

GN

The Good News

THE
WAVESHEAF
RITUAL

NEW TESTAMENT
AMONG
THE DEAD SEA
SCROLLS?

THE
PATH TO
LIVING FAITH

"IN VAIN DO
THEY
WORSHIP ME"

JUNE 1975

GN

The Good News

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June 1975

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ABOUT OUR COVER

Priest gives blessing with cross and candles. Does the pomp, ceremony and ritual of what passes for much of organized Christianity really honor Christ? Jesus' words of Mark 7:7 warn it may all be a waste of time and motion (see article, page 6).

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SEVEN PROOFS OF GOD'S CHURCH

YOUR BODY does not exist only for itself. That is, the sole purpose of your life is *not* just the serving, caring for, feeding, clothing and protection of your own body!

No — you have *purpose* in life!

No matter what your job, occupation, hobbies, or calling — there is a *purpose* for you. Your whole life consists of goals, short- and long-range ones, which you constantly strive to achieve. You don't eat *just* to "stay alive" — you are living for a *purpose*!

As we have seen so clearly, Jesus Christ Himself drew the analogy of a "body" when speaking of His own true Church, which He said He would build. He talked, too, of a "work" being accomplished on this earth — by that very body, the "body of Christ" which is His true Church.

Strangely, there are those who fail to grasp this vitally important truth — that Jesus Christ *commissioned* His disciples to carry out a *great Work* on this earth — that He promised to inspire, lead and guide them *in the conduct* of that Work. He promised He would be in their midst, overseeing directly, intervening when necessary!

Today, millions of hapless humans drift through life aimlessly with no real goals or purposes beyond just experiencing each day as it comes. Like directionless human beings, some organizations seem to flounder aimlessly — having no great, exciting, stimulating, challenging *job* to accomplish, no inspiring *goal* to reach! Such groups usually fragment, grow weaker and weaker, and finally die — for they lack purpose and positive direction!

Not so with the true Church of the living God which Jesus said He would build! He explained it is given a *commission* to fulfill and accomplish!

PROOF

7

GOD'S CHURCH HAS A COMMISSION

by Garner Ted Armstrong

***"Prove all things — hold fast that which is good."
"Prove me now" "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "Seek, and ye shall find" Are these just "spiritual" sounding precepts — not intended as practical, workable methods for arriving at the truth of God? No — Jesus Christ commands us to prove the truth. Surely, since Jesus said "I will build my Church," He would have left proofs for us of the identity of that true Church! In this eighth article of this series, you will read of one of the most obvious of all the proofs of God's true Church.***

But to some few, the fulfilling of a commission is totally unimportant.

A Selfish Salvation

They prefer to think only in smallish, inward, selfish terms — concentrating on themselves and their personal problems rather than on the hugely challenging problems of all mankind. Such an attitude was illustrated by a man who said, "Ain't no need to build no walkway — ain't goin' nowhere!" With this sarcastic retort, the farmer spat, hitched up his overalls and headed to his 1930s-model car, skirting the muddy puddles in the churchyard of the tiny building just outside Eugene, Oregon's city limits.

It was a Sabbath day in the early 1940s and the pastor, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, had just finished the sermon. In it he had mentioned the need for members to help build a walkway from the unpaved street to the front

porch; perhaps by a combination of donated labor, and tithes and offerings for this simple project.

Many had complained of wet and muddy shoes while negotiating the rutted "yard" in Oregon's drizzly weather. The building had been constructed by several members, Mr. Armstrong included, who had donated labor and materials. Now, the old walkway had rotted, broken up, and decayed. A few dozen boards were needed.

But all this "progress" was too much for one conservative member. "Why build a walkway?" was his question. Quite likely, his farmyard didn't have any. He was completely comfortable with his mossy, rain-slick boards and planks, and his mud puddles.

"Ain't goin' nowhere," he said. And he was right. He wasn't. But the Church WAS.

It was going to grow national in scope, then international, and then

worldwide! Because it was the Work of GOD, and *not* of any man, it was destined to encircle the globe with the dynamic message about a LIVING Jesus Christ who is the soon-coming KING.

That little walkway only represented a "door" to the street, and easy access from a higher, drier roadway to a porch.

A Stifling Misconception

But the attitude of at least one local member represented a misconception that has influenced massive church bodies, decided various forms of church government, and stifled the true preaching of the gospel for centuries!

For that member life consisted of rejoicing in the truth he knew, going to services each Sabbath, and living quietly on his farm with his wife and children. Involvement in projects of growth, even so small as a board sidewalk, just seemed nonsensical to him.

It was hard enough, in those days of comparative poverty, warfare, and hand-to-mouth existence, to keep one's own family fed and clothed, without all that "foolishness" of trying to worry about someone's children sitting around the wood-burning stove drying their socks during services.

A quiet life on the farm?

Too bad we can't *all* enjoy that; I wish I could.

