

# GN

The Good News

HERE'S  
HOW YOU CAN  
CHANGE  
YOUR WORLD

THE  
TITHING  
PRINCIPLE

IN THE IMAGE  
OF GOD?

IMPRESSIONS  
FROM  
CENTURY 1

CAN PROPHECY  
FAIL?

GET TO KNOW  
YOUR BIBLE

MAY 1975

# GN

The Good News

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**GN**  
The Good News

YOU CAN  
SEE THE  
BIBLE  
IN YOUR  
OWN  
LANGUAGE

### ABOUT OUR COVER

Biblical ignorance is a hallmark of our age. This month we feature an article ("Get to Know Your Bible") discussing the canonization and preservation of God's written Word - His message which is still very much for mankind today.

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# SEVEN PROOFS OF GOD'S CHURCH

**P**OWER CORRUPTS!" goes the saying. And, like many "sayings," it is in error. God possesses *all power* — and Jesus said, in commissioning His disciples: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). Yet, our God is *incorruptible*, as is Jesus Christ, the firstborn from the dead, and the Head of His Church!

The *abuse* of power is certainly corrupt. The ageless lessons of power wrongly used by carnal men is the most noxious and repetitious lesson of all of mankind's history.

But what is "power"? It has many definitions in your dictionary, from force, energy and the ability to do work in the physical sense to the political definition of the ability to hold sway over other men's minds.

Power and authority are, believe it or not, given into the hands of Christ's own ministers! And, though prayerfully it is a rarity, that power *can be abused*. One of the most basic cravings of human nature is the desire for power. From the time we were children our own human nature of vanity, jealousy, lust, greed — the desire to enforce our will on others — manifested itself.

## Human Desire for Power

The dangerous egocentricity of the craving for power is the hidden drive that motivates millions of human beings, in all our colors, races, religions and nationalities. Intangible, unrealized, unrecognized even by those so afflicted, power can, given carnality and base human nature, corrupt.

On one occasion the disciples were caught up in heated discussion about "rank" and "status" in the future. Jesus was heavy with sick dread about His imminent crucifixion. It was during the final Passover, the famous "last supper." Jesus had just finished sharing the bread and

## PROOF

# 6

## Part Two

# GOD'S TRUE CHURCH IS ORGANIZED!

by Garner Ted Armstrong

*"Organization" and "evil" are not synonymous! As we saw proved in the last issue, God's true Church is organized and fitly framed together as a tightly knit body, constituted for a great purpose — to preach the gospel of Christ's soon-coming Kingdom to all the world as a witness! God is Ruler, Christ is living Head of His Church, and He governs it. When God's government is rightly exercised, it produces the positive fruits of God's Work: preaching the gospel, serving, helping, comforting those who have need, feeding the flock, constantly striving to root out and correct error — enabling the Church of God to grow, flourish and prosper. God's government works!*

wine with His disciples, and had spoken out about the one who was to betray Him.

The disciples were not "saints" by any means — but carnal, albeit sincere and willing men, whose human natures had not yet been *changed* by the supernatural begetting of God's Holy Spirit. Their reasoning was still physical, carnal, and therefore selfishly oriented. Though Christ was exceedingly heavy of heart, they couldn't truly empathize with Him, reaching out with their hearts and emotions to let Him know they bore the same sorrow. Instead, "... There was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest" (Luke 22:24).

They wanted to know specifics!

At that time they wanted Christ to name names, and designate positions, ranks, titles, and official status! "But Jesus Christ said *nothing* about who should ultimately lead, even though Peter, John, James, all were present. Very likely,

knowing the impetuosity of Peter, and noticing Christ's statement which immediately followed — "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (verse 31). — Peter himself was involved in the argument.

But Jesus was not about to be trapped into creating some "ecclesiastical hierarchy" of "ranks" which would ultimately ferment into a rigid, stifling, pompous, dictatorial "establishment"! Instead, He gave them a great principle of leadership.

## Christ Defines True Greatness

"And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you,

let him be *as the younger*; and he that is chief, *as he that doth serve*. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that *serveth*? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you, as he that *serveth*" (Luke 22:25-27).

To any stranger, entering the room at the mealtime, they would have thought Peter, James, John and the other apostles were the "greatest," since they were obviously sitting "at meat." But what about Jesus? Why, they would have immediately supposed He was a *servant* of the house, *waiting on tables*! They would have seen Him wash His own disciples' feet, a task among those of the lowliest. They would have seen Him break and distribute bread, and pour out individual servings of wine, and hand them to each one.

Yet, obviously to you and I, looking at the Scriptures and understanding the awesome greatness of Christ, it was *Jesus* who was in *authority*, who had the *power*, who was the "greatest!"

What a striking contrast to the usual ostentatious conduct of carnal men who desire personal recognition, acclaim and status!

Christ knew the only true "status" worthy of the word was where He stood with God, His Father!

So Christ provided the *basis* for God's government in His Church by pointing to the word "service!"

The very word "minister" means *servant*!

#### The Impact Upon Peter

Peter never forgot what Jesus said to Him following His denial, and his shamed, thrice-repeated, ever more intense statement of love for Jesus. He was to later write: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder [thus showing no consciousness of "rank" between those who, though not "evangelists" or even pastors of churches, were older men who were ordained], and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: *Feed the flock of*

*God* which is among you, taking the oversight thereof [the "oversight" or "presbytery"], not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. . . . Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be *subject one to another*, and be *clothed with humility*: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:1-5).

Peter never forgot Christ's three-fold command: "Feed my sheep!"

#### The Right Use of Power and Authority

The apostle Paul coined a new phrase, one which has been a guid-

**Without organization (and God is not the author of confusion, 1 Cor. 14:33) there would be no smoothly functioning, healthy body, edifying and building up itself as it continually feeds upon the Word and the knowledge of God, or accomplishing a great Work, which, after all, is the overall purpose for the maintaining of a healthy body!**

ing light during recent months to Christ's ministry in this modern age: "Not for that we have *dominion over your faith*, but we are *helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand*" (1 Cor. 1:24).

"*Helpers of your joy*," a title hardly suitable for anyone *misusing* the power of the ministry!

Can we see clearly, and understand, that the *power* and *authority* Christ gives His ministry is not "over" the people, in the sense of stifling control over their lives? He gave power — but power over the forces of evil which *destroy* men's lives, power over the diseases which afflict people, power over demons which might influence or possess!

Christ called His twelve disciples and "he gave them power against un-

clean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Matt. 10:1). In commanding them to go abroad and preach, He said: "And as ye go, *preach*, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils [demons]: freely ye have received, freely give" (verses 7, 8).

The power was to *help* the people; to relieve terrible suffering, physical and mental; and to preach the *good news* of Christ's soon-coming *rulership* of this earth!

Later, when Christ *built* His Church on that first Pentecost after His resurrection by granting God's Holy Spirit to the original apostles (including Matthias, replacement for Judas Iscariot), He was fulfilling His promise: "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). He again promised *power*!

"Notice that even *after* the resurrection, and many infallible proofs that Christ was *alive*, the disciples still wondered about the establishment of an *earthly kingdom* then and there!

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you." (Acts 1:6-8).

"Power?" But *who*? What *kind* of power? Was it "authority" in the sense of having power to "give orders" to people; to hold sway over people's private choices and opinions; to stiflingly *control* other human beings? No — it was for the same consistent reason He had given the same men power as *teaching* disciples on their first "evangelistic" trip! ". . . And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Those were the last words Jesus



spoke before being bodily assumed into heaven!

#### Power for a Purpose

The apostles *knew* there was a great job to do, that a *great commission* had been given! Peter certainly didn't mistake the *purpose* for God's Holy Spirit — the unlimited *power* that Christ promised to send. It is not revealed which one of the apostles spoke the words of Acts 1:24, 25 — only that *they* prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may *take part of this ministry and apostleship*, from which Judas by transgression fell . . .

They knew they had been given a ministry (a service) to perform. Peter had referred to the broad principle in at least two of the Psalms concerning an "overseership" ("bishoprick," KJV) to be transferred out of the hands of Judas and into the possession of a replacement.

Referring to Judas, he said: "For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this *ministry*" (verse 17). Peter went on to say: ". . . and his overseership [margin] let another take" (verse 20).

The apostles were keenly aware that their whole lives would now be organized into a unified body for the purpose of accomplishing *one great job!*

They had the fantastic truth to report that Christ was *alive*, that He had risen from the dead, that they were *eyewitnesses to that fact*, and that *He was going to come again!*

And they knew that *job* was the *purpose* for receiving *power!* It was the power to accomplish the job they expected, and that power they used — not the raw abuse of "power" to interfere in people's private lives to the point of *super-snooping*, CIA, FBI-type surveillance over every thought, deed and act.

"Helpers of their joy," yes, but "policemen of their souls," *never!*

Miracles began to occur. The first

was Pentecost itself, and the powerful manifestation of God's Holy Spirit on that day: tongues of leaping, flickering flame, almost like divine crowns on their heads; powerful, intense, profound, moving words of Christ's resurrection; happiness, joy; a feeling of almost immediate expectancy of an imminent *utopia* that would come when Christ would rend the heavens and step down once again to this earth! That spirit of *wonderment* and *excitement* filled them all! By the thousands, people were converted and baptized! They sold properties and stayed longer — wanting to be a part of all the miraculous things that were happening! Fantastic healings took place!

**"And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. . . . I am among you as he that serveth."**

And then, suddenly, a shocking event occurred!

#### Ananias and Sapphira

A couple thought *pretense* — a pretended posture of "giving" while being covetous of money — could "put one over" on the Church and the apostles. They desired recognition as generous, giving, wonderful "Christian" people.

Their sordid story is told in the 5th chapter of Acts.

"Ananias and Sapphira are names synonymous with lying to the Holy Spirit." Their deaths were such a *shock* to the Church that "great fear" came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (Acts 5:11).

Unfortunately, the story of

Ananias and Sapphira has been *misused* all down through history in order to wrest terribly private "confessions" out of thoroughly frightened ones who inexplicably find themselves before a stern-faced "minister" who now demands to know the "truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" about some juicy little incident in their private lives. A careful study of Hefele's "Church Councils" proves enlightening, as does research into the origin of the Catholic confessional booth. Sometimes, such private conversations apparently got out of hand.

But this was *unique* in all the Bible — and no doubt, there have been tens of thousands of cases all down through history where people have tried to deceive Christ's ministry, or lied to a minister in private counsel, and lived through it.

God's purpose in taking the lives of Ananias and Sapphira was *not* to provide His ministry with the ultimate fear weapon for inquiring into the private lives of individuals. Ananias and Sapphira *voluntarily* came to the apostles, *posturing* as generous contributors of their earthly goods. Peter plainly said that while it was in their own hands it was *theirs*, to do with as they chose. Only after they *conspired*, and then *lied*, was the horrible penalty exacted — and that *not* by the apostles, but by a divine miracle from God, much like the case of Korah's rebellion.

The point is, it is a sin to lie, and the wages of sin is death — a fact which must be continually taught and emphasized by a loving ministry (Rom. 3:23; 6:23), in the hopes that sin will be repented of, forgiven and forgotten (Heb. 8:12).

God was proving, by direct intervention from heaven itself, that the *power* with which He was infusing His ministry was *supernatural*. There would be power to cast out demons, to heal the sick and to preach the gospel. The instant closeness of heaven was emphasized. The fact of God's *immediate* presence was plain! The fact that Christ Him-

self was ruling, judging and making the final decisions was clear!

Jesus Christ determined He would remain at the helm, as He had promised — never allowing mortal man to usurp that ultimate governmental function: final decision-making, *ruling* His Church!

But He had clearly demonstrated that awesome power could work in and through His chosen human servants!

#### The Church Begins To Wane

However, just as in the case of sensational healings, signs (earth-quake, being loosed from prison supernaturally, etc.) and other miracles gradually waned, even to the point the apostle Paul admitted at a much later date he had left "Trochimus at Miletus sick," so were the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira absolutely *unique* in those early moments of the New Testament Church of God!

