one of the most basic texts in all of the Bible. The Worldwide Church of God has previously published a series of articles thoroughly explaining each phrase of this vital verse. Read Peter's clear-cut instructions to a group of bewildered, conscience-stricken sinners: "Repent, and be baptized *every one of you*..." Notice that *no one* there was to be excluded from either repentance or baptism.

About 3000 people were obedient to the apostle: "Then they that gladly received his word *were baptized*: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (verse 41). The Church was beginning to grow very rapidly. It will become apparent as we proceed through early church history that every single convert was baptized in water. Notice Acts 8:12: "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, *they were baptized*, both men and women [not children]." These were Gentiles, not Jewish converts.

Word reached the Jerusalem Church that Philip had brought the gospel to Samaria. The Elders then sent Peter and John to follow up Philip's preaching (verse 14). These two apostles prayed that the Samaritan converts would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (verse 15). "Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit" (verse 17). The laying on of hands is an important adjunct to the baptismal ceremony. It is normally done *immediately after* water baptism.

**Means to an End.** Baptism is not an end in itself. It is a means to an



end. It is a prior requirement to receiving the Holy Spirit of God — without which we can never attain eternal life (see Rom. 8:9-11). Paul's conversion illustrates the point. Recall that he was struck blind on a trip to Damascus. God sent a dedicated church member to heal him. Notice the *two ritualistic forms* observed in the account: "And Ananias . . . entered into the house; and *putting his hands* on him [the laying on of hands] said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus . . . hath sent me, that thou mightest *receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit*. And immediately there fell from his eyes . . . scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, *and was baptized*" (Acts 9:17-18). Note the companion account in Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and *wash away thy sins* . . ."

Baptism symbolically washes away the sins of the repentant sinner, making his body a fit vessel for the Holy Spirit.

**Baptism Imperative.** In spite of the fact that Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, Peter was chosen of God to be the first apostle to take the gospel to non-Jewish nations. He was sent to the house of a Roman centurion named Cornelius. While Peter was bringing them a very strong sermon, "the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word" (Acts 10:44). These Gentiles were given the gift of the Holy Spirit *without being baptized first*.

This was not unprecedented. There is no biblical record that the eleven apostles who initially received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost were ever baptized prior to that event either (see Acts 2). Of course, it is certainly possible John the Baptist may have baptized some or all of them (see John 1:32-40).

Normally repentance, baptism and the laying on of hands precede the receipt of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:38; 8:12-18; 19:1-6). But the very first pouring out of that Spirit on both the Israelites and the Gentiles occasioned the only two apparent exceptions revealed in the New Testament documents.

Still Peter *insisted* on water bap-

## BAPTISM BY IMMERSION?

John the Baptist set an example of the Christian ceremonial form of total *immersion* in water: "John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was *much water there* . . ." (John 3:23). Whether he learned this rite from Jewish baptizers in the Palestinian area or from direct revelation is an open question. What is clear is that Jesus endorsed John's method of total immersion.

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. . . . And when Jesus was baptized, he *went up immediately from the water* . . ." (Matt. 3:13-16).

As many other New Testament examples affirm, the only valid form of baptism is total immersion in a symbolic watery grave. Only a complete submerging could properly picture the death of the "old" man (Rom. 6:3-6).

Actually, full immersion was

generally practiced until the late 1200s A.D. In the year 1155, theologian Thomas Aquinas wrote: "Baptism may be given not only by immersion, but also by affusion of water, or sprinkling with it. But it is the safer way to baptize by immersion, because that is *the most common custom*" (quoted by Wall, *His Baptism*, vol. II, pp. 391-393).

Further: "Thirteen hundred years was baptism generally and regularly an immersion by the person under the water, and only in extraordinary cases a sprinkling or pouring with water; the latter [sprinkling or pouring], moreover, was disputed — nay, even forbidden" (Brenner, *Catholic History*, p. 306).

Even today some few denominations still teach baptism by immersion. Any other method is merely man-made tradition and contrary to the inspired New Testament teaching.

tism! Continue: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And *he commanded* them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:47-48).

Anyone who is physically able to be baptized should definitely be willing to undergo the ceremony. It goes without saying that the thief on the cross simply was not able to come down from the cross to be baptized. God provides for such rare exceptions. A terminally ill cancer patient might be a modern example. The doctor may advise that immersion in water might be critically hazardous to the patient's health. In such a case the minister might lay his hands on such a person, and God, in all likelihood, would honor the minister's request by giving the sick one the gift of His Holy Spirit.

But does this mean that a minister may indiscriminately waive the ordinance of baptism for any repentant sinner? Decidedly not! The

New Testament instructions and examples are clear! No minister, in contradiction to the many plain scriptures on the subject, may dole out any "carte blanche" permissions for able-bodied persons *not* to be baptized.

Water baptism is imperative — a vital link in the chain of events in becoming a real Christian. Baptism symbolically cleanses and purifies the repentant sinner from his past sins.

**Private Counsel and Publications.** Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God both teach and practice the biblical doctrine of water baptism. They are available for counsel around the world (see box on page 29 for the details). Also available are our free booklets *All About Water Baptism* and *What Is a Real Christian?* These two publications clarify many common misconceptions concerning water baptism. Please request both booklets by return mail. Addresses are at the end of the staff box on the inside front cover. □





**HAROLD JACKSON**, pastor in the Worldwide Church of God, poses while visiting members in Casablanca.

# THE STORY OF THE WORK IN **WEST AFRICA**

***In 1960, a "mustard seed" was planted in West Africa with the first World Tomorrow broadcast from Nigeria. Here is the story of how it has grown and prospered ever since.***

by Harold Jackson

**O**ver 1900 years ago, Paul, while in Troas, had a vision in which there stood a man of Macedonia calling, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." Paul and his companions immediately set sail and after reaching Philippi preached to a group of women, one of whom was Lydia of Thyatira. On

hearing the gospel preached, she and her household were baptized.

Fulfilling the commission given by Jesus Christ in the 28th chapter of Matthew, God's Church has continued to answer that cry which has reverberated around the world through the centuries. After 16 years of probing and penetrating

into the heart of Black Africa, God has now opened the doors for churches and Bible studies to begin in West Africa, including one of the most populous countries on the continent — Nigeria.

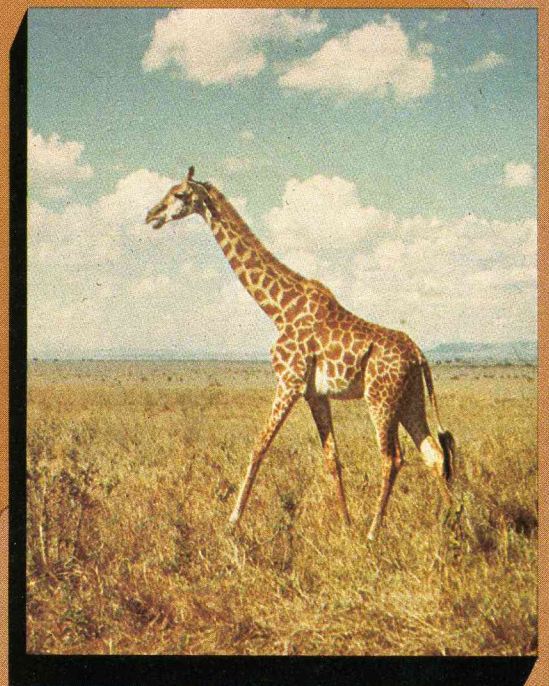
When in Africa on business or on vacation, in group studies, or on extended safari, the visitor is chal-





GN Photos

**OVER ONE HUNDRED POSE FOR PICTURE** during Feast of Tabernacles (1975) at Gold Coast, Ghana. Two churches are now starting in Ghana, with potential for four more in Nigeria.



lenged by different languages and customs, exotic diseases and difficulties in securing transportation. Africa is indeed different from what one is used to in the Western world. **Myths and Misconceptions.** For centuries Africa and its people seemed mysterious to the rest of the world. Generations of traders



knew and valued Africa's gold and ivory, but the continent itself remained a puzzle. Where had its natives come from? Why were they so different from other men? What was the explanation for their strange customs, so unlike those of Europe?

Unfortunately, the Europeans resorted to an easy conclusion, one that reflected their inability to judge any culture except in terms of their own. Africans, they decided, were savages, inferior beings, and had always been so.

This simple-minded answer to the riddle of Africa has lasted right up to modern times. Recently, however, Africa has been rediscovered by the scholars. Probing into its obscure past, they have turned up fascinating information. Africa has not been, after all, a land of unrelieved savagery and chaos. On the con-

trary, its people have had a long and lively history: cultures and civilizations have been created; systems of government and thought have evolved; pursuit of the inner life of the spirit has produced some of the finest art known to man. Africans have contributed much to man's mastery of the world.

The early explorers made this discovery, seeing what other men afterward forgot. They saw the tall stone walls indicative of the comfort and wealth of the inhabitants of the East African coast; the fabulous and scholarly city of Timbuktu, whose merchants made a greater profit from books than from any other commodity. Dutchmen, sweating through the rain forests of Nigeria, came upon the civic splendor of the city of Benin. They reported to their employers that its streets were as wide as those of Amsterdam, and its king lived in a palace that occupied "as much space as the town of Haarlem."

This is the historical Africa that Europeans began to see for themselves in the latter half of the 15th

century. These visitors found prosperous, self-contained cities linked to each other by busy, well-ordered commerce. Africans, who spoke more than a thousand different tongues, had almost as many systems of behavior and belief. Some of these systems produced societies whose standard of living — in terms of food, personal safety and freedom — equaled that of contemporary societies in Europe. In many instances they were even more advanced. African societies practiced a simple but effective social welfare in their concern for widows and orphaned children.