But if those who are called of God are called for a purpose, then that purpose transcends mere physical creature comforts. And as that great purpose is fulfilled — which is *primary* in the lives of members of God's Church — it can result in their own personal eternal salvation!

The by-product of that great transcendental purpose for which God's people are called is their own personal salvation. But that purpose is far *beyond* just individual salvation.

Think! If the only reason God has called His people is to grant them personal salvation, then why do the calling now? Why call so many into God's Church *now* in this age? Ob-

viously, there is a great *global purpose* in the collective calling of those who have really repented and become members of God's true Church. And that great purpose is directly related to the chaotic conditions extant on this earth today.

Global Conditions

Today's humanity faces the ever-increasing likelihood of massive worldwide famine. This possibility is fueled by the twin problems of the ever-burgeoning population explosion and the dwindling food supplies in poor, "underdeveloped" nations.

On the very day you read this article — and repeated each day — some 350,000 babies cry their way into existence on planet earth! Most of these infants are destined, tragically, to live out their lives in the dirt-poor, "have-not" nations of the earth.

Even after subtracting deaths, every year there are some 75 million more mouths to feed on this already overtaxed earth. At present rates, demographers and population experts estimate that world population, already exceeding four billion, will double in approximately 35 years and *double again* 35 years later! By the year 2000 it is estimated that world population will reach the dizzying height of six to seven billion; thirty-five years later, twelve to fourteen billion! Obviously that can't occur. Something has to give.

In order to feed all these people anywhere near an adequate diet, world food production will have to double between 1960 and 1980, and virtually triple by the year 2000. Yet the present rate of increase renders this a highly unlikely possibility. In plain English — *when* population passes food production, then worldwide famine, starvation, disease epidemics and resultant *food wars* are inevitable!

Every single day — as totally unaware of it as we in the Western world seem to be — a "low" estimate of ten to twelve thousand people on

this globe die of simple starvation!

And in addition to the hideous specter of starvation, what about the teeming millions on our poverty-ridden planet who have *no shoes*? — or even in some cases, *no feet*? What about the deliberately crippled children who endlessly wander — meandering through the streets of Calcutta — begging food and money for those who callously relieved them of their little legs and arms? What a tragedy to see their maimed, twisted, distorted, gnomish little bodies standing there in grotesque shapes — looking up into your eyes — not fully comprehending the shame of a hideous, cruel lifetime!

What a monstrous penalty to have to pay for the seemingly endless poverty that has plagued India for centuries.

Wars claim their toll too; the blood of humanity, spilled in warfare, stains the soil of India, Vietnam, Korea, Biafra, Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Middle East and even "Christian" Ireland.

Violence, political agitation, demonstrations, assassinations, hijackings, kidnappings, and mass slayings in airport terminals etch deep and lasting scars on the face of a tormented humanity.

But how does all this worldwide misery tie into the great *global purpose* of preaching and publishing the true gospel of Jesus Christ? Is God unconcerned about all this massive suffering? Or is He truly the God of all mankind?

Jesus Had a World View

Jesus Christ of Nazareth set us an example of concern, compassion and emotion-charged empathy for the plight of a heedless humanity. He showed that God — the Father — the God of all mercy — is the God of *all mankind*.

When Jesus saw the pitiful spiritual conditions and even the illnesses of the people of His day, He was "moved with compassion" (Matt. 9:36; Mark 1:41). He yearned to help, to save humankind from the heartrending results of its

own folly. Christ's message — the good news of the Kingdom of God — was *to* the world and *for* the world. That gospel message was to be preached in "all nations" as a warning and a witness (Matt. 24:14).

Paul revealed the true God to the superstitious Athenians: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is the Lord of heaven and earth And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:24-26).

God is "not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). God the Father did not send His Son Jesus Christ with a message of selfish, personal, ingathering, self-righteous salvation — but with a worldwide message for *all mankind!* "And so *all Israel* shall be saved . . ." said the apostle Paul in Romans 11:26.

Jeremiah prophesied about *many* nations (Jer. 25:13-26). Isaiah prophesied concerning Assyria (chapter 10), Babylon (chapter 13), Moab (chapter 15), Syria (chapter 17), Egypt (chapter 19) and many other nations and family groups which have since spread to the four corners of the earth.

God is concerned with more than just a few "Bible-Belt" religious hobbyists in the southeastern United States (though He is deeply concerned about them, just as He is about any human being who draws breath). He has an *international message* for *all* peoples and nations! It concerns the Kingdom of God and the salvation of the whole human family.

Notice the deeply moving words of Psalm 67: "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah. *That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among ALL nations* O let the *nations* be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the

people righteously, and *govern the nations upon earth* God shall bless us; and *all the ends of the earth shall fear him*" (verses 1-2, 4, 7).

This is the message of a globe-girdling gospel! It is a message of lasting peace, right rulership, radiant health and ultimate salvation for *all* races and nations around the world. It announces *the way* to world peace and harmony; the way to end all famines, wars and terrorism. It is a message of firm hope in an age of utter hopelessness.