Later, Jude was to write that there were those who had "crept in unawares" and who had deliberately *infiltrated* into the ranks of Christ's ministry, using hypocrisy and pretense! God *allowed* evil, plotting men to deceive and posture as true ministers, even though He had directly intervened, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, to show His never-changing attitude *today* would-be deceivers.

Almost from its very inception, the New Testament Church had to constantly *struggle* to keep itself intact against subversive acts from within and attacks from without.

But God's government *overcame* each of these obstacles. Though the Church may have been scared, bruised, wounded, and, in fact, lay almost prostrate for long periods of time, true to Jesus Christ's promises *it never died!*

But some points of truth *did* "die out" over a period of many centuries, until virtually all that remained of the original truths known and understood by the apostle Paul and other early New Testament apostles was the knowledge of

God's weekly Sabbath, the true name of the Church, and basic truths such as the nature of man and the mortality of the soul, the truth about a millennium on this earth, and the most basic of all truths concerning repentance, baptism and receiving of the Holy Spirit in order to achieve salvation!

Many major points of truth had been lost, among them the knowledge of God's annual Holy Days and Church government itself.

#### Organization Desperately Needed

But as the need for a more organized preaching of the gospel grew, so did the need for an *organization* to preach that gospel!

**Can we see clearly that the power and authority Christ gives His ministry is not "over" the people in the sense of stifling control over their lives? He gave power — but, power over the forces of evil which destroy men's lives, power over the diseases which afflict people, power over demons which might influence, or possess!**

Very soon after the Church began, it became evident that if the disciples were to devote their time to the primary mission of *preaching the gospel*, they would need help in administering various forms of physical *service* to others. The example of waiting on tables, resulting in the very first ordinations of deacons, is a case in point (Acts 6).

It remained for the apostle Paul to delineate the various functions, for the purpose of preaching the gospel to the world and for feeding the flock (all of which I'll explain shortly).

But today, God's Church is highly *organized!* As your body is highly organized, consisting of muscular, skeletal, nervous, digestive and circulatory systems, and as your own

body must continually be nourished, fed, protected and receive exercise in order to continue to function in a healthy manner, so must the organized body — *which is* the Church of God with Jesus Christ as living Head continually be nourished, and must *grow* as does the highly organized and tremendously complex systematic organization we call the "human body."

No, there is nothing "evil" in the word "organization." It comes from "organism," meaning a living thing or creation which has been intricately and beautifully designed of God!

Government in God's Church is for the purpose of keeping unity in the faith (Eph. 4:1-13), for preaching the gospel, for overcoming every obstacle, as well as settling doctrinal disputes, reaching decisions concerning disfellowshipping and reinstating in the Church, ordaining of ministers and establishing of Bible studies and churches — especially for the means of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God as a witness to all the world.

Without organization (and God is not the author of confusion, 1 Corinthians 14:33) there would be no smoothly functioning, healthy body, edifying and building up *itself* as it continually feeds upon the Word and the knowledge of God, or accomplishing a great work, which, after all, is the overall purpose for the maintaining of a healthy body!

Yes, it is true that God's Church is *organized!*

It is true that it has government, and that that government is *from the top down!*

And that is God's form of government, and the only form which can ever function in God's true Church.

One of the major *proofs* of the true Church of God is the spiritual organization of that Church, exactly as defined in God's Word.

#### New Testament Church Administration

Many New Testament scriptures show a pattern of God-ordained

Church administration and organization.

In the twelfth chapter of I Corinthians, the apostle Paul wrote: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God [not man] hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (I Cor. 12:27-28).

Notice how the organization emphasizes the primary purpose of the body *first*, and the secondary later. *First*, Paul spoke of apostles (meaning one who is "sent" commissioned with a message, "set apart"), and then prophets (which can also mean an inspired "preacher" as easily as it can imply a "foreteller of events"). *Then* he lists teaching (as in feeding the flock), and the *administrative* functions of the Church, as well as including various special gifts of God's Spirit for healing and other miracles.

Paul also wrote: "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us...."

He then went on to describe the order of the "gifts" God had placed in His Church: "... Whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teaches, on teaching" (Rom. 12:5-7).

Notice again in this organizational passage how "prophecy" (including inspired preaching and teaching of the Word of God as it especially concerns the future) and then the "ministry" are placed *first*!

This same pattern is repeated in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, where he said: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers..." (Eph. 4:11).

Paul's writings constitute a beautiful and vivid picture of the government of God in action!

His very letters, in themselves,

show a concerned and fatherly apostle who continually wrestled with the manifold problems of each individual Church area; writing to them in deep anguish of spirit over their personal problems; exhorting them, rebuking them, setting and deciding policies, sometimes dis-fellowshipping, and sometimes reinstating.

Paul's writings reveal how God's government was established for the purpose of preaching the gospel, for organizing churches and studies, for dis-fellowshipping in cases where this was required in order to keep God's Church free from contaminating influences, for reinstating where that could happily be done, and at all times preaching

**Jesus Christ determined He would remain at the helm, as He had promised — never allowing mortal man to usurp that ultimate governmental function: final decision-making, ruling His Church! But He had clearly demonstrated that awesome power could work in and through His chosen human servants!**

"sound doctrine" and protecting the Church from attacks both from within and from without.

#### Three Church Administration Letters

Paul's "Pastoral Epistles" are nothing short of "Church administration letters" from this apostle to the Gentiles to the young men under his charge. In them, you can read of the many details concerning Paul's instructions to young men such as Aristarchus, Secundus, Timothy, Titus, Gaius, and others who were his helpers in various parts of the Eastern Mediterranean region. And again and again the *purpose* for such organization is revealed.

Timothy was charged again and again to remember how he would

meet every opposition, including seducing spirits, doctrines of demons and lies (I Tim. 4:1-2). He would face pride, ignorance, questions and strivings about words, envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds desiring material gain (I Tim. 6:4-5). He was warned to beware of "oppositions of science falsely so called" (I Tim. 6:20), "profane and vain babblings" (II Tim. 2:16). Yes that the resurrection had already occurred which would overthrow the faith of some (II Tim. 2:18), foolish and unlearned questions (II Tim. 2:23). He was warned that evil men and seducers would wax worse and worse (II Tim. 3:13); people, having itching ears, would heap to themselves teachers and turn unto fables (II Tim. 4:3-4). He was told some would love this present world and simply quit when the going got tough (II Tim. 4:10). He was reminded about Alexander the copper-smith, who had done a great deal of evil to the apostle Paul (II Tim. 4:14).

Titus was warned that he would encounter "unruly and vain talkers and deceivers" (Titus 1:10), and that he should "speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority" (Titus 2:15).

He was charged to "avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretic [factions, or of splits and schisms] after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself" (Titus 3:9-11).

In these "Pastoral Epistles" you not only read of the organization of an apostle giving instructions to a young evangelist on how to conduct the churches in his area, ordaining elders, dis-fellowshipping or marking those who cause divisions, but also you read of the day-to-day conduct of the Work at that time, even including such instructions as helping others who were traveling through

(Continued on page 29)



IN THE IMAGE OF

**T**HEN GOD said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth.... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him...." (Gen. 1:26-27, RSV).

"In the image of God" — what noble and awe-inspiring words! But what do they mean? Can we look into the pain-wracked faces of the starving masses in the Sub-Sahara region, or into the eyes of a malnourished Biafran, Indian, or Pakistani child and say, "This person now reflects the image of God?"

As you study the huddled form

*The vast majority of planet earth's three-billion-plus inhabitants live in comparative squalor and poverty. Tens of thousands die daily of starvation, while millions live with the ever-present specter of famine and shortage. The "dignity of man" is something less than optimum in a world where the words "quality of life" are beginning to have an increasingly hollow ring. Is that all there is for man? What is the ultimate destiny for God's human creation?*

by Brian Knowles

tions has failed miserably, as did its predecessor, the League of Nations. The UN General Assembly is nothing more than a sounding board for national propaganda.

Each nation thinks egocentrically. Each looks out for its own even if it has to be at the expense of a neighbor nation. Selfish national interests, ideological ax grindings, economic expediencies and just plain natural human hostility continue to mar the potential of such world bodies. We just can't seem to "get it all together" can we?

Something is wrong.

How can we reconcile this warring, suffering, sometimes gluttonous, often starving, disease-ridden entity called the human race with

## IN THE IMAGE OF GOD?

and glazed eyes of an Arab beggar squatting in the streets of Cairo — as I recently did — can you see there the image of the Creator God?

Is God's image reflected in the grotesque figure of a typical camera-laden, Hawaiian-shirted, cigar-chomping, loud-mouthed "ugly-American" tourist hanging on the desk of a Jamaican hotel lobby demanding attention and service?

And what about the screaming, foam-flecked radical who frantically jumps apoplectically up and down on his left-wing soapbox demanding the overthrow of the System? Does he convey the image of God?

Or is God's likeness to be observed in the pea-brained, red-eyed, power-hungry, petty dictator who advocates stamping out all opposition by means of the fires of the concentration camp?

### Wars, Conflicts, Problems

Just exactly where do we see the image of God reflected in the bickering, posturing, suffering, angry, often helpless, and hopeless population of planet earth?

"Stop bad mouthing the human race," someone will say. I'm not bad mouthing — just observing. I can see. I can hear. I'm not quite that blind.

I know there have been over 55 wars of various scales since the close of the Second World War. I know the Kurds are currently at war in Iran. The fighting has never really stopped in Southeast Asia. There are still over 50,000 American troops in South Korea helping to maintain an uneasy "peace" in that troubled part of the world.

In the meantime the Arabs and the Jews appear to be preparing for yet another round in their seemingly endless conflict. Most Jews and Arabs seem to feel that such a war is only a matter of time.

It is obvious that the major problems of human society are rapidly getting out of hand. They are simply too big for humanity to solve. No great charismatic leaders are presently on the scene who are capable of rallying the human race to effect solutions for its seemingly terminal problems. The United Na-

the image of the Creator God? It just doesn't make sense.

Unless we conclude that God is that way!

But let's not be ridiculous. God is not that way. God says: "... My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord" (Isa. 55:8, RSV).

### The God of This World

God created man. And in so doing He started a process. A process of reproduction.

That's right. The great Creator God in heaven above is actually reproducing His own kind! More about that later. But God has an enemy who is called Satan, the Devil, Apollyon, the Destroyer, Lucifer and a whole host of other names (cf. Rev. 9:11; Rev. 12:9; Isa. 14:12). The devil was originally one of God's chief angelic servants. But he rebelled, taking with him some one-third of the angels in his mutiny.

Jesus Himself saw Lucifer fall from heaven like lightning (Luke 10:8). In Revelation 12:9 we are



told that it is Satan who has deluded the entire world. He is, as Paul pointed out, the "god" of this present age or society (II Cor. 4:4). As a result of the influence of the devil, the whole world is now in an "evil" condition. Paul spoke of "this present evil world" in Galatians 1:4. The apostle John wrote: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one" (I John 5:19, RSV).

And that's the reason the "image" of this world does not conform to the image of God! That's why the United Nations can't solve the serious problems that exist within the community of nations. That's why we have wars. That's why human beings can't get along with each other. That's why we see so much squalor, poverty and starvation. That's the main reason we see religious conflict and moral perversity. That's why twisted and bizarre ideologies such as Nazism, communism and a whole host of other "isms" are able to make such incredible inroads in human society.

This is not God's world!

It is the devil's world and he has seen to it that mankind continues to exist in a general state of deception and misery.

Human happiness and fulfillment can only be measured comparatively. Those who live in Southern California live in a materialistic heaven — comparatively speaking, that is. But is it heaven to breathe the effluent-laden smog that passes for oxygen in the Los Angeles area? Is it heavenly to fight the traffic hour after hour on the congested freeways?

Not really. As I said, it's all comparative.

#### Helpless to Relieve Misery

The whole human race is living in a substantially less-than-ideal state. There are just degrees of misery. As Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome: "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who

have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8:22-23, RSV).

The whole world is waiting for something. Christians suffer right along with their brethren "in the world" — those who are not yet a part of the Body of Christ. The fact that we share in that suffering gives us a greater and more sincere yearning for the ultimate redemption of our bodies into the Kingdom.