Africa was in many ways no more savage than Europe. But in spite of this, absurd tales about Africa circulated in Europe. They have only been dispelled by the research and reevaluation of African history conducted in the past 20 years. A complex picture of Africa has been pieced together and interpreted. With colonialism almost gone, anthropologists, historians and archaeologists have looked into Africa and its populations far more

closely and carefully than ever before. Like the wave of explorers who a century ago rediscovered the continent's geography, intellectual explorers have rediscovered its history and have rescued a main section of humanity from an unhappy misunderstanding.

**Broadcast Paves the Way.** In 1960, *The World Tomorrow* program began in West Africa with a broadcast from Ibadan, the educational center of Nigeria. For seven years a weekly program boomed into Central and West Africa, giving a concise and specific witness of the coming King-

**HAROLD JACKSON** leads African brethren in singing during the Feast of Tabernacles last year at Gold Coast, Ghana.



GN Photos





**MR. AND MRS. ABNER WASHINGTON** (left) and Mr. Jackson in native attire. Mr. Washington will pastor new churches in Ghana.

dom of God. The giant countries of Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria and the Cameroons, along with their neighboring states, are no strangers to *The Plain Truth* and the related literature offered on the broadcast. Since termination of the program, literally thousands of letters have been received asking for its reinstatement. We mailed tons of booklets to many who eagerly received the Word with thanksgiving and searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were true. Appeals for help began pouring in, but the Nigerian Civil War interrupted, prohibiting all entry into the country.

In 1970 Messrs. Frankel and Watson scheduled stops in West Africa, including Nigeria, but because of poor communication service were not able to contact many. A few were baptized; others saved up money and came to Bricket Wood to personally contact and counsel with a minister of God.

The year 1971 is a never-to-be-forgotten year to me not only because it was my first visit to the continent but also because it heralded the beginning of a rich rela-

tionship with people who may be descendants of my ancestry. Mr. Bob Morton (now director of the Work in New Zealand) and I made the tour that year, but because of governmental restrictions we were not permitted to enter Nigeria. Those in that country with whom we had made appointments were very disappointed. Three young men, however, were not discouraged when they discovered

we could not get entry visas. Knowing our itinerary, they set out to meet us in Ghana. After many hardships they completed the trip successfully and were baptized.

By 1972 the tour had become an annual event to which we all looked forward. Interest in the gospel was growing, more people developed hope as they realized that God had not forsaken them. But patience was needed. A beautiful example was set by Mr. Abimbola, a former magistrate, who monitored the radio program for us in Ibadan throughout its seven years on the air. He requested baptism in 1960 but had to wait (through no fault of his own) 12 years before his request was granted.

It was decided in 1973 to establish an office in Great Britain to serve the Black African countries. This presented me with the opportunity for which I had waited so long. Immediately after confirmation, I moved to England to take up new and exciting duties and to serve this fast-growing segment of God's Work.

**Church Beginnings.** As strange as it may seem, there are as yet no churches in this vast area, but since 1974 the first and last Feast seasons have been kept in both Nigeria and Ghana (Pentecost was observed each year in Zambia, Central Africa). We now have deacons

(one each in Zambia and Ghana), and a ministerial trainee in Nigeria.

During the middle of 1974, the publishing and mailing of literature to Africa had to be drastically curtailed because of budgetary considerations. The financial crunch almost stopped our work, but we limped along for 18 months until monetary help arrived from the Church in Canada.

At long last the work of raising up churches has begun. Along with Mr. and Mrs. Abner Washington, I will be moving to West Africa. Mr. Washington, a minister in God's Church, will be raising up two churches in Ghana. For the last two years, the Washingtons kept the Feast of Tabernacles in Ghana and have had a wonderful time teaching the called-out ones in this area.

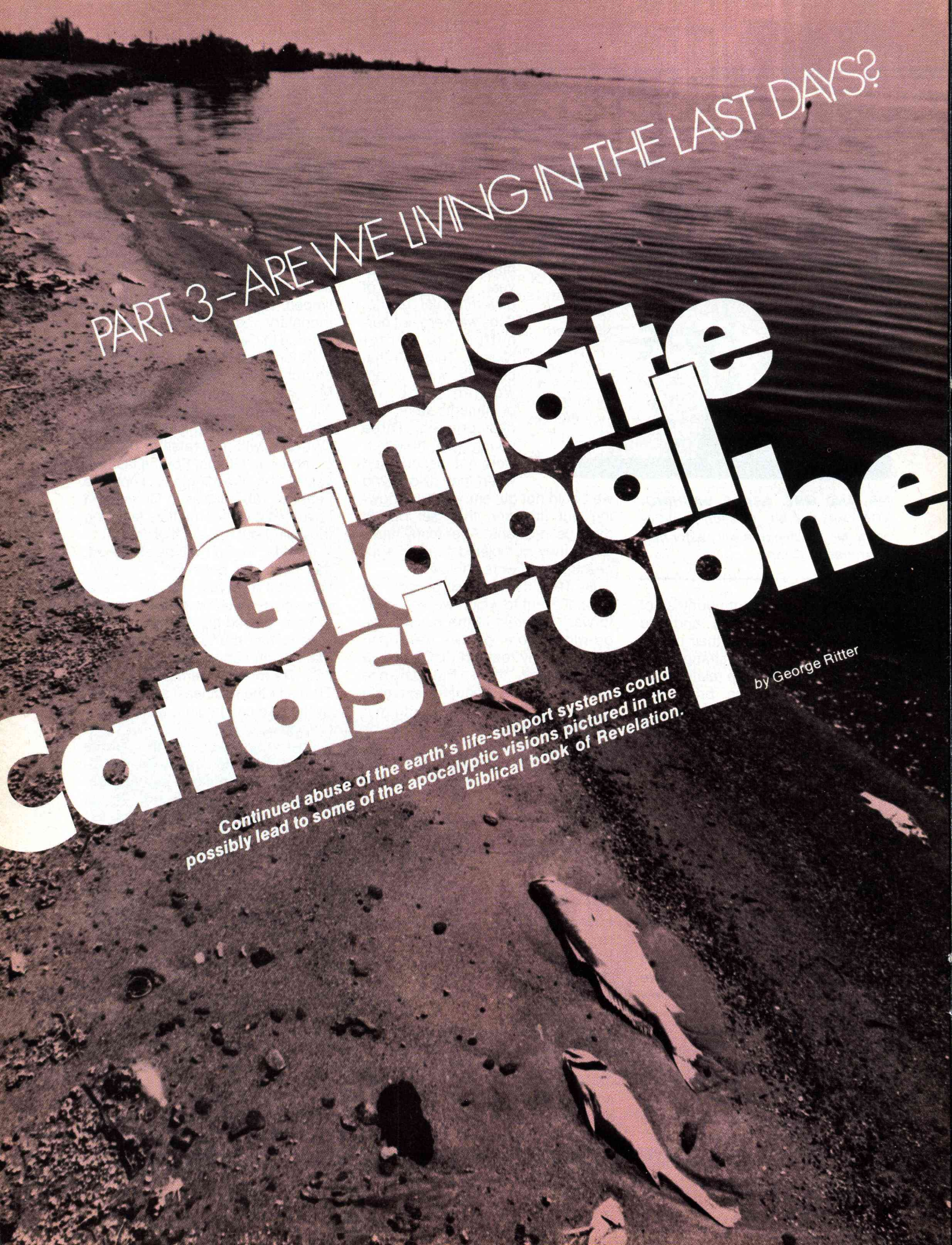
Nigeria, where I will be stationed, has unlimited potential. A country rich in oil reserves, and with a fast-growing population now estimated to have passed the 80 million mark, Nigeria has the largest number of *Plain Truth* subscribers in West Africa. We formerly sent 36,000 *Plain Truths* to the southeast section, and we feel we can begin a work of four churches.

The future looks bright for the Work now that we have the finances. Plans include periodic visits in East and Central Africa besides the concentrated effort expended to develop West Africa from Liberia east to the Cameroons.

Another facet of our work cannot be overlooked — that of our youth who desire to attend one of our two colleges in the U.S. We intend setting up dates for personal interviews which we hope will assist in preparing the groundwork for college entrance.

And now, we pray that our work on entering "Macedonia" will be as fruitful as was that of Paul. The call was made, we have heard, and we are now on our way! We know that in the midst of whatever should transpire, the impossible will be made possible and the mission accomplished. □





PART 3—ARE WE LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS?

# The Ultimate Global Catastrophe

Continued abuse of the earth's life-support systems could possibly lead to some of the apocalyptic visions pictured in the biblical book of Revelation.

by George Ritter



It had been almost imperceptible at first. A few abnormal high tides recorded in Miami, Amsterdam and Calcutta. Nobody except a few scientists had given it much thought.

That had been almost 12 months ago. Now the tides were more than a matter of scientific curiosity. Water was reported in the streets of Tokyo, Manila and Hamburg. The subway systems of London and New York were periodically inundated as boiling torrents of briny liquid swirled down streets and sewers. The famed dikes of Holland were no longer adequate to hold off the tempestuous poundings of the North Sea. Waterfront residents in Buenos Aires, Bombay and Singapore had been forced to retreat to higher ground.

**Greenhouse Effect.** Scientists said it had something to do with the greenhouse effect caused by too much carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere. It all seemed very baffling to the average man on the street.

It was also very baffling to most of the world's farmers. Temperatures had warmed in most parts of the globe. River and stream flow had declined dramatically in the Western United States, Europe and the Indian subcontinent. Irrigation had already been pushed to its limits as numerous nations strained to put food in the mouths of their burgeoning populations. Now farmers reported that saline river water was withering crops in many areas.

Still nobody panicked. There were ample grain reserves to last for a few months. In most of the Western democracies, politicians continued to stress the need for full employment and more government spending. In the United States, Wall Street was enjoying a bullish year. Automobile assembly lines were humming. Energy demands had

never been greater. And even though progress had been made in the development of nuclear power, the nation's economy continued to depend heavily on petroleum for its main source of energy.

A few dead fish were seen washed ashore with rotted fins. An occasional forlorn-looking waterfowl was observed wandering aimlessly, encased in a blanket of slimy goo. Tourists on fashionable Mediterranean beaches found that tar stuck to the soles of their feet. Sailors also reported floating oil slicks in mid-ocean.

Aside from a few known "econuts" nobody made any strenuous objections. There hadn't been an oil spill remotely approaching the size of the famous Santa Barbara eruption in the early 1970s — just the continuing nuisance of isolated overflows, ocean dumpings and well seepages here and there.

Oil was still king. And ever since the disruptive Arab embargo, which was now a dim memory in most people's minds, petroleum had continued to flow in ever increasing quantities. Offshore drilling was now at an all-time high — especially in the North Sea and around the North American continental shelf. Wells were now producing profitably in such remote places as the Arctic and Antarctic; and from all preliminary indications their ample reserves would last for another decade or two.

**Depleted Ozone Layer.** Still there was the nagging problem of the world food supply. For the last few years chemical fertilizers had been applied lavishly both in the West and East. Their initial impact had been salutary. But now an increasing number of scientists were beginning to warn of the potential threat nitrogen fertilizers posed for the ozone layer — already seriously depleted by aerosols, increased

SST flights and unauthorized atmospheric nuclear tests conducted by belligerent military powers.

Yet none of this was new. Similar conditions had existed for years. During the last few decades nobody had pulled the nuclear trigger. Malthus' theory of food and population had yet to be conclusively demonstrated. And the ecosystem was still functioning despite the grave warnings of a few prophets of doom.

**Full-Scale Torrent.** Then it happened. It wasn't anything initially catastrophic or earthshaking. Still it was bad enough. A major blowout occurred at the wellhead of one of the arctic drilling rigs. It was another Santa Barbara, but this time much worse.

Wildlife populations, including whales, seals, polar bears, birds and ocean life, were decimated. But the worst was yet to come. Millions of gallons of black oil boiled out to contaminate the arctic ice pack. Thousands of square miles were saturated with sticky petroleum.

The consequences were devastating. The ice pack had already been weakened by the increasing amount of carbon dioxide, fluorocarbons and other industrial gases that had been injected into the atmosphere. The resulting greenhouse effect had kicked off a noticeable melting trend in the polar regions.

So far it had only progressed at moderate rates. But the oil spill turned what had been a moderate trickle into a full-scale torrent. The massive loss of ice in the Arctic produced a dramatic upsurge in the global incubation process. This in turn rapidly accelerated the disintegration of the Greenland and Antarctic ice caps. Glaciers were suddenly transformed into rivers. Massive hunks of pack ice began to shear off and cascade into the sea.

The coastlands of the earth took

***“The second angel poured his bowl into the sea,  
and it became like the blood of a dead man,  
and every living thing died that was in the sea”***



the full brunt of this sudden climatic shift. The increasing tides were no longer a nuisance, they were now lethal. Raging waters swept over east Texas, Bangladesh, the lowlands of Western Europe and Indochina. Millions were killed or left homeless. Valuable croplands were destroyed. Manhattan Island was buried under 50 feet of water. So were cities such as Hong Kong, Seattle and Sydney. Most of the state of Florida was awash. The Netherlands had ceased to exist.

*"... Upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world..."*  
(Luke 21:25, 26).

A chain reaction of catastrophe was set in motion. The increased weight of water in the oceans exerted additional pressure on the earth's mantle. New tectonic forces shook the earthquake-prone rift zones in the Pacific. High tides and high seas were reinforced by seismically induced tidal waves. Coastal cities that had survived the previous hydraulic pummeling quickly collapsed under the onslaught of these awesome forces.

*"And there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as had never been since men were on the earth, so great was that earthquake.... And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found"* (Rev. 16:18, 20).

Both San Francisco and Los Angeles were hit sledgehammer blows by this violent tidal and seismic activity. Skyscrapers toppled like tenpins. The major industrial cities of Japan suffered the same fate. Volcanoes spewed out tons of molten lava. Skies were blackened as voluminous clouds of volcanic ash billowed upward.

*"And behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood"* (Rev. 6:12).

Even worse was the effect the increased seismic activity had on offshore oil wells that dotted the

coastlands of Europe, North America, Asia and the polar regions. Santa Barbara-like spills erupted with greater frequency. Oil-laden supertankers broke apart, collided, or ran aground in the tempest. The seas received the tankers' untimely cargoes of death-dealing chemicals.

*"And a third of the sea became blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed"* (Rev. 8:9).

It was more than the already-weakened oceans could take. Much of the oxygen-giving phytoplankton had already died as a result of the progressive, insidious onslaught that had been under way for decades. The oil spills pushed this delicate marine biomechanism past the point of no return. Vast patches were decimated. The oceans were dying. Millions of fish

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**"You can very quickly  
get a planet that is  
unworkable."**

**— Barbara Ward**

floated lifelessly on the surface, belly up, deprived of life-giving oxygen.

*"The second angel poured his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a dead man, and every living thing died that was in the sea"* (Rev. 16:3).

The bitter water of the earth's overworked river systems likewise was finished. Too salty to support life, they polluted and poisoned men, plants and animals alike.

*"The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the fountains of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died of the water, because it was made bitter"* (Rev. 8:10-11).

Surviving nations, alarmed at

what was happening, prepared to grapple for the remaining supplies of resources, energy and food. Nuclear weapons were unsheathed for the final decisive struggle.

But at this point the earth's biosphere was in no shape to withstand even a limited nuclear war. And it didn't take long for the survivors to discover this fact. Great gaping holes were torn in the already depleted ozone layer by the thermonuclear detonations. Men and animals began to drop like flies from the intensified bombardment of ultraviolet radiation.

*"The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch men with fire; men were scorched by the fierce heat"* (Rev. 16:8).

Ecological failsafe had come and gone. The earth's ecosystem lay mortally wounded, its vital signs rapidly failing. The countdown to the extinction of all life was well under way. Now it was only a matter of time.

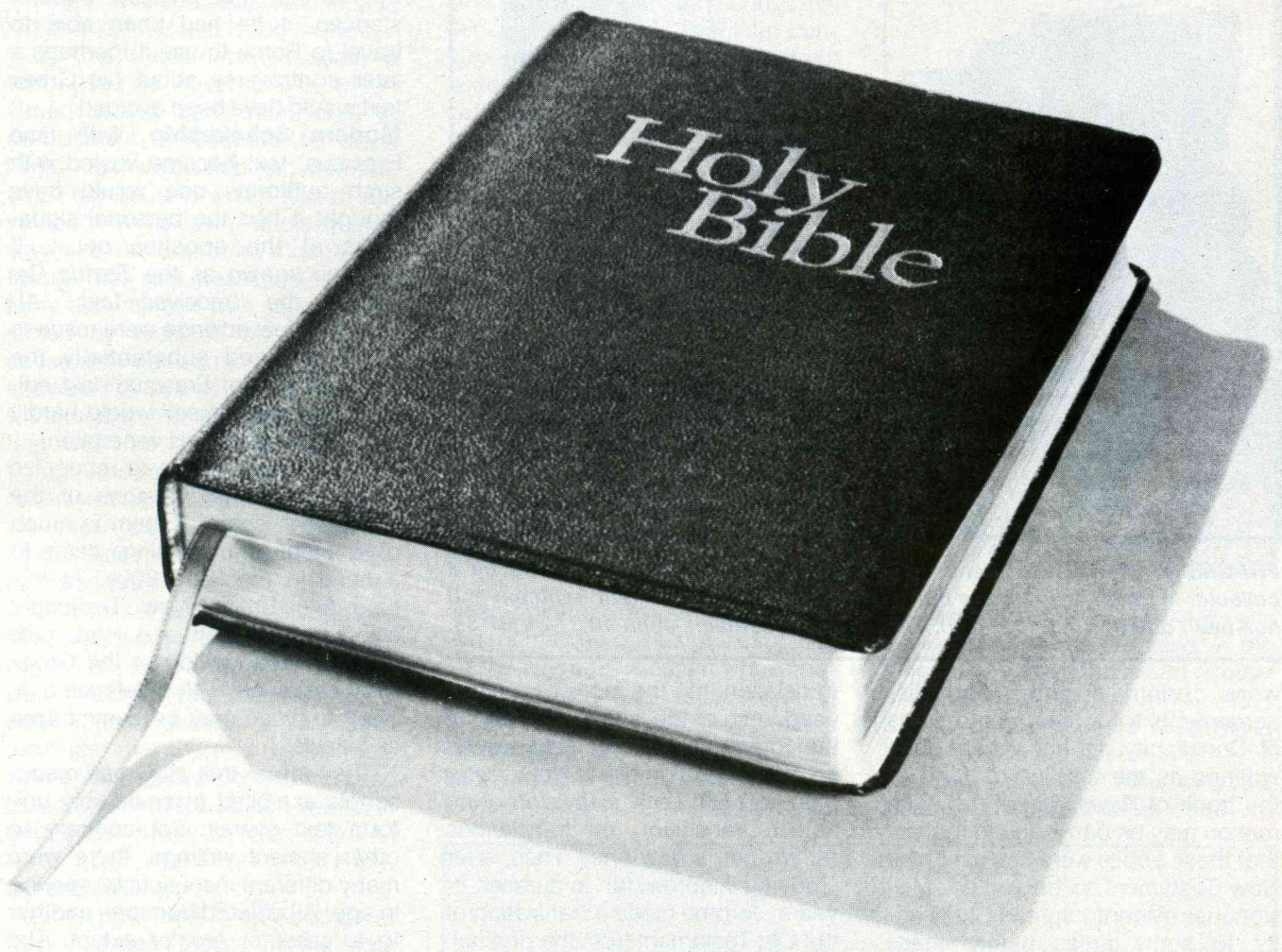
**Grave Warnings.** The foregoing is by no means meant to be a definitive prognostication of future global events. It merely serves to illustrate what is within the realm of possibility.