As Christians, we yearn for the only true solution to the sufferings of humanity — the glorious Kingdom of God. As a group, Christians cannot now solve the problems of humanity. We cannot end the starvation of the millions in underdeveloped countries. We cannot convince the world of atheistic communism that there is indeed a God who is worthy of worship. Nor can we correct the theological errors and abuses of false Christianity.

But we can preach the gospel. We can show the way to universal peace, prosperity and fulfillment. We can lift up our collective voices and cry aloud, showing this world the real causes of its suffering and misery in the hope that some will heed and change their ways. We can be a light and an example. We can glorify our God in our bodies and in our way of life. We can give this world hope by telling it of the coming Kingdom of God which will effect the needed solutions. In fact, we must!

Those who are privileged to know and understand the truth of God's great plan of salvation must be a "light that shineth in a dark place." We are accountable for what we know. Not only must we act upon our own present knowledge, we must also share it with others.

Of what value to anyone is the armchair religious hobbyist who sits benignly back in his overstuffed chair and mouths esoteric spiritual platitudes to his closest personal friends? What does his "Christianity" accomplish?

When the founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ, looked around Him at

contemporary society He was "moved with compassion." Yet so many of today's Christians are not moved at all — or they are simply moved by a feeling of superiority.

#### Practical Christianity

The very basis for all true Christianity is love. Without it a Christian is no Christian at all! (I Cor. 13:1-3.) And love is primarily outgoing — away from the empirical self. Paul told the churches in his charge that they must strive to do good to all men as they had opportunity (Gal. 6:10). True, our brethren in the Church should come first, but the Christian must not be an exclusivist who loves only his own!

Jesus taught against such empirical self-love: "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?" (Matt. 5:44-47, RSV.)

This kind of Christianity is a practical thing. It is not a collection of theological arguments. It is a living demonstration of the love of God residing within a Christian.

If you know the solution to someone's problem, then it is your responsibility to try to communicate with that person as a Christian. Does it make sense to continually hand a starving man food when you could show him how to grow a garden full of it? Sure, you give him food until he learns to grow his own. It is the same with the gospel.

The gospel is the only true panacea. It is the only real solution to the sufferings of mankind. But not everyone is really willing to receive that gospel. Yet the message of the gospel represents preventative medicine for this world's ills. The gospel is more than a mere message — it is



something that may be practiced! It can be lived (cf., Rom. 10:16).

### The Gospel Contains Hope

What hope does this suffering world have of ever conforming to the image of God? How can human beings ever realize their maximum potential in this life? Can man become godly, spiritual and holy in his outlook — in his character?

I said earlier that God is reproducing His own kind. He is ultimately to adopt millions of sons (Rom. 8:23). But how is this process started and how is it completed?

In the beginning God created man in His own image — physically. Man resembles God in his basic appearance. Man, however, is now composed of the elements of physical matter, but God is composed of spirit (John 4:24).

Of course, modern man with all of his physical problems, sicknesses, ailments and maladies is probably a far cry from the physical ideal. Undoubtedly there has been substantial physical degeneracy through wrong habits and broken laws since Adam was first created of the elements of matter! That's why God says the whole creation groans and travails in pain.

But that pain is also spiritual and mental! It is a yearning, a craving for something better than this physical existence. It is an undefined desire for some kind of spiritual fulfillment, for self-actualization.

Man does not generally realize the incredible profundity of his own vast potential. While God initially created the first man physically in His image — He is now putting man through a process of spiritual development which will ultimately lead to his being made into God's spiritual image!

Adam was a physical man made of the dust of the ground, the elements of the earth. But that physical creation, typified by Adam, will be followed by a spiritual creation. "How best that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural [physical], and afterward that which

is spiritual" (I Corinthians 15:46).

The physical creation of man in God's image is merely a forerunner of the greater spiritual creation! God is reproducing His own kind. He is adding members to His divine, spirit family. He is expanding and extending Himself in His own spiritual children!

### The Transcendent Purpose

Man is destined to resemble God, to look like Him, to be made over in His spiritual image! John wrote some of the most profound truths in all of the Bible. He said: "Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2, RSV).

God reveals that we shall be like Him. We are begotten as His sons and daughters now, in this life, but ultimately we shall be born into God's family kingdom. Christians have been spiritually "conceived" (begotten) but they will not come to actual spiritual "birth" until the return of Christ. This final birth will be accomplished by a resurrection from the dead (I Thess. 4:16-17; I Cor. 15:50-57).

What a glorious hope! What a magnificent destiny!

Yet as we look at the terrible condition of most of the human race today, we see none of the spiritual image of God. We see wars, starvation, inflation, scarcity, conflict, hatred, prejudice and suffering. We see only degrees of comparative unhappiness and despair. We see a race floundering in uncertainty, not knowing who it exists, not understanding its own destiny.

Yet God has given you and me hope. He has given us insight into the great plan of salvation. He has shown us the real destiny of His human creation. We have been privileged to gain a glimpse into the mind of God!

In the light of this, what should we do? What is your responsibility in the light of what God has revealed?

Let John answer: "And every one

who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure" (I John 3:3, RSV).

What are you doing about purifying your own life spiritually? How does one start this process of spiritual purification?

When Peter was ~~was~~ preaching the first real sermon ever given in the Church of God (on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 31), the question was asked: "... Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37.) Peter replied: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (verse 38, RSV).

### Have You Really Repented?

Have you repented? Really? Have you been baptized in that one true baptism (Eph. 4:5-6)? Have you received God's Holy Spirit?

Perhaps you would like to pursue this more? If so, the Worldwide Church of God has ministers in most major cities of the Western world.

If you would like to be contacted by one of our representatives to discuss baptism (or any other spiritual matter), please write to us and we will forward your letter to the nearest representative.

Or, if you live in the continental United States and would like to save time, please feel free to call our toll-free number here in Pasadena: (1) 800-423-4444 (Readers in California may call 213-577-5225 collect.)

You owe it to yourself to follow through on what you now know! Do it while you may!

### RECOMMENDED READING

These attractively printed booklets will be sent to you, free of charge if you call the number mentioned at the end of the article. Or send your letter to The Good News, Pasadena, California 91123. (Those residing in other countries should check the inside front cover for the address of our office nearest them.)

- What Is a Real Christian?
- Where Is God's True Church Today?
- All About Water Baptism
- Why Were You Born?
- Just What Do You Mean — Born Again?

# HERE'S HOW YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR WORLD

**Have you tried to really change your life, only to fail miserably? Maybe you have overlooked one vital key that can guarantee success. This article tells you how you can effect genuine, lasting change!**

by Charles F. Hunting

IT WAS just after the party — which one was it? New Year's, Christmas, a birthday or the weekend house party? — that we finally decided we had had enough. No more alcohol. We were going cold turkey. With iron-willed resolve we vowed never to over-indulge again.

Yep, that was it. The spirit of Carrie Nation and Billy Sunday would prevail from now on — not the spirit of Old Grandad. Same for the cigarettes — out!

But it didn't quite come off, did it? Wasn't too long before the old gang got together again, and we were off once more into the wild blue yonder! Just one cocktail and that offered lung buster was too much temptation to resist. And there was the "morning-after-the-night-before" hangover, just like all the times before.

Has this been your experience?

Maybe not drinking. But it makes little difference whether it is alcohol, illicit sex, cigarettes or overeating. Whether it is a fight with a mate after a particularly annoying day at the office. Or whether it is yelling at the kids through just plain lack of self-control.

We all face these problems. We do things we know are harmful to ourselves and others. We want to change, to quit, to get the monkey

off our backs. But in all too many cases we know we are fighting a losing battle. And we continue to pay the penalty in unhappiness and frustration and in making those around us miserable.

Does it have to be this way? Were we intended to continue on in a never-ending pattern of failure?

The answer is *no*.

We want to change. We should change. And we CAN!

## Compensation for Weaknesses

Some of us never admit to the way we are. We blunder on in our indomitable way, never taking a stand-off look at ourselves. When once in a while reality forces itself upon us, we might have an uneasy feeling that we aren't facing the way we really are, but we quickly console ourselves with the "I'm-all-right, you're-all-right" philosophy. If this is our approach, we will never change.

But anyone who has any awareness of himself wants to change bad habits, life-styles, even appearance. Few of us are satisfied with our mental state, financial condition, interpersonal relationships or physical state. Witness the continued struggle by a large slice of the population to change all of these things.

We consult psychiatrists and read books such as *The Power of Positive Thinking*. We look for new investments or try to curb our appetite for spending in the hope of changing our financial condition. We read books by Dale Carnegie to improve our personal relationships. We try to restore color to our faces with cosmetics. Or exercise to change the shape of our bodies.

Most want to change. We want. Yet so much of this "change" is

temporary. It's not permanent change.

The question is, WHY? Why don't we make permanent change?

## The "Fly in the Ointment"

What's wrong with human beings? Why can't we be the way we really want to be?

Einstein put his finger on the root of the problem when he said: "The real problem is in the hearts and minds of men... It is easier to denature plutonium than to denature the evil spirit of man."

Science knows no way to effectively change human nature. We know that the cause of all of our problems is the way we are. Human nature is the reason for war, hunger, crime. It is the root cause of all of our troubles. But while we can identify cause and effect we can't solve the problem. Drugs, genetic engineering, or whatever science may devise to "change" human nature are all limited in their effectiveness because they destroy the uniqueness of a human being.

General Douglas MacArthur pinpointed the only real hope for human nature when he said: "The problem basically is theological and involves a spirit of recidescence and improvement of human character... It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh."

The Bible talks about just such a change in human nature. It describes a time in the future when this change will occur on a giant scale. "A new heart also will I give you," God says, "and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." (Ezek. 36:26-27).

What will be the result of this change in human hearts?

"In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden . . ." (verses 33-35).

This is the world's only real hope for peace. And it is the way that we can change, now, on an individual basis.

The Bible reveals a way by which we can *really* change. It offers us the chance to finally eliminate debilitating weaknesses and self-defeating habits.

What is the key to such a change in human nature?

The Bible terms it *repentance*. The basic meaning of this theological-sounding term is simply "change." But there are two kinds of "repentance" described in the Bible, and only real repentance actually brings about permanent change.

Most people who seek to change are actually "repenting" in the wrong way. And many who think they have repented even in a religious sense misunderstand.

Let's examine the two kinds of repentance. Then we can understand why many of us simply don't make any real permanent changes.

#### A Worldly Repentance

Christ said, "I bless you repent, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:5). Change cannot be arbitrary. Sooner or later, we are all going to have to change. But what does it mean to "repent"?

The apostle James likens the

Bible to a spiritual mirror which spotlights the failings of human nature (James 1:22-25). When an individual begins to look into the Bible, he becomes capable of a deeper degree of self-analysis. As we peer into this mirror, we begin to realize what we really are and what are the real problems. We come to understand that the heart — the basic core of the human being — "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9).

Now you might accept the fact that the Bible says we are this way, and you might also mentally agree with it. You might admit your inability to overcome this wretched nature, perhaps even learning to repeat the words Job used when he came to see himself: "I abhor myself." You may see the need for change, and deeply want to change.

It's not so difficult to come to abhor oneself — and to despise and hate weaknesses. After all, most people detest feelings of inferiority. Few like the way they are. But is "detesting" oneself really *repentance*?

Is being "sorry" — even regretting and loathing the way we are — what the Bible means when it talks about repentance?

Let's face it. What we usually mean when we say, "I'm sorry," is that we are sorry for the effect our mistakes and inferiorities have on our sense of well-being and happiness.

When we give in to weakness, we feel *guilty*. And we like to feel comfortable mentally and physically. We want to live at peace with ourselves and others.

Humans like to avoid personal predicaments. They go to almost any lengths to avoid them. And if

they can't eradicate their personal despair, some will even *take their own lives*. Suicide may represent a deep abhorrence of oneself, but suicide is an escape from hopelessness! It is *not* repentance.

Can we begin to see the yawning difference between sorrow — even self-abhorrence — and real change?

#### Two Kinds of Repentance

Did you realize that Judas Iscariot actually "repented" of his terrible crime?