A number of the above factors are already matters of serious ecological concern. Numerous warnings were sounded in 1975 regarding the depletion of the ozone layer. Scientists have spoken out concerning the possibility of melting ice caps and rising ocean levels from a man-made greenhouse effect. Oil spills are known to be a definite hazard to polar pack ice. The poisoning of the oceans, if continued indefinitely, could be ultimately catastrophic — especially considering that some 90% of all marine organisms live in areas that are most easily polluted by man.

In view of the fact that there has been no significant downturn in many of man's polluting and consumptive activities, one can't help but wonder if the events described above might one day become stark reality. A time when, as Jesus put it: "Had not those days been cut short, not a soul would be saved alive" (Matt. 24:22, Moffatt). □

*(To be continued)*





# HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE

by Lester L. Grabbe

**A**s an ancient document, the Bible is unique. One does not have to be Christian or Jewish to realize this. In its external preservation over the centuries, the Bible is certainly unique — unequaled by any other continuously used document of antiquity.

No other work of antiquity can lay claim to the multitude of manuscript witnesses of the Old and New Testaments. Few can assemble major textual evidence which is as close in time to the original writers as much of both Testaments.

Most students of ancient history and literature would be enraptured and ecstatic to discover a small fraction of the ancient testimony for documents important to them as

biblical scholars already have. Yet important discoveries have added significantly to the textual stock of the Bible even in this century, some of it as recent as the last 25 years.

For example, a small fragment of papyrus in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England, is one of the most interesting pieces of writing available. It preserves parts of John 18:31-33, 37-38. The interest is the age of this fragment: scholars generally agree that it was written before A.D. 150. Since the Gospel of John is thought to have been written in the last decade of the first century, we have a part of it less than half a century removed from the actual autograph edition!

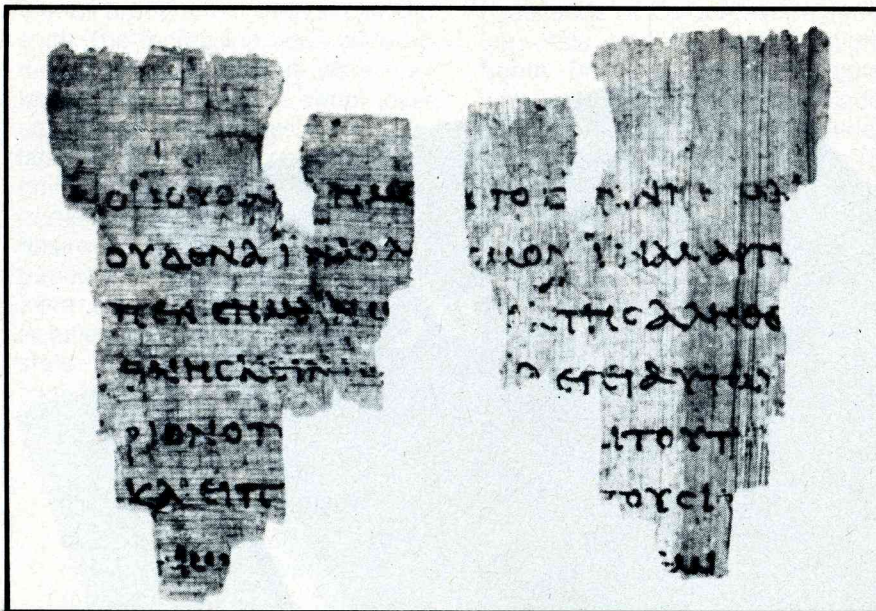
The degree to which New Testa-

ment scholars are more fortunate than their colleagues in classical Greek literature is made plain by the box on page 20 titled "Remains of Other Ancient Writings." Old Testament scholars are similarly fortunate, though in a slightly different way.

In surveying the history of the biblical text, its scholarship and witnesses, let's first take a look at the Greek Testament of the Christian Church.

**New Testament Through the Centuries.** The entirety of the New Testament was essentially complete by about A.D. 100. The canon of the New Testament has been an accepted dogma in Christianity for most of its history. Granted, there





**FRAGMENT** of a Greek manuscript of the New Testament. Acquired by a collector in Egypt in 1920, it is the oldest-known New Testament fragment and has been dated to A.D. 125-150. The fragment contains John 18:31-33, 37-38.

were certain disputes and disagreements for a time. Some areas of Christianity did not accept such writings as the epistles of John or the book of Revelation at first. The reason may be partly due to the fact that these books were the last of the New Testament to be written. Missionaries evidently spread Christianity to some areas before these books were produced.

However, questions about the canon were mainly confined to the first few centuries A.D. and concerned only a few books. Such heresies as that of Marcion, who accepted only a version of Luke and some of the Pauline letters, were quickly rejected. For one and a half millennia the state of the New Testament canon has been secure.

For a couple of centuries or so after its completion, the New Testament was fairly widely read in Greek since Greek was the common language of the early Roman Empire. However, with time the knowledge of Greek began to decline in the Western Empire (western Europe, Italy and North Africa) and be replaced by Latin. With the fall of Rome and the commencement of the "Dark Ages," Greek became restricted mainly to Greece and the surrounding area.

The result was the need for a

translation into the more commonly used Latin of the time. At the end of the fourth century, Jerome issued an official version of the New Testament in Latin (only a revision of an earlier translation or translations rather than a new one). Then, after studying Hebrew for a number of years, Jerome made a translation of the Old Testament from the original. His Latin version, known as the *Vulgate*, became the standard version of the Bible for almost a thousand years. Most people could not read, but those who could had learned Latin. So the Vulgate became the common version and made the Scriptures available to any educated person.

However, in the 15th century, during the Renaissance, Greek studies revived. Erasmus, a great scholar of the time, produced an edition of the Greek text and had it printed. Once again the original version of the New Testament was available. Many vernacular editions of the Bible were translated from Erasmus' text, including the popular King James Version in English.

Yet Erasmus had made his edition from some very late Greek manuscripts. This was not by choice. He knew of an ancient manuscript of great reputation in the Vatican. Erasmus wanted to use

it for his edition, but was prevented by his age and physical circumstances. If he had been able to travel to Rome to use it, perhaps a later controversy about his Greek text would have been avoided.

**Modern Scholarship.** With time Erasmus' text became vested with such authority, one would have thought it had the personal signatures of the apostles on it. It became known as the *Textus Receptus*, the "received text." Although a few editings were made in it, it remained substantially the same as that of Erasmus' last edition. Erasmus himself would hardly have approved of this veneration.

But scholars began to recognize there were other versions of the Greek text, some of them in much older manuscripts. Things came to a head in the late 1800s. At this time two British New Testament scholars, Westcott and Hort, produced a new edition of the Greek New Testament with a defense of it. Their findings may be summarized as follows:

They found that all Greek manuscripts exhibited a remarkably uniform text overall. Yet contrary to other ancient writings, there were many different manuscripts, varying in age. All differed from one another to a lesser or greater extent. The question was which readings were more likely to represent that which the original authors had written. They found that manuscripts fell generally into three major text-types. These were:

1) The Byzantine text, represented by the bulk of all manuscripts, of which the *Textus Receptus* was the major printed edition. However, the text as a whole was found only in later manuscripts and most of its unique readings could not be traced back before about the fifth century at the earliest. Besides, they were often composite readings or had other secondary characteristics.

2) The Alexandrian text, represented by the great Vaticanus manuscript which Erasmus had wanted to use. It was attested in the earliest manuscripts then known. Furthermore, it best conformed to the internal canons of textual criticism which scholars had worked



out in dealing with other ancient writings. It was basically this text which Westcott and Hort followed.

3) The Western text, actually a term used to cover a text which varied greatly from manuscript to manuscript. It seemed to be a "wild" text which had had little editorial control and which sort of developed in its own undisciplined way like an unpruned hedge. Although this text was attested for a fairly early time, it was generally rejected by Westcott and Hort because internal canons of criticism showed it to be a secondary text.

Naturally, the Westcott and Hort text was not accepted without a fight. Although they had accepted textual scholarship and logic mainly on their side, the entrenched Textus Receptus was not to be easily dislodged.

Of course, scholars recognized the uncertain nature of many readings. For this reason an attempt was made to produce a "critical edition," an edition which gave readings from different manuscripts where they varied from the printed text. A convenient edition was produced by Nestle in Germany not long after Westcott and Hort. Others followed.

Since that time a good deal of work has been done, yet the state of the field has not really changed much since Westcott and Hort. A number of critical editions have been produced to try to keep up with the latest research. Yet the two most widely used editions of the Greek New Testament, the Nestle and the United Bible Societies texts, do not differ essentially from the Westcott-Hort text. The last century has seen a number of new discoveries, including the papyrus fragment of John mentioned at the beginning of the article.

Most of these finds have been basically of the Alexandrian or the Western text-types. Thus, the picture painted by Westcott and Hort from fourth- and fifth-century manuscripts has not been appreciably affected by the work done and the material discovered since their time. A few scholars did advance the idea that the Western text might be the most original, but this idea is almost totally rejected now.

Because of the lack of any major new trends, one textual scholar recently wrote of the "twentieth century interlude in New Testament textual criticism" (*Journal of Biblical Literature* 93, 1975, p. 386ff).

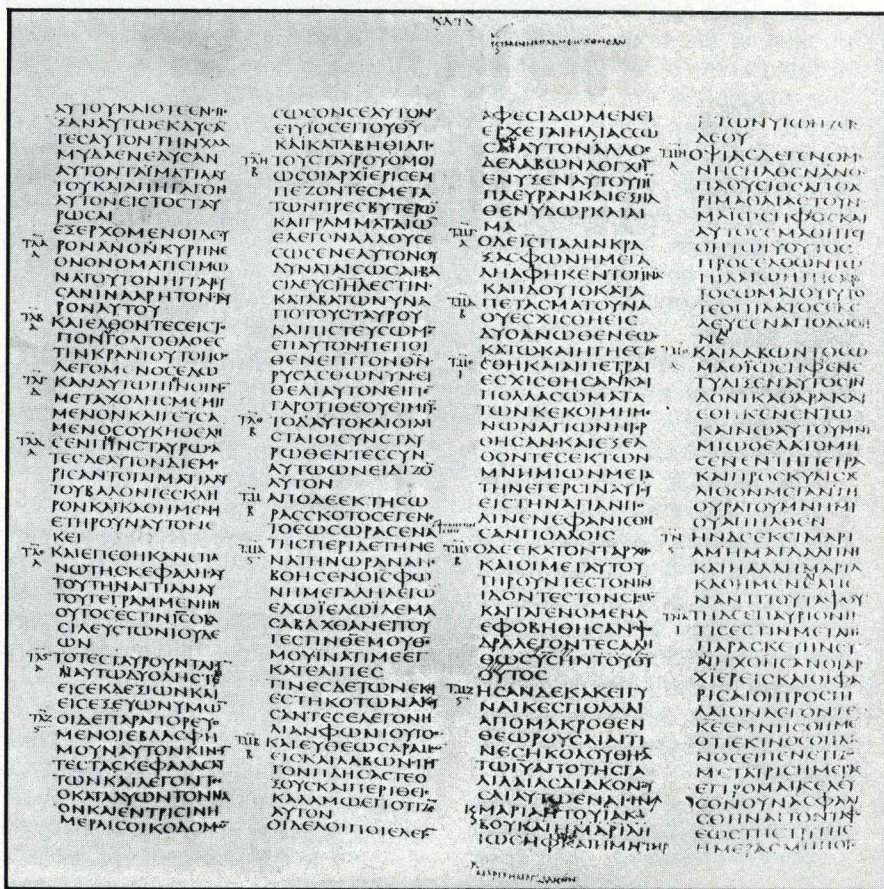
Future scholarship may cause some alteration in our views about the New Testament text. Yet at the moment we can be confident that we have the New Testament in essentially the form it had reached by A.D. 100 — this despite some of the textual variants which we will now discuss.

**Significant Textual Differences.** A Christian may wonder what difference it makes between using one Greek text as opposed to another, or a translation based on one as opposed to another. The answer is, *very little*.

For a scholar working on a technical point of research, a textual variant may be quite significant. But for the average Christian whose primary concern is the basic meaning of the text, the different variants produce little significant change in sense when a given passage is read in its immediate context and in the



**ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM.** His Greek text became the basis of the King James New Testament. Codex Sinaiticus (below), fourth-century Greek manuscript of the Bible, found by Constantine Tischendorf in a monastery near Mt. Sinai in 1859. Matthew 27:30-64 is shown here.





# REMAINS OF OTHER ANCIENT WRITINGS

There are approximately 5,000 manuscripts of part or all of the New Testament. These include substantial parts of the New Testament from about A.D. 200, and the whole New Testament attested within 200 years of its writing. Other Greek writings of the classical world hardly compare.

The most influential writings of pagan antiquity were the long Homeric epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The *Iliad* is generally thought to have been written sometime shortly before or after 700 B.C. and the *Odyssey* about half a century later. Yet the earliest papyrus fragments date from the third century B.C., almost half a millennium after the poems were written. The earliest manuscript containing the whole of the *Iliad* is dated to the tenth century A.D. The situation is about the same for the *Odyssey*.

Herodotus, the "father of history," wrote in the fifth century B.C., but the two best manuscripts are both from the Middle Ages (tenth and eleventh centuries). Thucydides, who wrote about 400 B.C., was the first historian in the modern sense. Yet the earliest of the major manuscripts of him is from the eleventh century A.D.

The famous writer of New Comedy, Menander (died about 290 B.C.), was known only from quotations until a partial manuscript of one play was found in 1905. Another almost complete play was published in 1959. Yet precious as they are, these two tattered papyri date from only the fifth and third centuries A.D. respectively.

The master of Greek Old Comedy, Aristophanes (died about

388 B.C.), is the only writer of Old Comedy to survive. Of his forty-plus plays, only eleven have come down to us. Yet the earliest manuscript dates from about A.D. 1000. But one of the surviving plays occurs in no other manuscript until the fifteenth century, which itself was a copy of the one just mentioned. If that sole manuscript of A.D. 1000 had perished, one more of Aristophanes' plays would have been lost forever.

The two most influential philosophies of the New Testament times were Stoicism and Epicureanism. Both of these philosophies were founded about the year 300 B.C. But the earliest major Epicurean writer to come down to us (Lucretius) did not write until two centuries after Epicurus. Apart from a few Epicurean maxims which may or may not have originated with Epicurus, the earliest surviving source of any of Epicurus' own writings are three letters quoted by a writer of the third century A.D.

No complete writing of Zeno (the founder of Stoicism) has come down to us, only some fragments quoted in other writers.

These are only a few examples of the poor preservation of writings from antiquity. No wonder classicists can feel quite envious of New Testament scholars with their multitudes of early manuscripts!

Sources: Albin Lesky, *A History of Greek Literature*; Roger A. Pack, *The Greek and Latin Literary Texts from Graeco-Roman Egypt*; K. J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*; A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*; the Loeb Classical Library.

light of the overall teaching of the New Testament.

The King James Version, familiar to most in the English-speaking world, was based on Erasmus' printed text. So were a number of early translations into the vernacular. Most modern translations, on the other hand, make use of the Nestle or some other version of the Westcott-Hort text. The differences between them are usually ones of interpretation or English idiom rather than of Greek textual reading.

The only differences involving major sections are two: the ending of Mark and the section on the woman taken in adultery (John 7:53-8:11). In neither case would a person's basic understanding of Christianity be affected, whether these were accepted or rejected as Scripture. Yet both of these passages have been traditionally accepted for a considerable period of time and are both quite early, even though a first-century origin cannot be proved. As Bruce Metzger writes about the passage in John: "The account has all the earmarks of historical veracity" (*Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 22). A similar judgment applies to the traditional ending of Mark.

Most modern translations list significant variant readings in footnotes just as editions of the Greek text list major variants in a critical apparatus. One might ask whether these variants have much theological significance. That is, did someone deliberately change the text because of some theological prejudice? Again the answer is no. The vast majority of variants are the type one would find in any early piece of literature. They arose through scribal practice and error or through slightly variant forms of a story which naturally arose before the age of printing. (Compare the slight differences in wording between the way you learned the Mother Goose rhymes and the way someone else may have learned them.)

For example, the manuscripts at a particular passage may disagree over whether it should be read "Jesus," "Christ," or "God." Or



they may disagree over the tense of a verb. Sometimes a scribe will assimilate two similar passages together. That is, he will add information to a passage which did not originally appear there but did appear in a parallel passage. The sense of one passage is thus changed, but the overall story is in no way affected.

As an example of probable assimilation, take Matthew 1:25. The reading "a son" is almost universally agreed to be what the author originally wrote. However, some manuscripts read, "her firstborn son." The same reading is found in Luke 2:7 which scholars accept as the original reading there. Thus, the fact that Jesus was Mary's firstborn son is not in question. The point in question is whether this reading is original in Matthew. Because of internal and external evidence, scholars conclude that a scribe somewhere along the line by design or chance added information from Luke 2:7 to Matthew 1:25. But this was not the original reading of Matthew 1.

As one studies variant readings such as the ones just discussed, it becomes clear how insignificant most of them are. Almost none could be put down to deliberate change because of theological bias.

About the only one which might have clear theological overtones is the so-called Johannine Comma, the trinitarian statement found in some translations of I John 5:7-8. This is a very late reading by any count (the only Greek evidence is from two very late manuscripts). Scholars generally agree that the passage should read along the following lines: "(7) For three are the witnesses, (8) the spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one." Few, if any, other variants arose through deliberate change for theological reasons.

**Old Testament Text.** Only a brief summary can be given here because of lack of space. Interested readers are asked to consult the article "The Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for the Old Testament" (September 1975 GN, pp. 26-28).

The New Testament writers rec-

ognized the responsibility of the Jewish religious community in preserving the Old Testament. Paul wrote that the Jews "were entrusted with the words [*ta logia*] of God" (Rom. 3:2). Jesus Himself stated that the scribes (those educated in the law and its mechanical preservation) and Pharisees occupied "Moses' seat" or place of religious authority (Matt. 23:1-3).

The Jewish community was responsible for preserving the Old Testament in Hebrew. They were also basically responsible for the great Greek translation of the third century B.C., the *Septuagint*. After the Septuagint fell out of favor because of its use by the Christian Church, several other Greek translations of the Old Testament were made (Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus).