We read: "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, *repented himself*, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned . . ." (Matt. 27:3-4).

Judas had been in the presence of the Master Teacher. He had seen countless miracles performed. He had lived with Christ day and night for the best part of 3½ years. He was given responsibility and offered a tremendous future in the coming Government of God. But he stole, spurned the greatest chance for success a man ever had, and committed a deed of infamy unparalleled in history when he became a traitor to his Creator!

When he saw his horrible mistake, he showed *deep remorse*. He hated himself, as he had every reason to. Yes, Judas *repented*!

But what did Judas do? He sought a way to escape the terrible guilt he felt. His repentance only led him into *another sin*! Because he couldn't live with himself, he committed suicide.

#### Repentance Gets Results

What was wrong with the kind of repentance Judas experienced?

To answer this pivotal question, notice the result of the *right kind* of repentance: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make *straight paths* for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Heb. 12:11-13).

Judas didn't change his way of life. The lame was "turned out of the way." Judas killed himself! He didn't learn from his mistake, and his sorrow produced no "peaceable fruit of righteousness."

When we really repent, we change!

Paul wrote a strong letter of correction to the church in Corinth. They were going in a pattern of life which was far from what God intended, and they came to see how wrong they were.

What was the effect of this correction? Here is how they responded:

"What carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (II Cor. 7:11).

These Corinthians understood what it means to repent. It resulted in tremendous carefulness to avoid the same mistake again, indignation that they had been so foolish, and tremendous zeal—almost a feeling of revenge—not to fall into the same pitfall twice!

Because they really repented, they changed!

But what made the difference? Why was there a totally opposite result when Judas repented?

This same passage in II Corinthians 7 reveals the difference. It shows us plainly that there are *two kinds* of repentance. "Now I rejoice," wrote Paul, "not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly manner . . . For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation [it produces the fruits of righteousness

and] great difference between this kind of sorrow and godly repentance.

When David came to see the terrible sins he had committed, he realized he would experience the penalties for the rest of his life. The prophet Nathan told him that what he had done would bring upon Israel perpetual war with all its horror and suffering. David knew that he would become the object of ridicule and would be humiliated before the whole nation. He had brought tremendous suffering upon a great many people as well as himself.

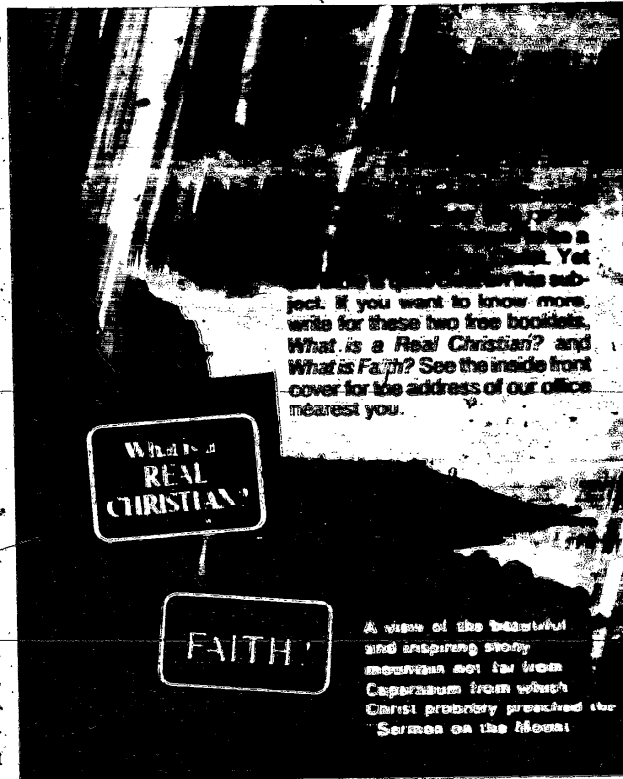
Yet in his prayer of repentance, David cried out to God: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight . . ." (Ps. 51:1-4).

Why, when he had murdered a man, committed adultery, and brought awesome penalties upon the entire nation, did David say that his sin was against God only?

Had David diminished God's power in some way, taken away any of His divine authority, or thwarted His plan for mankind? Had he lessened any of the beauty and splendor of God's throne? Had he actually done some material hurt to God?

No, David couldn't do any of these things. Had He chosen, the great Creator could have obliterated even the annoying memory of David from His mind!

Yet David understood that his sin was against God. How was it against God?



What is a Real Christian? Yet . . . 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?

FAITH

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

which will qualify a person for salvation] not to be repented of [we don't need to keep on repenting of the same sin because this kind of repentance products change]; but the sorrow of the world worketh death! For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort . . ." (verses 9-11).

#### David Knew the Difference

The world's kind of sorrow, which too many of us often have, is frankly self-centered remorse! There is a

### Sin Is Against God

It is possible to even come to the place that we acknowledge we have sinned against God, and *still* not be repentant.

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He set them up as a model nation. For forty years He performed daily miracles to preserve them alive. He revealed His law to them so that they might prosper. He desired to give them every good thing.

Did Israel appreciate all of these blessings? Did they worship God in obedience and overwhelming gratitude for what He had done? To the contrary. Moses indicted them: "And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the Lord *hated* us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt . . . to *destroy* us" (Deut. 1:27). They accused God of hatred and premeditated murder!

When they began to pay a penalty for their sin, these Israelites saw their tremendous mistake and admitted their error. "We have sinned against the Lord," they said (Deut. 1:41).

This admission of guilt against God might seem like the people learned their lesson. But they hadn't. Notice the rest of the story. God told the people through Moses: "Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest you be smitten before your enemies. So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but *rebelled* against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill" (verses 42-43). When some of them were slain, they *again* "repented." But what was the *result* of their repentance?

"And ye returned and *wept* before the Lord; but the Lord *would not* hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you" (verse 45). Contrast this with God's reaction to David's sin: "And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (1 Sam. 12:13).

• Why did God hear David but not Israel?

The answer is that the Israelites had not really repented. They were sorry for the difficulties into which they had gotten themselves. But it was mere *selfish* remorse, not repentance.

What was the crucial difference between the attitude of these Israelites and David?

### Must Understand God

Israel imputed wrong motives to God: they saw Him as a harsh, cruel, vindictive, restrictive Being who did things out of avarice and selfish desire. They never understood the great and magnificent God who inspired Isaiah to write: "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea" (Isa. 48:18). The concept of God as a loving Father who wanted every good thing for them just wasn't in their thinking.

But David knew God for what He really is. Because of this, he pleaded with God: "Restore unto me the *joy of thy salvation*; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Ps. 51:12-13).

He deeply *appreciated* all God had given him. His great desire was to reestablish contact with His Father so that he could continue to serve his Creator. He knew that his sin had been "an expression of disrespect and ingratitude toward God.

"Wherefore hast thou *despised the commandment of the Lord*," Nathan asked him, "to do evil in his sight?" And God told him: "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast *despised me*" (1 Sam. 12:9-10).

David was broken up over his sin because he realized he had disappointed the One who had given him everything. He had utterly failed a Being who had shown nothing but love and concern toward him!

David experienced repentance toward God. He was sorry with a heartfelt godly sorrow. His wasn't a *selfish* sorrow; because of what he

## 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 appointment. 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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- Other areas of the world should check the inside front cover (staff box) for the address of our office nearest you.



was now suffering, what he had been deprived of, or what might happen to him?

### Job Understood God

When everything Job owned was suddenly swept from him, and when he was sorely afflicted, he thought God was being unfair to him. He challenged God to reveal Himself, so that he could plead his cause.

A while later, God did just that. And by the time He was through, Job's eyes had really been opened. He said: "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not: things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. . . . I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:2-6).

Job had talked about a lot of things that he hadn't really comprehended. He knew the true God. He understood God's plan. He had knowledge of the resurrection and a coming change from mortality to immortality (Job 14:14-15). He wrote about the second coming of Jesus Christ and of his own resurrection (Job 19:25-26).

But when he came to a real understanding of this great Being — when he grasped the awesome power, magnificence, perfection and mercy of God — he finally got things into proper perspective. He couldn't help but *abhor* himself by comparison!

Here was no surface, shallow, self-seeking, self-pitying type of repentance. Here was the kind of repentance God desires! Like David, Job saw how worthless he was beside God, and how much he had failed to come anywhere near what God wanted of him. He saw himself as a total failure!

### What Repentance Is

Has our sin so overwhelmed us that we have cried out to God be-

cause we have been so callous and disrespectful toward Him?

Have we ever grasped that when we break God's law, we *despise* our very Maker?

Do we realize that to disregard God's instruction — His laws, given for our good — shows utter contempt for this great Being who gives us everything good?

How many of us are quite content to continue to bear the result of our physical sins, destroying bit by bit the very body which He gave us to enjoy life. We don't even have the type of worldly repentance that brings about physical change, let alone a deep spiritual change.

We overeat — *knowingly*. We're willing to pay the penalty in colds and other types of sicknesses. We never consider that our bodies are the temple through which God is doing His Work, and that we *represent* God to the world (I Cor. 3:16-17).

When we sin, we show the ultimate scorn for the transcendent purpose of the life we have been given. We show monumental disrespect toward the Being who gave His own Son so that He could share eternity with us. With our sloppy attitude toward God's commandments, we demonstrate unbelievable callousness toward Christ's stupendous sacrifice!

God's great desire is to share. He is a giving God. His greatest joy would be to share with us His power, His magnificent glory, His eternity. He wants to give us equality with Him! That is the greatest good God can ever do!

When we sin, we deny our Father this tremendous thrill of giving. We thumb our nose at Him. We despise that Creator-Ruler of the entire universe.

Do you begin to see what godly repentance is? Do you now comprehend the right motive for self-abhorrence? Godly repentance is repentance because we have denied God the privilege of giving us every good gift.

### A Fresh Start!

Perhaps the point could be illustrated by a true story. A man commissioned by Ambassador College for architectural work was invited to Pasadena. He and his wife were shown unusual courtesy and consideration, far beyond what is normal in the world. He didn't expect it, and he felt he didn't deserve it. The attention given to him was unlike anything he had ever experienced.

This man felt that he would just hate to disappoint those who had given him such undeserved kindness. He wanted to do the very best for them. If he did not want to disappoint humans who had shown him such consideration, how much more should we hate to disappoint God in the life He has given us?

Probably you have been disappointing God. You have *tried* to repent — *tried*, to change. But you haven't made much progress.

But you don't have to go through the same process of sinning and repenting time after time. You can ask God to reveal Himself to you and to give you *godly* repentance "not to be repented of" (II Cor. 7:9-10).

Just as soon as you go to God in deep sorrow for how you have scorned His love and Christ's sacrifice, you can be forgiven. And you can begin on a pathway toward *perfection*.

At last you will make *real* progress in God's way of life.

You won't change overnight. But you will *change*. God will add to your ability to *really* repent, so that you stop sinning.

When Christ returns, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Some will *still* be "trying" to repent, but not actually changing. Don't you be among them.

Repent in a godly way, and you will be able to say with the same feeling as David: "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him" (Ps. 103:10-11). □



# UPDATE UPDATE UPDATE UPDATE

## IMPRESSIONS FROM CENTURY I

**L**AST MONTH we reported on a tour of the Mideast taken by several GN staff members. Here is a second article giving you the personal impressions and observations of one of our associate editors as he toured Jerusalem and the city of Bethlehem.

We saw the sights of the Holy Land, but where were the "holy" sites?

Under Roman Catholic church buildings, Greek Orthodox church buildings and buildings of other sects. Deep down in grottoes, caves and other hollow places beneath the surface. Centuries of building, ruin and rebuilding have indeed raised the surface of the land in the built-up and densely inhabited places. Each generation built on a little higher foundation, on the ruins of the edifices that had gone before. Present street level is several feet above the level of the first century, the time of the apostles.

We stood on a part of the "Pavement" (see

John 19:13) where Pontius Pilate sat in judgment to condemn Jesus to death by crucifixion.