Although absolute proof is not available, the basic question of the canon seems to have been settled before the time of Jesus. Other works were known and circulated, but they were not given the status of Scripture among the majority of religious Jews. Some of these "apocryphal" and "pseudepigraphical" books were also known to New Testament writers. On one occasion at least, one seems to be quoted in the New Testament (Jude 14-15). Yet this does not show they were regarded as canonical any more than did Paul's quotation of Greek poets (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12).

It is true that the Catholic Church accepted seven books of the Apocrypha into their Old Testament. However, this was not done officially until the pressures of the Reformation. The Protestants generally rejected these books because they were not found in the Jewish Scriptures. Yet they were not the first to do so. Already in the fourth century the great Catholic doctor Jerome had similarly rejected the Apocrypha as canonical Scripture.

Recent research on the Dead Sea Scrolls and other textual evidence has shown that the Old Testament has been preserved in three major text-types. One of these is represented by our present Hebrew text, called the *Masoretic text*. Another is represented by the Septuagint. A

third is reflected in the Pentateuch used by the modern-day Samaritans in Israel.

As with the New Testament, though, the differences are more apparent than real. The differences are important to a textual scholar doing technical study on antiquity. But for the average Christian who reads his Bible primarily for its spiritual content, any version will do. Any discrepancies will resolve themselves as he learns to use the Bible as a whole and to meditate on the embodied principles rather than just concentrating on single, isolated verses. Of course, a Christian, while giving all due respect to the value of the Old Testament, will still read it in the light of the New.

### **The Christian and the Bible.**

Scholarship has been able to elucidate the road by which the Bible came down to us through the centuries. Much of the road is still dark; other parts are fairly well lighted. Even as we hope more light will eventually be shed over the obscure parts, we must be grateful for the tireless effort of scholarship which has already done so much.

Yet the state of things can only remind us that no one can "prove" the correct text or canon. We have too little information even to begin such a process. There is still an element of faith involved in using the Bible. One has to accept on faith that God has preserved His written Word for mankind — that He has made the way to salvation clear to us. The canon and text — despite some variations and unanswered questions — that has come down to us from the Jewish people and the ancient Church constitute the necessary guide which man could not otherwise discover for himself.

It is not a matter of "blind" faith since there are many evidences for the truth given therein. But the evidence lies primarily in the application of that Word. The Bible itself sometimes speaks of "proving" when a pragmatic test through actual application is in mind (Mal. 3:10).

We have the Bible. The responsibility for using its resources is yours. In the words of that famous evangelist, Madison Avenue: "Try it. You'll like it." □



**Q** **UESTION:** "In answering C.B. of Colony, Kansas (May 1976 GN), you explained the meaning behind Exodus 23:19. However, you never did explain if there were any other verses that related to whether or not it is wrong to eat meat and milk together. What are the biblical dietary laws pertaining to eating dairy and meat products?"

Gerald G.,  
Honolulu, Hawaii

**A** **NSWER:** Genesis 18:8 reads: "Then he took curds, and milk, and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate." This verse is part of the account of Abraham entertaining two angels and the One who later became Jesus Christ. (For more on the identity of the God of the Old Testament, write for the free reprint article "Who — What — Was Jesus Before His Human Birth?") That Abraham and Christ ate calf meat, milk and cheese together at the same meal indicates there was no prohibition against such a combination — and such a dietary law is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible.

**Q:** "I wish to call to your attention a mistake in the booklet 'The Pale Horse: Disease Epidemics.' On page 50, it says: 'For instance, the seventh commandment, Thou shalt not commit adultery....' This commandment is the sixth."

Mrs. R. B.,  
Chicopee, Massachusetts

**A:** This is indeed the sixth commandment according to the Roman Catholic and Lutheran enumeration. But according to the *original* enumeration in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, it is the seventh. The Catholic and Lutheran enumeration results from dropping the second commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image... Thou shalt not

bow down thyself to them, nor serve them" (Ex. 20:4-6). By omitting the second commandment from the ten, the succeeding commandments become renumbered so that the third becomes the second and the fourth becomes the third, etc. The ninth commandment is then divided into two separate commandments — coveting your neighbor's wife and coveting your neighbor's goods — to fill in the gap (see Louis LaRavoire Morrow, *My Catholic Faith*, p. 194).

The Bible, however, gives no precedent for dividing the one commandment into two. Jesus referred to just one commandment against coveting in Luke 12:15, and the apostle Paul wrote: "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known *lust*, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom. 7:7).

It is not logical to divide the first two points of the tenth commandment (coveting one's neighbor's house and wife) into two separate commandments while ignoring the four other items specifically mentioned (manservant, maidservant, ass and ox). And finally, the overall principle of not coveting *anything of one's neighbor's* would seem to adequately cover all necessary ground (Ex. 20:17).

It is apparent that this renumbering is an attempt to avoid the obvious implications of the second commandment. For more on this subject, write for the free booklet *The Ten Commandments*.

**Q:** "You have a blooper in one of your answers ('Questions and Answers,' May 1976 GN). The third answer — that those raised up into the clouds are the exceptions to the rule that all must die — may cause some to wonder about Bible rules. To become spirit, we must first expire physically. I Corinthians 15:36 says: 'Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.' There are no exceptions to any law or principle of God."

C. B.,  
Kansas City, Missouri

**A:** The original question asked if those who were changed into immortal spirit beings instantaneously at Christ's second coming were an exception to the statement in Hebrews 9:27 ("It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment").

Let's take time to review the main scriptures relating to this question. First of all, I Thessalonians 4:13-17 reads: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep [dead], that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope [the Christian hope is the resurrection]. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For... we which are *alive and remain* unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [come before] them which are *asleep*." Notice the two states of being — life and death — are clearly contrasted in the context of this scripture.

Continuing in verses 16 and 17: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven... 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." There is no statement in this entire passage about those who live and remain until Christ's second coming *dying* — even for a split second. In fact, those who are alive at the time of Christ's second coming are clearly contrasted with the "dead in Christ" in two separate verses.

The companion scripture to I Thessalonians 4 is found in I Corinthians 15:50-52: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a *mystery*; We shall *not all sleep* [die], 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 [who are alive and remain — compare with I Thessalonians 4] shall be



# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

changed." This scripture also contrasts life and death. It specifically states that *we shall not all die!* No death is mentioned for those saints alive at the time of Christ's second coming, only a "change."

How, then, do we understand Hebrews 9:27 in this light? This verse must be read *in its context* — one of the most important rules of Bible study. (For more information on this, write for the free booklet *How To Study the Bible*.) Beginning with verse 25, we read: "Nor yet that he [Christ] should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men *once to die*, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Verse 27 is incidental to another subject in the context of these verses, the subject being Christ's sacrifice having to occur *only once* in history to effect the desired result for mankind. Human beings having to die once is used in support of Paul's point. "It is appointed unto men once to die" is analogous to that major point. Note that it does not say that it is appointed unto *all* men to die. The adjective "all" is not included in the text.

Of course, Hebrews 9:27 is a biblical truism. Up to this point, all men *have* had to die (excepting those now alive), including Jesus Christ. But the second coming of Christ affords an exception *for all Christians alive at that time*.

Incidentally, the expression "all" in the Bible does *not* always mean "all" in the sense of every single individual. Romans 11:26, for example, says "All Israel shall be saved." From other scriptures (i.e., Matt. 25:41-46; Luke 13:28; etc.), we can understand that Paul's obvi-

ous intent in this verse is that the great majority of Israel — not every individual Israelite — will be saved.

Notice one other point, concerning 1 Corinthians 15:22: "For as in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive." Paul is explaining here, and in Hebrews 9:27, that all men are mortal — subject to death. It is a generalized statement in both cases — not a "no exceptions," 100-percent rule. Not every single human being will be made "alive in Christ," because, as previously explained, some will be cast into the lake of fire. Again, "all" simply means the vast majority.

This question is in one sense largely a matter of semantics. One could speculate that a sort of split-second "death" of the physical body occurs to those yet alive at Christ's coming. But that is not death in the conventional sense. There is no body, no funeral, no burial, no mourning, no cessation of life. Death, by definition, is the ending of life. In no case does this definition fit in with those who are changed from flesh to spirit at the time of Christ's second coming.

**Q: "You have stated: 'The true church is [today] small, and its people are scattered. But remember, no organization is the body of Christ. Rather, the church is an organism often composed of scattered individuals (see 1 Cor. 12).' The Bible completely disagrees with you! The Church of God is most definitely the body of Christ!"**

**Craig B.,**

**Prairie Village, Kansas**

**A:** We must not confuse the Church of God, the body of Christ, with the configuration into which members of that body organize in order to achieve the goal of preaching the gospel in an orderly fashion. It is quite correct to say that the Church is the body of Christ. This body is a spiritual organism composed of those individuals who have been given the Holy Spirit by and from God. But these individuals may at different times in history or-

ganize into groups of people (the Greek word *ekklesia*, translated "church" in the New Testament, means "a group of people") dedicated to a common set of purposes. Organization, *in this sense*, is what the church *has*, not what it *is*. The Church of God today has an organized ministry, deacons, deaconesses and various other leaders or "governments" (see 1 Cor. 12:28).