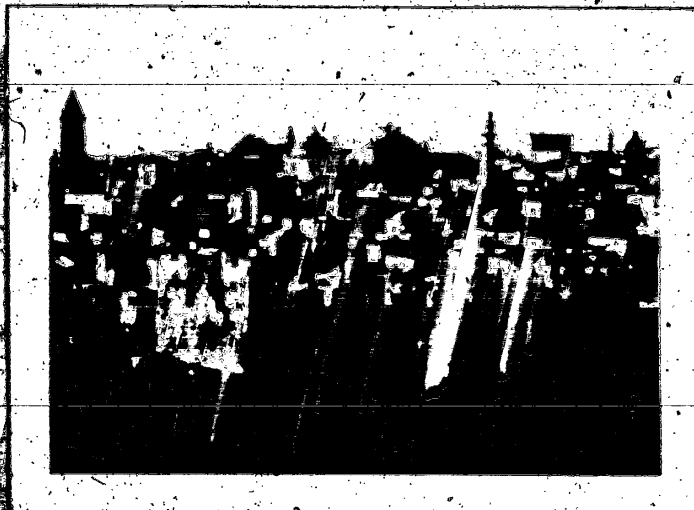
### The Pavement of Pontius Pilate

In the first century, the central headquarters of the Roman authority — the Roman Empire had conquered and occupied Palestine as it had the entire Mediterranean world — was a fortress called the Antonia, located just to the north of the northwest corner of the Temple area. The Pavement was an enclosed courtyard in the confines of the fortress. Here at the Antonia was stationed a body of Roman soldiers, conveniently near to all parts

of Jerusalem, but especially to the wide courts and porches of the Temple where, several times before, the volatile religious emotions of congregated Jews had broken forth and resulted in uprisings and bloodshed.

Luke 13:1-3 mentions one of the disturbances, or alleged disturbances, that Pilate — the normally decisive, swift and determined acting Roman governor — had settled in typical fashion. He had sent his soldiers into the Temple area and violently mingled the blood of certain troublesome Galileans with the blood of the animals they came there to sacrifice.

The Gospels show Pilate hesitated for a little while regarding the condemnation of Christ. It was a thoroughly untypical and uncharacteristic role for him. His wife's dream and warning not to have anything to do with Jesus (Matt. 27:19), the obvious bias and hatred against Jesus of the avaricious Jewish leaders (who also hated Pilate and whom Pilate distrusted in return), Jesus' obvious in-

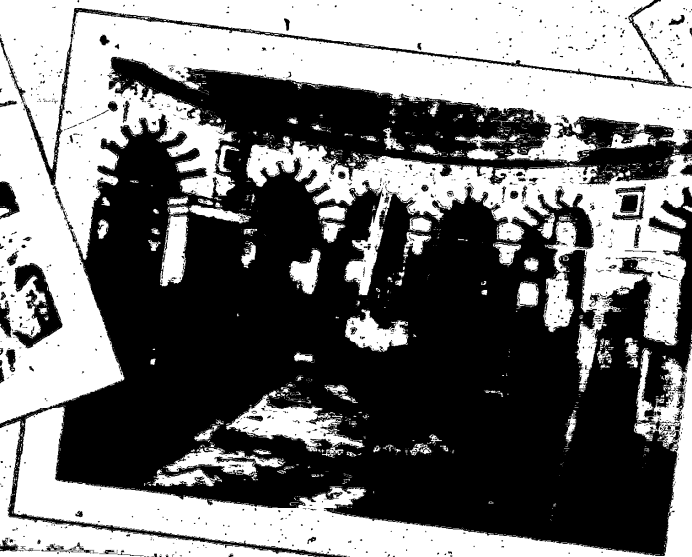


Jerusalem

Ernst Hepp - GN



Golgotha



Dome of The Rock

nocence and the witness of Pilate's own intelligence that this was indeed no ordinary man (perhaps indeed a son of God — John 19:7-9), had somewhat unnerved him for a moment. But he rebounded quickly and decisively. *Jesus would die.* And he, Pilate, would ostentatiously wash his hands in the matter and claim himself to be innocent of the crime.

It is considered probable that Pilate's Jerusalem home was also within the fortress Antonia. Certainly his judgment hall was there, the *praetorium* of John 18:28.

The Pharisees led Jesus there to be condemned, but would not themselves enter because those Gentile precincts would have defiled them ceremonially, preventing them from eating the Passover lamb according to Jewish law that night. The Jews killed their Passover at the end of the 14th of Nisan rather than at the beginning, the time Jesus set by example for the New Testament bread and wine to be taken annually.

We entered the underground chamber where a portion of the ancient Pavement has been uncovered beneath the Catholic Chapel of

*Flagellation.* A full story below the main level of the church, we saw the strong but low arches which now support the structures above. We sat on low benches — the low ceiling would have made it difficult for a large group (we were with about three quarters of a hundred tourists — mostly foreign — at the time) to stand for very long.

The enthusiastic, blue-eyed, red-cheeked Catholic Sister had spoken to us above regarding what we would see, then guided us below. There she pointed out the marks made long ago on the large flat stones of the pavement by the Roman soldiers as they played simple ancient games to while away their idle time. We saw the channels cut across the paving stones to drain away the rain. A few steps away we looked into the two-foot mouth of the ancient cistern, still filled with black water only a few feet down, which underlays a part of the ancient courtyard.

We saw the grooves which the practical Romans had cut into the face of the paving stones to keep the horses' hooves from slipping.

As the Catholic Sister continued

her explanation, the ancient scene suddenly became very real. We saw, in our mind's eye, not any more the low arches painted with modern paint, no more the underground gloom lit by sparse electric lights. Instead we were suddenly *there* — in the first century. The open courtyard was busy with people, Roman soldiers, horses. There was a busy coming and going, a hubbub of voices — Latin, Greek, Aramaic — and was that even a snatch of Hebrew?

It was very real. Surely this was indeed an identifiable and valid historical site. The mood passed as we traversed a few steps up and out into the 20th century to follow the traditional route of Jesus from condemnation to crucifixion, to Golgotha, following the so-called *Via Dolorosa* or "Road of Pain."

#### Beneath the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem

Not every supposedly significant site we visited was so apparently genuine. Look for a separate article later examining the rival claims put forward on behalf of different sites of Golgotha or Calvary — the place



Gethsemane



Roman Walkway

of the skull — and the associated rival locations assigned as the place Jesus was actually entombed for three days and three nights.

Everyone knows that Jesus was born at Bethlehem. The 3500-year-old town is located about five miles south of Jerusalem in the territory originally assigned to the tribe of Judah by Joshua after the conquest of the land from the Canaanites.

Bethlehem was the hereditary home of the ancestors of King David (and therefore also of the ancestors of Christ). When Mary's time was fulfilled and Jesus was to be born, Joseph and Mary had returned there to be enrolled for the purpose of taxation by the occupying Romans because it was their ancestral hometown.

We saw the exact spot where allegedly Jesus was born. There was no manger. Nor did the scene in any way resemble a stable. It was a rather small, tomblike underground chamber, festooned by multitudes of the ubiquitous little oil lamps kept burning at such shrines. The walls were hung (or padded?) with ancient, now decrepit, wall coverings.

On one side is the exact place where we were told the mahger-turned-cradle rested. About six or eight feet from it a small, low-roofed area only reachable by one on hands and knees is marked by a six-inch hole in the stone floor around which is a silvery metal plate roughly in the shape of a star. This round hole supposedly marked the exact spot where Jesus was born. Just what the hole signifies I never learned, but just as we left two nuns hurried in from above and knelt and kissed that plate and the sides of the hole.

We left wondering how that demonstration could be the religion Christ lived to found and died to save! Or even the religion the apostle James described in James 1:27.

#### Many Other Sites

We also saw where Jesus is supposed to have fallen on His face to pray in agony just before Judas, the mob and the Roman soldiers came to arrest Him. It is a large uneven rock in the forefront of the Church of All Nations where the Garden of Gethsemane was located. We saw

**LEFT TO RIGHT:** One of the alleged and disputed sites of Christ's death and burial. The little-photographed rock itself, with its four-foot-high wall. Where olive trees grow today very much as they did then. Roman military's graffiti.

*Left to right: V. Gutierrez — GN; Mattson Photo Service; James Lee — GN; P. Terres.*

ancient olive trees (but not as ancient as the time of Christ) just outside the church, which gave an idea of what may then have been in the garden, those nearly 2000 years ago.

We visited the rock which is beneath the Dome of the Rock, one of the most important Moslem holy places. It was probably where Abraham almost offered his son Isaac as a burnt offering. It was where Solomon built the Temple of God one thousand years before Christ, and the location where Levitical priests were still sacrificing and maintaining the ancient rituals during the first generation or so of the New Testament Church.

We saw many things. Many of them had a great deal of meaning for all of us who are in that New Testament Church today.

— Lawson C. Briggs

## The Church in Action



### Four Hundred Years of Experience Gather for Seminar

Big Sandy, Texas:

Thirty-five ministers of the Church in the United States got the year off to a good start with nine days of meetings and workshops at Ambassador College, Big Sandy, Texas. The session was one of a continued series of educational programs designed to help God's ministers serve more effectively. C. Wayne Cole, director of Church administration in the United States, presided with the assistance of Art Mekarow, director of the Ministerial Education and Training Program.

This particular seminar was for "veterans" with ten years or more of experience in God's ministry. Collectively they have accumulated over 400 years of experience in preaching and serving people. This



wealth of knowledge and understanding was shared and augmented during 2½-hour sessions held twice daily over subjects ranging from "coping with change" to effective preaching and organizing time.

Though separated by time, distance and the uniqueness of their individual experiences, Mr. Mekarow found it "rather amazing that we've been coming to about the same conclusions on matters. We came to find that we feel the same way, we experience the same basic things, and we are really more in agreement than we even imagined."

### Dutch Work Fights Inflation

Bricket Wood, England:

Dr. Roy McCarthy, head of the Dutch Work, has announced several changes to cope with inflation while maintaining the effectiveness of the witness to the Netherlands and Belgium.

Until recently, *De Echte Waar-*

*SENIOR PASTORS* pose for a picture during the seminar (left) Elbert Atlas, pastor in Detroit, Michigan, talks with C. Wayne Cole, director of church administration, during a break (above).

heid, the Dutch edition of the *Plain Truth*, was both printed and mailed in Britain. Now, however, it will be printed in England — but mailed in Belgium. This will take advantage of lower printing costs in England (compared to costs in the Benelux countries) and lower postal tariffs in Belgium. The weight of the new format of the magazine — 57 grams versus 75 for the old — offsets a recent increase in Belgian postal rates, making possible a greater savings in mailing out the 28,000 copies of the Dutch edition and 4,500 additional copies in English sent to the Netherlands and Belgium.

Another stratagem involves the moving of several personnel back to the Netherlands. The production staff of *De Echte Waarheid* will stay in England. But Dr. McCarthy has moved to the Netherlands to pastor the church there and respond to

questions and visit requests from magazine readers. Miss Iepke Klarrenberg has also returned to read mail, maintain manual files on our subscription lists, as well as to continue translation work.

The work of evangelizing the Lowland countries in the Dutch language was formally organized in September 1968. Actually, a foundation had already been laid with English broadcasts over such stations as Radio Luxembourg. The programs resulted in an English-speaking church being raised up in December 1967. At the time members met once every six or seven weeks in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

Since October 1970, they have been meeting every Sabbath. Membership has grown from 19 to 45 and is expected to grow significantly in the future.



Dean Wilson

## Canadian Ministry Plans for Another Big Year

Pasadena, California:

In late January, Canadian district superintendents flew south to balmy Southern California to confer in Pasadena with Leslie L. McCullough, director of the International Division of the Worldwide Church of God. In five days of meetings they discussed general ad-

ministrative matters as well as plans for growth and personnel placement for the upcoming year.

Dean Wilson, director of the Canadian Work, reported that the Church has been growing steadily in Canada. Membership climbed over

12% in 1974 and 13 new churches and several Bible studies were added. "We had good growth all the way around," he noted. "The growth pattern this year looks like it will be just as good or better than it was in 1974."