In 1 Corinthians 12 the apostle Paul likens the Church to a human body which has many members or parts. But this is only an analogy. The structure of the Church, in the physical sense, is merely a tool for doing a job. God has used various structures in different ages. Today the Church may have a corporate structure for the purpose of dealing with the world on its own business terms. But that corporation is not Christ's body — it is something that the body of believers uses to get the job done. (Further information on the Church may be obtained by writing for our free booklet *Where Is God's True Church Today?*)

**Q: "In your booklet 'The Seven Laws of Success,' you wrote that there are fifty-five places in the Bible where 'diligence' is mentioned in one form or another. Could you please send me a list of references showing where I should look to find this word?"**

**Arturo C.,**

**Los Angeles, California**

**A:** You can find these passages yourself in a Bible help called a *concordance*. There should be several available at your local library: the most popular are *Cruden's Complete Concordance*, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, and *Young's Analytical Concordance*. In these works you can look up a word such as "diligence" and find listed after it all the places it occurs in Scripture. Some concordances also give the Greek or Hebrew word from which the English word is derived. For more information on how to use a concordance, write for the free booklet *How To Study the Bible*. □



# WHAT KIND OF CHRISTIAN ARE YOU?

by Brian Knowles

***One of the greatest responsibilities a Christian has in this life is to set a right example. Unfortunately, many fall short! This provocative article challenges you to become a true light to the world!***

**G**od is often judged by the company He keeps — or should I say, by those who claim to keep company with Him! Too many have been “turned off” religion because of the unfortunate example set by some who have claimed the label “Christian.”

Bertrand Russell, the noted mathematician and philosopher, was such an individual. Of the “Christian religion,” he generalized: “It seems to me that the people who have held to it have been for the most part extremely wicked. You find this curious fact, that the more intense has been the religion of any period and the more profound has been the dogmatic belief, the greater has been the cruelty and the worse has been the state of affairs. In the so-called ages of faith, when men really did believe the Christian religion in all its completeness, there was the Inquisition, with its tortures; there were millions of

unfortunate women burned as witches; and there was every kind of cruelty practiced upon all sorts of people in the name of religion.

“You find as you look around the world that every single bit of progress in humane feeling, every improvement in the criminal law, every step toward the diminution of war, every step toward better treatment of colored races, or every mitigation of slavery, every moral progress that there has been in the world, has been consistently opposed by the organized churches of the world. I say quite deliberately that the Christian religion, as organized in its churches, has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world” (*Why I Am Not a Christian*, pp. 20-21).

What a painful, yet all too accurate, indictment of “organized Christianity”! Granted, Sir Bertrand generalized, but he wasn’t far off the mark. Much cruelty has been perpetrated in the name of Christ. Who can deny that the Inquisition was a “religious” affair? Who can lightly dismiss the burning of both books and people in the superstitious Dark and Middle Ages? Intolerance, racial bigotry, persecution and even hideous personal torture have often been the earmarks of allegedly “Christian” movements. And many who have held high office in the churches of the world have been, in retrospect, evil men.

One ex-minister, Paul Blanchard, wrote: “Barrels of sermons were preached on the perfection of the character and teachings of Jesus by men who never would dream of following in his way for a single day” (*Some of My Best Friends Are Christians*, p. 15).

**The Greatest Enemy.** Perhaps simple hypocrisy is the greatest enemy of Christianity! All too many who claim to be Christians do not practice even the simplest moral teachings of Christ. The way of life practiced by many who associate themselves with professing Christian organizations belies the

authenticity of their conversion!

Jesus said to His followers: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:14-16).

The works of Christians — and Christian organizations — should cause people to glorify God — not to condemn Christianity! Yet so often the opposite has been the case. The world of organized religion has often been one of conflict, power politics, Big Money, doctrinal dogmatism and intolerance. Millions have been tortured, bludgeoned and murdered in the name of religion. Wherever the churches of this world’s Christianity have gone, they have left a trail of blood and tears. Those who have murdered in the name of Christ have mistakenly believed that they were “doing God service” (John 16:2).

**What About You?** But all of the above is “big stuff.” What about the example of the individual, “unofficial,” lay Christian? What about the average church member? What about *your* example?

Does your way of life cause people to glorify God? Do people see your example as a reflection of Christ’s philosophy and will? *Can others see God in your life?*

Churches are only as good as the individual members of which they are composed. The “church” (Greek, *ekklesia*) in any given city is merely a group or community of believers who have been called out of this world’s sins to be a “light” to that community. Christians must exist as a part of society in general, yet they must separate themselves from society’s standards. Jesus prayed of and for the church: “I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one [Satan, the god of this world — II Cor. 4:4]. . . . As thou didst send me into



the world, so *I have sent them into the world*" (John 17:15, 18).

Christians must coexist with society! They are very much *in* the world in the physical sense. But we have "dual citizenship": we also represent the family of God and His soon-coming Kingdom (Phil. 3:20). We are called "ambassadors for Christ" (II Cor. 5:20). We are "members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). As such, Christians must be conscious at all times of the responsibility to rightly represent God and His way of life. In a world of spiritual darkness, true Christians are the *only* real "light"!

The apostle Peter explained, quite dramatically, the Christian responsibility in society: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Peter 2:9).

A "chosen race"! A "royal priesthood"! *God's own people!*

Can you grasp the import of those words? Can you discern the burden of responsibility that Peter's statement places on each individual Christian? On you personally?

Christianity is not a game for religious hobbyists! It is serious business. Real Christianity is not a "weekend religion."

**A Way of Life.** Genuine Christianity is a way of life. It is a pattern of conduct. It is an attitude toward life, and it involves *actions*.

Priscilla and Aquila, leading lay members in the early Church, explained "*the way of God more accurately*" to the great speaker Apollos (Acts 18:26).

Speaking of his persecution of the Church prior to conversion, Paul said: "I persecuted *this Way* to the death . . ." (Acts 22:4).

In His teachings, Jesus expounded that way of life in great detail. He spoke of "good works" as being the key element in being a light to the world (Matt. 5:14-16). In the so-called "Sermon on the Mount," Jesus taught Christian atti-

**"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).**

**"Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation" (I Pet. 2:12).**

**"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).**

**"... Lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10).**

tudes. Once adopted, many of these attitudes will be reflected in good works — works of mercy, peace and humility, for example (Matt. 5:3, 5, 7, 9).

The good works of a Christian can include simple, mundane works of physical service such as feeding the hungry, clothing those who lack clothing, giving drink to the thirsty (Matt. 25:35, 36). Everyone has physical needs. The human race is interdependent — our very existence depends upon mutual cooperation. We were all created in the very image of God for a great purpose which He is working out here below. We are all our "brother's keepers." We share a common environment — this good, green Earth. When we do good to others we automatically benefit ourselves. "So then, as we have opportunity, *let us do good to all men*, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

Both collectively and individually, the Church of God should take advantage of those opportunities which arise to be of physical service to those outside of the Church, and to those who are members.

Such service includes visiting the sick, helping widows who are in some way afflicted, and taking care of the needs of those who are orphaned through some unfortunate circumstance (Matt. 25:36; James 1:27). Each day we receive letters from inmates of prisons who wish to correspond or be visited by ministers. Some are even converted inside the walls of such institutions! Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God do visit with and counsel such individuals *when* they request it. When one is in such a situation, almost nothing is more important than knowing that someone "on the outside" *cares!*

One of the greatest services that can be performed for those who are suffering in some manner is *prayer*. It may sound trite to say so, but we should not underestimate the power of *faithful, believing prayer!* As James, the brother of Christ, said:



# THE BIBLE DEFINES "GOOD WORKS"

## FEEDING THE HUNGRY

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink . . ." (Matt. 25:35).

"Happy is he . . . who gives food to the hungry" (Ps. 146:5-7).

"He who has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor" (Prov. 22:9).

"For the fool speaks folly, and his mind plots iniquity: to practice ungodliness, to utter error concerning the Lord, to leave the craving of the hungry unsatisfied, and to deprive the thirsty of drink" (Isa. 32:6).

"If a man is righteous and does what is lawful and right — if he does not . . . oppress any one, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment . . . he is righteous, he shall surely live, says the Lord God" (Ezek. 18:5-9).

"And the multitudes asked him, 'What then shall we do?' And he answered them, 'He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise'" (Luke 3:10-11).

## HOSPITALITY

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me . . ." (Matt. 25:35).

"Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13:1-2).

"And if your brother becomes poor, and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall maintain him; as a stranger and a sojourner he shall live with you" (Lev. 25:35).

"Beloved, it is a loyal thing you do when you render any service to the brethren, especially to strangers, who have testified to your love before the church" (III John 5-6).

"Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality" (Rom. 12:13).

"He said also to the man who had invited him, 'When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just'" (Luke 14:12-14).

"Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another" (I Pet. 4:9).

## VISITING THE AFFLICTED

"I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me" (Matt. 25:36).

"For the Lord hears the needy, and does not despise his own that are in bonds" (Ps. 69:33).

"Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them . . ." (Heb. 13:3).

"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their af-

fliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (James 1:27).

## SHARING, GIVING, CHARITABLE WORKS

"Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God" (Heb. 13:16).

"One man gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. A liberal man will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered" (Prov. 11:24-25).

"If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren, in any of your towns within your land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be" (Deut. 15:7-8).

"Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back" (Luke 6:38).

"But if any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth" (I John 3:17-18).

"The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide



you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. As it is written, 'He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures for ever' (II Cor. 9:6-9).

"Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness" (Rom. 12:6-8).

## DISTRIBUTING CLOTHING

"I was naked and you clothed me" (Matt. 25:36).

"Is not this the fast that I choose . . . when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?" (Isa. 58:6-7.)

"But if this man begets a son who sees all the sins which his father has done, and fears, and does not do likewise . . . but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment" (Ezek. 18:14-16).

## PREACHING THE GOSPEL

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18).

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" (Isa. 52:7.)

"The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects" (James 5:16).

Those who are afflicted can take heart from the fact that someone else is taking the time to petition God on their behalf. *Faith is contagious!*

**The "Give Way."** True Christianity is based upon the *give* principle — as opposed to the *get* principle. A truly converted person is not primarily self-seeking. He is not ambitious for himself so much as for others. He seeks others' welfare *before* his own.

For many that's a bitter pill to swallow. Most of us are, by nature, self-centered. We tend to think that the whole world rotates around our needs, our interests and our sensual desires. We tend to fraternize mainly with those who make us feel most comfortable — our "cronies," "buddies" and personal friends.

But Jesus said: "But when you give a feast, invite *the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind*, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:13-14).

Of course, we can always "spiritualize" that away and claim that Jesus didn't mean that to be taken literally.

What *did* He mean then?

Perhaps Jesus didn't mean *anything* He said?

Listen! To practice real Christianity is to go against *nature*! It's hard! It's tough! It involves *overcoming*.

True Christianity is not a way of elitism. It's not always comfortable. It is often awkward and difficult. It is sometimes embarrassing. But Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Founder of Christianity, said: "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to *destruction*, and those who enter by it are many. For *the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few*" (Matt. 7:13-14).

Most people take the path of least resistance — the easy way. We

don't like to put ourselves on the spot and perform that which is difficult or embarrassing. We don't like to get our hands dirty with someone else's blood, or vomit, or whatever.

Right?

But if true Christians would stop "posturing" and start *performing* acts and deeds of love and service once in a while, people would have a better impression of Christianity!

Christians need to stop trafficking in "word pollution" and start *doing* things. The Christian faith is demonstrated more by *works* than by words and claims. James wrote: "So faith by itself, if it has no works, *is dead*. But some one will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith apart from your works, and I *by my works* will show you my faith" (James 2:17-18).

Study the entire book of James and you will find out what kind of works he was referring to. Be sure to read the above-quoted passages *in context*.

James wrote of being "doers of the word" (1:22) and looking into the "perfect law of liberty" (1:25). He spoke of bridling the tongue (1:26), visiting orphans and widows (1:27), being impartial and avoiding favoritism (2:1-4), not dishonoring the poor (2:6). Of the "royal law," he said: "You shall love your neighbor *as yourself*" (2:8).

James spoke of caring for the physical needs of a brother or sister who is in need: "If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' *without giving them the things needed for the body*, what does it profit?" (James 2:15-16.) And it is in *this context* that James says: "So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."

Kind thoughts and pleasant words are not enough! A starving man can't eat platitudes!

**Right Motivation.** The good works of a Christian should not be done for the purpose of drawing attention to one's self. They should not be done as a means of advancing



one's self in some local congregational "pecking order" or structure. James also said this: "Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good life let him show his works *in the meekness of wisdom*. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. . . . For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice" (James 3:13, 14, 16).

"Good works" that are based upon personal ambition and a desire to enhance one's own reputation within a community are nothing more than a hollow, insincere sham!

Jesus Himself warned: "Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 6:1).

God seeks those who are willing to serve in obscurity. Those who exalt themselves will be abased. Those who seek the praise of men may well receive it — and that's *all* they will receive!

**Adopting Godly Attitudes.** Being a light to the world involves adopting godly attitudes and forsaking worldly ones. John showed clearly that Christians should not adopt this world's standards when it comes to spiritual and moral values: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever" (1 John 2:15-17).

A bit "hard line" for some?  
Maybe.

But those verses are part of the Word of God — and they reflect the *will* of God. (John is not talking about the kind of love *for the world* expressed by God the Father when He gave His only begotten Son —

John 3:16. He is talking about the danger of loving the world's ways and adopting the world's false values and standards.)

Christians cannot practice "selective obedience." We cannot accept one teaching or command in the New Testament and summarily reject others. It's all part of "The Book." It's all the Word of God. Performing the will of God may be difficult but it's the way to ensure "abiding forever"! Not that you can "earn" your salvation — you can't. Eternal life is the free, undeserved *gift* of God. But once God has granted eternal life, you will be "rewarded according to your works"! (Write for our free reprint article

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**Our very existence  
depends upon mutual  
cooperation. We were all  
created in the very  
image of God for a great  
purpose which He is  
working out here below.  
We are all our  
"brother's keepers."**

---

"No! — You Can't Earn Your Salvation." Also the booklet *What Will You Be Doing in the Next Life?*

**The Law of the Jungle.** The standards of this society are not often based upon true values. Certain unsavory characteristics seem to dominate — such as *greed and competition*.

The law of the world is the law of the jungle — "survival of the fittest." The law of God says exactly the opposite — "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Paul told the Romans: "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and *not to please ourselves*" (Rom. 15:1).

This is *real* Christianity!

This is *the way* of which the Bible writers spoke!

Are you willing to practice *this*

*kind* of Christianity? It's a far cry from religious hobbyism and petty doctrinal debate. There is very little philosophy, or science, or exegesis, or hermeneutics involved in this type of Christianity. There's not even much to argue about — except who's going to make the first move!

But this is "where it's at" so far as the Bible is concerned. This type of Christianity involves compassion, service, humility, and above all, *love*! Those who minimize the importance of love are not Christians at all. Their religion is a hollow form, "full of sound and fury signifying nothing" (to borrow from Shakespeare).

You disagree?

Fine.

You disagree with Paul and with God!

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, *but have not love*, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, *but have not love*, I AM NOTHING" (1 Cor. 13:1-2).

Now what do you say about the importance of love?

Paul said love is far more important than the ability to "speak in tongues," prophetic powers, the understanding of mysteries, knowledge and even *faith*!

Love is the *paramount* virtue a Christian can possess! *Nothing* transcends it. And "works of love" are the greatest works a Christian can perform! Is it any wonder Paul wrote: "Make love *your aim* . . ." (1 Cor. 14:1).

True godly love is incapable of willfully inflicting pain or suffering upon a fellow human being. A Christian who loves wholly seeks only the comfort and welfare of others.

**Love Erases Prejudice.** Love can erase the hideous, hateful scab of racial prejudice from the heart of even the most entrenched bigot. Those who are led by the Spirit of



God and fed by the Word of God know that *all* men, black, white or yellow, and every shade in between, were created in the image of the Great God (Gen. 1:26-27). They know that God "made from one [Adam] every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth," and that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for *you are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Acts 17:26; Gal. 3:28).

No one is "superior" within the Church of God because of color, status in society, or sex. We are all children of God and He and Christ alone are "superior"! We are brothers and sisters in Christ. Sons *and daughters* of God (I Peter 3:6).

There is *no place* within the Body of Christ for racial prejudice! Those of us who have allowed ourselves to be bitten with this evil, divisive, worldly bug need to deeply and bitterly *repent* before the living God who made *all* of us in his very image!

**Male Chauvinism.** "Male chauvinism" is definitely *out!* God tells us that men and women in the Church are "*joint heirs* of the grace of life . . ." (I Peter 3:7).

(It should be noted that God has designated certain standards for male-female relationships within marriage [Eph. 5] and within the Church congregational structure [I Cor. 11], but these have nothing to do with "superiority" or "inferiority" within the Body. It is merely a matter of working within the natural roles that men and women have assumed throughout history. The Church of God *does* abide by these scriptural standards.)

And God is definitely *not* impressed with "gold rings and goodly apparel"! In fact, He is not a respecter of persons at all in that sense. God looks on the heart — not the outward appearance. Status symbols mean nothing to Him who judges impartially. All are free in Christ — whether slaves in this life or not.

The standard of God lifts the

Christian above the values and standards (or lack of them!) of this world! We are to be different, unique, *converted* (changed)!

Through the love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which we receive at baptism (Rom. 5:5), we live by the standard of the royal law of love. And "*Love does no wrong to a neighbor*; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10).

The "good works" of a true Christian are "works of love." It is the responsibility of the Church of God to set an example before the world, one that will cause people to *glorify* God instead of to vilify Him! The Church is a city that is set upon a hill. The religion of a true child of God is *the way he or she lives life!*

Though we are *in* the world, we are not *of* the world. We should have a higher, more noble, more godly set of values. We *must* have

such or we are not really Christians! We cannot allow ourselves to succumb to the baser passions of the flesh and of the mind. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, constant prayer and study of the Word of God, we must rise above our own weak flesh.

Those who have been prejudiced must learn to look beyond the flesh and into the heart and there see the Spirit of God burning — and say, "Brother!"

And those men who have had a chauvinistic, superior, tyrannical attitude toward their wives, or women in general, need to repent and say with sincere feeling, "Sister!"

All of us, who have been selfish, lazy and comfortable, need to reach out to the world, and to our own brethren in the faith, the right hand of fellowship and say, "May I help you? Please, let me be of *service*."

Are you willing to be *that kind* of Christian? □

## IF YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW MORE

Many hundreds have written asking if we have representatives in their areas to counsel with them personally and to answer their questions.

The answer is yes, we do.

The Worldwide Church of God stations personal representatives (most are ordained ministers) in the United States and British Commonwealth and many other areas of the world. These men will visit you, if invited, directly in your own home.

So if you have spiritual matters to discuss or questions to ask about biblical topics such as repentance, baptism, etc., please feel free to write us and request a private ap-

pointment. Worldwide mailing addresses are as follows:

- United States: P.O. Box 111, Pasadena, California 91123 (Or simply dial this toll-free number in the *continental* U.S.: 1-800-423-4444. Readers in California, Alaska and Hawaii may call 213-577-5225 collect.)
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# Why water baptism?

Is baptism a necessary step in a Christian's life, or merely an outdated ritual? The apostle Peter said: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ . . . and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Even Jesus Himself was baptized as an example for His followers. Yet the importance, meaning and correct form of baptism have not been understood. The free booklet *All About Water Baptism* explains the Bible's teaching on this important subject. For your copy, write to *The Good News* (see inside front cover for our address nearest you).