Scott Ashley



## Benefit Basketball Game for Flood Victims

Big Sandy, Texas:

Garner Ted Armstrong, with 18 points, was a leading scorer for the Ambassador College, Big Sandy, faculty team as it defeated the "Thunderchickens" of Tyler, Texas, from radio station KTBB. The final score after several playing strategies — fair, foul and funny — was 95-48. The game played on February 8 was to raise funds for victims of a recent flood in Nacogdoches, Texas. Over 650 people attended and in excess of \$770 was raised for the relief effort.

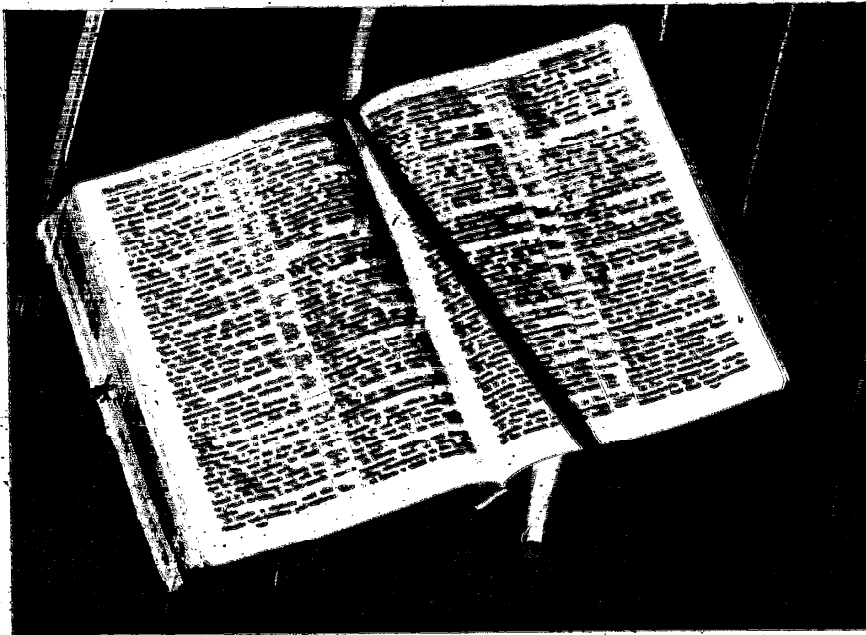
KTBB TEAM tries unorthodox play (below). Garner Ted Armstrong thanks crowd for turning out.

GN PHOTO



Wayne James

# GET TO KNOW YOUR BIBLE



ing with technological knowledge of every stripe and description, mankind is nevertheless suffering from a severe case of knowledge starvation. A certain *kind* of knowledge — knowledge of God's plan for mankind: "My people are destroyed for lack of [spiritual] knowledge. . . I thundered the prophet Hosea (Hosea 4:6). If anything, that prophecy is much more automatic today than in the waning dynasty of the kings of Judah — the time when Hosea prophesied.

The third irony: at a time when more Bibles are being printed in more versions and languages than ever before, biblical ignorance is a hallmark of our age. We have, as a whole, rejected the Word of God as a solution to our monumental modern problems. Yet the Bible is the foundation of all true knowledge. Does that sound shocking? To capitalize on an overworked cliché, we all need "an anchor for our souls." Something we can grasp onto as the world and all of its man-devised structures shake uncertainly beneath our feet. Never before have we needed to immerse ourselves more in the knowledge of God and His plan for a presently shaky humanity. In other words — we need to get to know our Bibles.

## What is the Bible?

The English word "Bible" is a derivative (or anglicized form) of the Greek expression *biblia*, which is itself a diminutive plural of the Greek term *biblos* or *biblien* — meaning "books." The Bible is a collection of sixty-six books (twenty-seven in the New Testament and thirty-nine in the Old).

We often refer to the Bible by the expression "Holy Scriptures," which merely means "Holy Writings." The biblical revelation is a written revelation — although many of its words were originally spoken orally.

The Word of God is composed of two main parts: the Old Testament

**M**ANY SHALL run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan. 12:4).

This ancient prophecy rings in our ears today with momentous mind-boggling significance. The twin phenomena of almost instant communication and the knowledge explosion have spawned the unwanted by-products of future shock, culture shock and even religious shock.

The first irony: in an age of unprecedented scientific and technological knowledge, we are suffering from the perpetually growing headache of uncertainty. Governments, groups and individuals grope for an elusive security in an earth characterized by the growing specter of global chaos. We live in a world of ominous forebodings, where even the future existence of biological life is an open question.

The second irony: in an age teem-

by John R. Schroeder



and the New Testament. The coming of Christ is the glue that joins these two testaments together.

The original language of the first Testament is basically Hebrew, with some few chapters written in Aramaic (a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew). Hellenistic Greek (or *Koine*) is the original New Testament language.

The Bible is an *inspired* collection of closely related writings. "All scripture is inspired by God..." (II Tim. 3:16, RSV throughout remainder of article). And, "No prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (II Peter 1:21).

But the question immediately emerges: How do we know which books are inspired (and therefore are part of the Bible) and which are not?

#### The Theology of Canonicity

Our English word "canonicity" is an anglicized derivative of the Greek term *kanon*, meaning a "rod" or "ruler." Men and organizations of men could hardly have canonized the biblical books without proper rules or standards.

Canonicity began with Moses. Prior to his time there was pre-canonical revelation, but in all probability it was largely limited to the vehicle of oral speech. Canonicity was cut and dried in the days of Moses. He knew God as a literal, visible, personal friend. God said of Moses: "With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the Lord" (Num. 12:8). God has revealed Himself to some men in a far more literal manner than He has to others.

Genesis is a capsule history of the human race from man's creation to the time of Joseph — great grandson of Abraham. Its time frame spans many centuries. Of course, it is very possible that the Genesis story was

preserved in books, rather than just orally oral traditions, and carried through the global Flood in Noah's Ark.

Many scholars attribute the Genesis authorship to Moses. But whether he wrote it himself from oral traditions, received it as a direct revelation from God, or merely edited already existing, preserved written accounts is not completely clear. What is clear is its inspiration and canonicity.

Jesus of Nazareth confirmed its historicity in the New Testament. He referred to the Genesis One earth-creation (Mark 13:19), the creation of Adam and Eve (Matt. 19:3-4), the historicity of Abel (Matt. 23:35), the Noachian Deluge (Luke 17:26-27), Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (John 8:37; Matt. 8:11), Lot's wife (Luke 17:32) and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Mark 6:11, KJV).

In the faith chapter (Hebrews 11), the apostle Paul refers to the first and last events in the book of Genesis (as well as many in between). He begins with creation (verse 3) and then mentions, chronologically, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, and finally Joseph, the last main character in Genesis. Paul ends his Genesis commentary with these words: "By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his burial" (verse 22; cf. Gen. 50:25).

Moses lived the material in the four books following Genesis (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Jesus Himself recognized Moses as the author of the Pentateuch: "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?" (John 5:46-47.)

Of course, editings and additions were made to the Torah after Moses' death. Examples include the

insertion of the parenthetical remark in Numbers 12:3 describing Moses' humility (Moses would hardly have recorded his own meekness) and the account of his death in Deuteronomy 34. Many scholars agree that Ezra the Priest did much of the official editing of the Pentateuch.

There are several possible standards, probably all used in determining final canonicity. Among these were inspiration, internal evidence (some books of the Bible *internally* assert or imply themselves or other canonical books to be of divine origin — cf. Joshua 1:8; Judges 3:4; Jeremiah 36), previous official public action (Neh. 8:5), and the recognition of previous canonizations (i.e., Moses).

For us today, New Testament corroboration is an extremely important factor. This includes recognition of the Old Testament writings by Jesus and the apostles.

#### The Tripartite Division

The Old Testament was divided into three parts: the law, the prophets and the writings. Jesus Christ recognized this tripartite division in the New Testament: "These are my words which I spoke to you ... that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms [sic: here, probably called 'the Psalms' rather than writings] because the book of Psalms is the first and longest book in this third section" (Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, p. 96) must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:44-45).

Jesus called these three divisions of the Old Testament "the scriptures." In addition, He implied the standard order still used in the Hebrew editions of the Bible. "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (verse 27).

Jesus gave credence to the historical timespan of the first Testament: "... That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel [Gen. 4:8] to the blood of Zechariah [see II Chronicles 24:20-21 - the final book in the Jewish Version of the Old Testament] ..." (Matt. 23:35).

Says noted British scholar F. F. Bruce: "It is almost certain that the Bible with which He [Jesus] was familiar ended with the books of Chronicles, which came right at the end of the 'Writings' in the Hebrew Bible. The evidence for this is that when He wished to sum up all the martyrs whose blood had been shed in the Old Testament times, He used the expression [quoted above in Matthew 23:35] ... Now Abel is obviously the first martyr of the Bible, but why should Zechariah come last? Because in the order of books in the Hebrew Bible [see Jewish Publication Society translation] he is the last martyr to be named ... in 2 Chron. 24:21 ..." (op. cit., p. 97).

#### The Apocrypha

Some Bibles contain fourteen additional books called the *Apocrypha*. There are a number of valid reasons why these books were not included in the official Old Testament canon, and should not, therefore, be regarded as part of the inspired Bible.

Space does not allow broaching all of the reasons here, but you may have the details by writing for our free reprint article "Do We Have the Complete Bible?"

In this article we restrict ourselves to Jesus' omission of the Apocrypha - He never once cited or quoted from it - and the following testimony of the eminent first-century Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus: "For we [the Jews] have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another [as the Greeks have], but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly

believed to be divine. ... [Against Apion, book I, section VIII]. Josephus has in mind the fact that today's thirty-nine Old Testament books were sometimes included in 22 different scrolls.)

F. F. Bruce comments on this testimony of Josephus: "We are on firmer ground when we come to Josephus. ... For he tells us much more precisely what books were accounted specially authoritative by his nation. ... Josephus echoes the prevailing opinion about what books were canonical and what were not. And though he uses the Septuagint freely, he does not regard the Apocrypha as canonical" (op. cit., p. 99).

#### Canonicity Continues With the New Testament

Many books were circulating in the New Testament era. Apparently a substantial number of authors even wrote gospels about the life of Jesus. "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" (Luke 1:1-2).

The official Jewish community (those sitting in Moses' seat - Matt. 23:2) was responsible for the preservation of the Old Testament text and "entrusted with the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2). But if the Jews rejected Christ, who then did God designate to perform the same function in New Testament times?

Perhaps Jesus Himself gives us the key: "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation [the New Testament Church] producing the fruits of it" (Matt. 21:43).

The Church of God is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, with Jesus, of course, being the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:19-20). One of the chief first-century apostles was Peter (Gal. 2:7-8). Notice Jesus' personal commission to Simon Peter: "And I tell

you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:18-19).

The indications are that Peter began canonizing the New Testament books. The time setting of his second epistle is very close to his death (II Peter 1:14). In this particular epistle, he is deeply concerned about preservation of truth: "Therefore I intend always to remind you of these things, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to argue you by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body [death] will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me" (verses 12-14).

Now consider this key verse: "And I will see to it that after my departure [death] you may be able at any time to recall these things" (verse 15). How could this be accomplished except by the preservation of written works?

Then in verses 16 through 21 and on to chapter 2:1-3, Peter differentiates between the authentic true doctrine and destructive heresies.

There is no doubt that when he authored this second epistle, Peter knew what was written Scripture up to that time. "So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures" (II Peter 3:15-16). Peter not only equated Paul's epistles with Scripture, but he also knew what constituted the other Scriptures.

#### The Role of Paul

But Peter was not the only apostle involved with the canon.

The time setting of Paul's second

epistle to Timothy is very near to the apostle's death. "For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure [death] has come" (II Tim. 4:6). Paul then makes an urgent request. Notice these important final instructions to the young evangelist: "When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments" (verse 13).

F. F. Bruce comments on the above verse: "What the parchments were which Paul so anxiously desired Timothy to bring we cannot be sure, but it is a reasonable guess that they contained portions of Holy Scripture" (*op. cit.*, p. 12).

So the indications are that Paul had a role in canonizing parts of the New Testament in cooperation with Peter. However, since neither Peter nor Paul were alive when the final books were written, it remained for another apostle to close the canon.

#### The Role of John

To continue our story, turn to the Gospel of John, the 21st chapter.

Relative to canonicity, verses 21 to 23 are pertinent: "When Peter saw him [the apostle John], he said to Jesus, 'Lord, what about this man?' Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!' Yet Jesus did not say to him that he [John] was not to die, but 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?'"

Plainly, John was to outlive Peter — and for a reason. Jesus was not ready, before Peter's death, to reveal the full measure of "things to come" (John 16:13). John's Gospel and the book of Revelation (two major New Testament books) were yet to be written.

Note F. F. Bruce's comment: "Towards the end of the century, John, perhaps the last surviving companion of Jesus in the days of His flesh, records his reminiscences of his Master's life and teaching, together with his meditations on them, in such a way as to supple-

ment the earlier Gospels" (*op. cit.*, p. 107).

The Gospel of John was the last canonical biography of Christ to be written. It is very distinct from the other Gospels, mentioning many events omitted in the three Synoptic Gospels.

John's Gospel reveals that Christ Himself had planned for Peter to very possibly be involved in canonization, (for the upbuilding of Christ's sheep) and for John to outlive him to complete the job. This is indicated also in the finality of the conclusion of the Gospel of John: "This is the disciple [John] who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true. But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:24-25).

The implication is that no other Gospels were to be written.

The concluding verses to the book of Revelation likewise have a ring of finality: "I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book" (Rev. 22:18).

John, the last original apostle and author of the book of Revelation, was approaching the end of his physical life. No more canonical books would be written in that age.

#### Standards for New Testament Canonicity

What are some possible criteria for canonizing books into the New Testament? Apostolicity is perhaps the major standard. Every book in the New Testament was either written by an apostle or someone closely associated with an apostle. "So we find Mark, the companion and interpreter of Peter, committing to

writing in Rome the Gospel as Peter habitually proclaimed it... and Luke, the companion of Paul, writes in two books [Luke and Acts] for Gentile readers a narrative for the beginnings of Christianity from the birth of John the Baptist up to Paul's two years' residence in Rome..." (Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 107). All other New Testament books were written by apostles.

Consistency and accuracy in doctrine, internal evidence of inspiration, etc. are other possible criteria for canonicity.

Much more could be said about canonicity. Much could be argued that is not entirely clear.

But now that we know that the sixty-six biblical books are authoritative in God's sight, what should our attitude and approach toward the study of these Scriptures be? Clearly the important thing for us is what we do with the written revelation in our possession today. Are we reading and studying the Bible as we should?

#### Methods of Bible Study

**Overview:** the Bible has a distinct theme running through it from Genesis to Revelation. A good way to begin is to read through the whole Bible (in order) from start to finish. The Worldwide Church of God publishes a complete booklet with tips on just how to accomplish this task. Write for your free copy of *Read the Book*.

**Overview of a Particular Book:** read any one of the sixty-six books through from beginning to end, endeavoring to determine the outline and the main purpose.

**Study by Subject or Topic:** individual subjects such as salvation, repentance, Christian living, prophecy, etc., may easily be studied by obtaining a Bible concordance.

Other important keys and methods of Bible study are presented in our free booklet *How To Study the Bible*. Simply request a copy.

The important goal, by whatever means you accomplish it, is to get to know your Bible. □

# THE TITHING PRINCIPLE

by George P. Ritter

**M**ANY businessmen have regularly searched the pages of the Bible for guidance in their daily affairs. They have found that the Bible has many practical words of advice — especially to the money handler.

Consider the biblical principle of savings: "Go to the ant, thou slug-gard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest" (Prov. 6:6-8).

But a deeper and more profound monetary concept is contained in the words of Jesus-Christ: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

Once a person begins to use some of his resources to help others, he discovers that he has begun to lose some of his selfish attitudes. This principle of concern for others exerts a great stabilizing influence on the overall well-being of an individual. The book of Proverbs expresses the principle in this way: "It is possible to give away, and become richer! It is also possible to hold on too tightly and lose everything. Yes, the liberal man shall be rich! By watering others, he waters himself" (Prov. 11:24-25, *The Living Bible*).

Thousands have had their lives vastly changed for the better by the biblical principle of tithing. They have found that it works!

Look at it this way. Everything produced — money and the things money will buy — comes from the earth. Man didn't make the earth — God did! Man merely applies energy in thinking and planning and labor while on the earth, which God created and owns. Where does the energy man expends really come from? It too comes from God. You merely utilize what God supplies. Therefore, God has a prior claim of

ownership on all you take for granted that you produce.

But God is concerned about humanity. He has our interest and welfare in mind. He has set laws in motion for our benefit, regulating that portion of His wealth which our thinking and our labor extracted from the earth and developed.

God's law regulating what man earns can be likened to a contract. He allows humanity to work on His earth, to use a part of the earth for food and other materials for our livelihood — to utilize its soil, its timber, its water, its coal and oil, and to manufacture products from it. In turn, God wants us to understand that we are working with Him in partnership — maintaining and developing what He created.

## The History of That Partnership

The first man Adam was instructed to dress and keep the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15). His descendant Abraham was educated in all of the commandments, laws and statutes regarding man's relationship to God, himself and the earth (Gen. 26:5).

Consider one of those principles recorded in Genesis 14. A confederation of four kings invaded the flourishing cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and took Lot, Abraham's nephew, captive (verses 11-12). Subsequently, Abraham engaged these four kings in battle, rescuing Lot as well as recovering all the booty.

Enroute to his home, Abraham met Melchizedek — King of Salem and priest of the Most High God. He then gave Melchizedek tithes of all the spoils, including nonagricultural products (verses 18-20).

There are several interesting observations that can be drawn from this account. The main one is this: the spoils clearly belonged to Abra-

ham. In a strict sense, according to the custom of war, Abraham was entitled to all won in battle by right of conquest. But not wanting his wealth traceable to any man, he returned everything except a full tenth and what his young men needed for provisions (Gen. 14:23-24). The crux point is that he gave the tithe to Melchizedek before disposition to any other parties.

Abraham's grandson — Jacob — was involved in the other recorded pre-Mosaic tithing incident. Jacob was running for his life from brother Esau (Gen. 27:43, 44). During his flight, God promised Jacob both the land and an innumerable host of descendants (Gen. 28:13-15).

In a positive response to these promises, "... Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God" (verses 20-21).

Then Jacob continued with a little-known second promise to his Creator: "... And of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (verse 22). Reference to Genesis 31:3, 13, 18-20 and 35:1, 6-15 shows that Jacob fulfilled the first part of this vow to God.

In that light it would be highly inconceivable for Jacob not to have fulfilled the second half of his promise as well — a promise to tithe on all the future increase that God would give him. Presumably this would mean that Jacob would have had to tithe more than once, since he would not have received all of his God-given sustenance at once.

## Levitical Tithing

Apart from these two specific accounts, tithing is not discussed again until incorporated in the Mosaic

code. Here it is enjoined as an ongoing law, not one established at Mount Sinai (Num. 18:21).

Later, reflecting on the priesthood in the ancient Israel of Moses, the apostle Paul said that the sons of Levi "have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law..." (Heb. 7:5). The Levites took the tithes—but they did not specifically belong to them.

According to the law, Moses had stated: "And all the tithes of the land... is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord" (Lev. 27:30). However, God did designate the tithes for Levitical and priestly use at that time: "... I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance..." (Numbers 18:24).

Now, for the sake of space, we pick up the story hundreds of years after Moses. As long as the Israelites performed their responsibility in paying the tithe diligently, the Temple services flourished following the return of a few tribes from Babylon to the Holy Land. It was a time of exciting restoration, a spiritual renaissance for the Jewish people.

#### The Message of Malachi

Once the initial zeal wore off, however, the situation in post-captivity Judah began to deteriorate. Priests became politically oriented and contemptuous of the Temple services—haphazard in their selection of sacrificial animals.

God gave them a scathing indictment through Malachi. He pointed to the track record of forsaking His ordinances and laws since the nation's infancy in the wilderness (Mal. 2:8; 3:7).

When the people asked God just what He meant, the Creator replied: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and

offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation" (Mal. 3:8-9).

By not paying the Levites the tenth, the people were actually robbing God.

But was the message of Malachi only for the people of that day? The prophetic pre- and post-context of this tithing passage indicates that the message (indeed the tithing principle) was also for a future time!

#### New Testament Tithing

In Matthew 23, Jesus Christ—a New Testament Prophet—indicted the religious leaders for their upside-down priorities concerning God's way of life. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin—and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these [tithing] ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (verse 23).

So Jesus of Nazareth did endorse the tithing principle even in the case of its picaresque observance in what might be likened to today's backyard garden.

Another biblical passage helps to clarify this important verse in context. Notice the very first verse of this chapter: "Then spake Jesus to the multitudes, and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat."

Apparently Matthew 23 was directed to the general populace and Christ's own special students as well as the scribes and Pharisees.

At any rate, Jesus' own words do appear to uphold the tithing principle (cf. Luke 11:42).

#### Tithing Today

Fully considering the foregoing material, how should the twentieth-century Christian approach the sub-

ject of tithing? In retrospect, it is important that we wholly recognize that God is the owner, proprietor and Creator of everything we observe in the natural environment.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1; 50:10, 12; Job 41:11; Deut. 10:14; Ex. 19:5, etc.). And this includes rare metals often employed as basic monetary standards and mediums of exchange. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Eternal of hosts" (Haggai 2:8).

And there is no possible way humanity can begin to reimburse the Creator for all of His beneficence. The gift of life itself is precious beyond words. Then there is land, water, air and all the little accoutrements of the earth that go to make life so enjoyable for men and women. "... For he [God] makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45, RSV).

And as David wrote about God: "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits..." (Ps. 68:19). He knew that our God is a giving, benevolent God. "Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing" (Ps. 145:16).

Tithing (indeed the giving principle) shows our respect, love and admiration for our Creator. It is an expression of honor and acknowledgment of God's supreme lordship and mastery in the universe—a fitting minimum standard for Christian giving.

A very wise king certainly captured the principle of this giving spirit: "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Prov. 3:9, 10). □



# CAN PROPHECY FAIL?

By Lawson C. Biggs

In every generation people have made predictions of things to come. Imminent events. Far-off events. Likely events, unlikely events. And sometimes they have come to pass.

But sometimes they didn't. They haven't. And they won't!

Psychics prophesy. And few people become upset when such predictions miss the mark. Weather forecasters prophesy, and people take it in stride if it rains at the picnic.

Even political analysts and pollsters predict. All they have to do when things go wrong is to red-tacodily explain why they erred.

But let a religious figure or group make a prediction — and miss — and it shakes people's faith in God! But is it really God's fault?

"It's in the Bible!"

It may not be true that "you can prove anything by the Bible," but many people try. "The Bible says . . ." they insistently and dogmatically proclaim — when the Bible says no such thing. They may think it does. They may be totally correct, but they may be wrong. They misunderstand and misinterpret Scripture. But should we blame God?

The fact of the matter is that much of what practically all people think they got from the Bible, read right from the Bible, and can "prove" from the Bible, they actually got right from their own ideas, or from other people — parents, friends, church associates — or possibly even from a spiritual source, through the subtle planting of a thought in the mind by an evil spirit. Nowhere is this fact better illustrated than in people's understanding of prophecy.

When human expectations don't come to pass as proclaimed, it isn't the Bible's fault. The problem is that human interpretations of what the Bible means are often in error.

Take for example, the written warnings and prognostications of G. G. Rupert. Rupert was a prominent American Holy-Day and Sabbath keeper of the first three decades of this century. His predictions about *The Yellow Peril* (the title of one of his books) proved to be somewhat prophetic in forecasting the coming menace of Japan, even while Japan and the United States were allies in World

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War I. Ostensibly his ideas came from the Bible.

Like other prophetic expositors, he had built up an imposing theory by taking dearly held personal opinions about Bible prophecies and propping them up with a show of biblical verses. And part of them, through the '30s and '40s, and even the '50s, did seem to be coming or about to come to pass.

But was his understanding wholly from the Bible? It was not. It was derived from his own interpretation of the Bible plus commonly held public opinions and fears, seemingly apparent trends, and a liberal dose

of private and personal guess. Because his understanding fell short, his prophetic interpretation (concerning a great race war which he supposed to be imminent and which would bring on the end of the world) eventually flopped.

Few people alive today have ever heard of G. G. Rupert. A few that continued to follow closely his thinking were finally compelled to understand the "yellow" Asian peril as being "red" communism, primarily that of the white Europeans of the U.S.S.R.

Don't Blame God!

God's prophecy in the Bible had not failed. But man's understanding of it had, and there are reasons for this. There are important spiritual and doctrinal principles involved in all such situations. The first and most important of these is that it is not God's will that man be able to perfectly understand the future.

Enabling man to acquire detailed, specific knowledge of yet future events has never been God's purpose. His prophecies reveal only a general overall picture. The real purpose of most prophecies is revealed in principle in John 13:19: "Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe . . ."

When the prophet Daniel continued to ask for more and more detailed understanding of the broad, all-inclusive prophecies that had been revealed to him, God answered by the angel: "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (Dan. 12:9). Neither Daniel nor any man was or is allowed to understand them, perfectly and precisely until they are actually coming to pass.

A second important principle is that God is not willing for man to



determine for Him how He will or must fulfill any prophecy. That would mean that man would be ruling God, rather than that God does and will rule over man (see Ezekiel 20:33 and Isaiah 40:10 as examples of God's determination to be the Ruler).

No man rules God. "Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?" (Isa. 40:13-14.)

Principle three is that in order to implement the preceding principles it appears that God has had the prophecies of the Bible written ambiguously and indistinctly so that He can make them work out at the time and in the manner *when* and *how* He chooses — and yet fulfill His written Word to the letter. God is flexible. He isn't committed to an irrevocable timetable.

There was the case, written for an example to us, of God's promise — a prophecy — to Abraham that He would make of Abraham's seed a great nation! But because of the actions and attitudes of the people of Israel who were that seed, God stood ready to scrap His intended way of fulfilling the promise by wiping out the nation as a whole and raising up a new nation of the seed of Moses (Ex. 32:10). All that was lacking was the go-ahead from Moses. God had committed Himself. He was willing, if need be, to change. The new nation from Moses would still have been the seed of Abraham, and the promise would have been perfectly fulfilled another way.

Years ago, when I was in college, a roommate of mine had a personal

standard joke that illustrates this principle.

"I can tell you exactly when Christ will return," he would say.

"When?" we would eagerly demand.

"It's the hour that you think not [Matt. 24:44; Luke 12:40]," he would reply. "He won't come at any time when you expect it. And that's for certain."

#### Prophecy Is Conditional

That brings us to one more important principle: most prophecy is to some degree conditional. Its exact fulfillment depends on certain

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stated, or unstated but tacitly understood, conditions which are in the province of humanity. Take the prophecy of Jonah against Nineveh.

God had literally forced Jonah, by the storm at sea and the sojourn in the great fish, to go and warn Nineveh of imminent destruction. Then God changed His plan *when the Assyrians repented*. Jonah was mightily displeased, although he knew all along that the threatened destruction was conditional:

"... Was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God,

and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil" (Jonah 4:2).

Jonah knew in advance that God would repent (change His mind) if the people repented. And even though Jonah may never have told the Ninevites it was conditional — at least it is not so recorded — the king understood it that way (Jonah 3:9).

Was the entire prophecy against Nineveh therefore scrapped, because the Assyrians repented? It was not. Only the time element of it was changed. When they returned to their old ways, the punishment was again set in motion. And it finally came to pass in 612 B.C. when Nineveh was destroyed.

What about the apostle Paul's statement that sometimes "prophecies will fail"?

#### Just What Do You Mean — "Fail"?

Because of misuses, abuses and vanity among the members of the first-century Corinthian church, the apostle Paul found it necessary to devote three whole chapters of his first epistle to the Corinthians to the subject of spiritual gifts.

He begins chapter 12 with the words, "Now concerning spiritual gifts..." As he continues, he discusses the purpose and function of spiritual gifts, and distinguishes between one kind of gift and another in terms of two things: 1) which gifts are "best" (1 Cor. 12:31); and 2) what, after all, will continue to be useful into eternity. "In a word, there are three things that last for ever: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of them all is love" (1 Cor. 13:13. *The New English Bible*).

To help develop this context the apostle made his famous statement, so often now misunderstood and taken out of context, that "proph-

ecies, they shall fail" (1 Cor. 13:8). Prophecies are among the temporal gifts which are contrasted with the three things which will endure. And this is the key to Paul's meaning.

It was the *gift* of prophecy that was to fail" (from Greek *katargoo*, properly defined as "to render inoperative or idle"). The *gift* of inspired prophesying, which was known and exercised in the early Church before the New Testament was written, was to disappear. Thus, the scholarly *Jerusalem Bible* says: "Love does not come to an end. But if there are gifts of prophecy, the time will come when they must fail; or the gift of languages, it will not continue for ever; and knowledge — for this, too, the time will come when it must fail."

Notice that Paul's declaration has no reference to God giving warnings or predictions which He could not or would not, for any reason, bring to pass. The question is not in any way one about predictions of events that never happen. And notice also how the apostle's next words illuminate some of the points explained earlier in this article.

For our knowledge and our prophecy alike are partial [in other words, we lack most of the details concerning the actual working out of the fulfillment of any prophecy], and the partial vanishes when wholeness comes [when the actual events can be seen in their fulfillment]. When I was a child, my speech, my outlook, and my thoughts were all childish. When I grew up, I had finished with childish things" (verses 9-11, NEB). Applied to prophecy, this refers to the coming time when we will be finished with partial predictions and with guesses about how things will happen.

"Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror [or, we see through a dim window — a reference to the ancient windows made of thin sheets of horn, translucent crystal, line stone or greased paper before today's clear glass was manufactured], but then we shall see face to

face. My knowledge now is partial; then it will be whole, like God's knowledge of me" (verse 12, NEB).

Still today, like Paul, we are unable to see clearly to the actual fulfillment of prophecies — as God sees — but we see only dimly. And that is by God's intention. That the scripture itself reveals: "... No one can interpret any prophecy of Scripture by himself" (1 Peter 1:20, NEB). Why? Because, as the rest of the verse explains, it was not man who prophesied — and is able to bring his prophecies to pass — but it was God, through His Holy Spirit, who predicted and will fulfill.

That is why human interpretations, additions, or detailed applications of Bible prophecies can only lead to mistaken results and wrongly directed zeal. Those are human prophecies — which have failed, are failing and will continue to fail.

#### Prophecy Is Sure

Despite the possibility of human error as shown by the foregoing points, Jesus Christ did commission His Church to preach and publish the gospel of the Kingdom of God to all the world as a witness (Matt. 28:18-20; 24:14; Mark 13:10; 16:15; Acts 1:8).

And the gospel is prophetic! Jesus Christ said: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things [prophesied future happenings] that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36).

The general tenor of Bible prophecy is really coming alive in this, the opening moments of the last quarter of our century. It promises to be the most traumatic quarter century in the history of man.

While keeping the crucial points of this article fully in mind, we all need to vigilantly watch world events as they unfold, and observe the fulfillment of many prophecies as revealed by God in the Bible.

Yes, human error is always possible — but God's Word is sure! □

## How Your Good News Subscription Has Been Paid

Jesus said, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached [and published — Mark 13:10] in all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matt. 24:14) at this time, just before the end of this age. A price must be paid for this magazine, the Correspondence Course, booklets and other literature.

But how? Christ forbids us to sell it to those who receive it: "Freely ye have received, freely give," said Jesus to His disciples whom He was sending to proclaim His gospel. "It is more blessed to give," He said, "than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

God's way is the way of love — and that is the way of giving. God expects every child of His to give freewill offerings and to tithe, as His means of paying the costs of carrying the gospel to others.

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The living, dynamic Christ Himself enables us to send you this *Good News* magazine without charging a price. God's way is right — the way of giving to others.

## PROOF 6 -

(Continued from page 5)

the area (Titus 3:13) and that Timothy should remember to bring both the coat and some books and parchments Paul had left behind (II Tim. 4:13).

### Paul's Humanity and Humility

Through Paul's letters the constant *humanity* of the apostle comes clearly through. He calls himself a "wretched man," delineating the many areas of his own personal life in which he felt inadequate. He spoke of his physical infirmities and afflictions, sometimes cried out about the enormous burden of responsibility he carried and the lack of cooperation he would receive from this or that Church congregation. Yet he continually preached, exhorted, and wrote powerful letters to strengthen the congregations to which he ministered, as well as the younger ministers in his charge.

Like the apostle Peter, Paul had a great measure of humility to temper any potential feeling of pomposity or vanity which he might have been tempted to assume simply because of the office in which Christ had placed him. Paul knew he was a "prisoner of the gospel," and that his whole life was utterly dedicated to fulfilling the great Work to which he had been called. He wrote: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"

"And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:14-15.)

The whole motive of all the apostles, as especially exemplified by Paul, was not to stifle the Church through their God-given power and authority; but — first of all — to give out Christ's powerful gospel message, and — secondarily — to protect the little ones in the flock from

power-and-money-hungry deceivers (false apostles and ministers). This secondary function is a vital and integral part of feeding the flock.

### Protecting the Flock

So not only is God's Church organized for the purpose of preaching the gospel as a witness to the world, and to edify and build the Church (Eph. 4:12), but also for the purpose of *protecting* the flock from attacks from *within*, and from *without*!

Paul warned: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers [bishops, or pastors], to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." (Acts 20:28-31).

By looking at Paul's own life, the way he spent his time, you can easily see the *priorities* in God's Work and the primary function of an apostle.

*First and foremost*, Paul labored incessantly to *preach the gospel!* *Secondly*, he strove to establish churches, ordain ministers, feed the flock, and continually exhort that the Church be kept free from doctrinal error, as well as *free* from "grievous wolves" whether from *within* or from *without*.

The entire New Testament from the book of Acts onward bears testimony to the struggle which ensued as the government of God continually functioned to preach the gospel freely and without hindrance; to feed the flock with the truth, free from error; and to *protect* the flock from attacks.

Initially, as in the case of healings, signs and miracles (such as at least two cases of resurrections from the dead, and earthquakes), and the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira,

God was plainly showing His *great power* was there to *back up* and *support* the responsibilities He had placed on His ministry.

But those same powerful signs did not continue in the same intensity throughout the history of the writing of the New Testament; nor are they continuing today!

### Christ Backs His Church Today

Nevertheless, Christ's promise, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," does remain in effect!

*When* (not "if") it becomes God's time to once again shake this earth with great signs and wonders, He will do it!

But in the meantime He is providing His Church, the Body of Christ, with the spiritual power, as well as with the physical necessities, to preach the gospel of the Kingdom in an organized fashion to the whole world as a last-moment witness and warning!

*It could not be done in any other way!*

In today's highly complex societies, with jet-age travel and space-age communication facilities, God's Work must use the electronic media, the printing press, personal evangelism — *all possible methods* to preach the gospel!

It must function as an highly organized Work: able to buy, sell, lease, pay salaries, purchase equipment, produce telecasts and radio programs, print magazines, papers, booklets and letters, administer churches and Bible studies — *to do the Work*, and to do it efficiently, and in an organized manner!

God, not man, is the author of order, or organization!

Thank God He has placed *government* in His Church — and thanks be to Him He continually supervises and guides it, seeing to it that His government really works! □

### CORRECTION

"Paul explained that we love God because He first loved us (I John 4:19)" (article: "Whatever Happened to Basic Christianity?" Feb. GN, p. 20), should read "John explained..."

## Public Bible Lectures

Many hundreds write us each year asking about our views of today's prophesied times as well as our answers to biblical prophecies. In a humble effort to provide more direct help for such people and to help provide preaching in this confused and troubled time, the Worldwide Church of God is sponsoring public Bible lectures in hundreds of cities across the United States.

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