Is Your Religion Selfish?

Yet, in spite of the biblically revealed international thrust of a giving gospel, religion is still a very private and very selfish commodity to many harboring a spiritual ingrown toenail.

They want that "old-time religion" — a religion that's part of one's neat, orderly, settled and comfortable life; a religion that's like a favorite pair of comfortable slippers, a spiritual tranquilizer, a good book and an easy chair by that old favorite lamp.

It is as familiar and comfortable as that rusting old automobile in the back farm lot that his father drove before him; and it is as much a part of his encrusted environment as that old oak tree out back, or that creaking step on the front porch.

Church attendance is also oftentimes for purely selfish reasons. "Attend the church of your choice," advise the billboards. And that is exactly what most religious types do! They attend the church which most caters to their own *personal*, selfish needs, notions and desires.

Some attend church because they want a sense of "belonging"; others because of the convenience of the parking facilities; still others, because they enjoy the music — all for patently selfish reasons. The point is that a church *exists* to suit every type of personality and approach to religion. One can even find churches that openly worship Satan the devil if that happens to be a person's particular "bag."

Many denominations are in "cut-throat" *competition* with each other. Because of this peculiar "Christian" phenomenon, people who are next-door neighbors go to different churches — which are miles apart — driving past each other with scarcely a glance.

Those who prate about "my own salvation" have lost sight of the really big goal in human life — having forgotten that the true gospel has to do with *giving salvation* to as many *other* people as possible.

Jesus likened the Kingdom of God to a "pearl of great price" and to a "treasure hid in a field" (Matt. 13:44-46). The gospel is an all-important, futuristic announcement of how that Kingdom is going to rule this earth and how those who hear the message may have a vital part in that ruling Kingdom! That message is a *saving*, giving message — *not* a selfishly oriented "get" gospel.

John's Disciples Misunderstood

John the Baptist's ministry was one of frugality and hardship. He apparently ate a stringent, limited diet — mainly subsisting on locusts and wild honey. He lived a very austere life-style, so much so that contemporaries observing his unconventional behavior mistakenly accused him of being demon possessed.

When John heard of the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples to try to substantiate who Jesus really was (Matt. 11:2). (John was in prison, but he was aware that somewhere, somehow, the Messiah had to appear at that time.) When the two disciples came to Jesus they asked: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Verse 3.)

Jesus answered: "Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see" (verse 4). He then (verse 5) pointed to the miracles which were a vital part of His messiahship. Jesus pointed to *the fruits* — to the *work being done*.

Then Jesus added: ". . . And the poor have the gospel preached to

them" (verse 5). He pointed out that He was in the business of *giving* that gospel message — and this was one of His most important works. Then Jesus said a seemingly strange thing: "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (verse 6).

What did Jesus mean by this enigmatic saying? Does this veiled warning and blessing really fit in this context?

Yes, it does! Let's understand.

After a brief description about John's commission and character (verses 7-15), Jesus began to explain the meaning by comparing the two ministries. "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil [demon]. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children" (verses 18-19).

In other words, *the incongruity* of the two situations showed that no matter what we in God's Work do, we will be criticized for doing it "all wrong"!

Jesus was roundly accused and criticized because of His "hobnobbing" with the leaders of the Sanhedrin, sitting with the Pharisees at a huge banquet table, and going to the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee.

Yet Jesus preached to large *crowds* of people — thousands at a time (Matt. 8:1; 13:2; 23:1). He preached the true gospel to them — the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14).

The fact that Jesus said, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me," strongly indicates that the disciples of John didn't observe what they had *expected* to see in Christ. They probably expected to find someone whose life-style was similar to John's — one of frugality and self-denial. Even John himself may have misunderstood! That's probably why they asked, perhaps preprogrammed by John to do so in a dubious, quizzical tone: "Well, are

you he that should come, or should we look for another?" They expected the Messiah to be living quite differently.

It is obvious that they were thinking: "You couldn't be the one — or you wouldn't be here in the midst of all this . . ."

Christ's Commission to the Disciples

Jesus *commissioned* His disciples in much the same way a person was commissioned at one time in the military service. A "commissioned officer" originally could have been an ordinary private citizen, or even a wealthy or titled person, who was given a directive to carry out a certain mission. The word "commission" means "with a mission"; that is, with a *purpose* or an objective.

Jesus *sent* out the twelve with a specific charge or purpose: "These twelve Jesus *sent forth*, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, *preach*, saying, *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt. 10:5-7).

The disciples were *not* sent to the Church — they were sent to preach to the world: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have *I also sent them into the world*" (John 17:18).

The main commission was *to the world*. In turn, the body of believers that resulted from their preaching of the gospel to the world became the "Church." But the Church was the *by-product* of the preaching of the gospel!

IF THE GOSPEL WERE NOT FIRST PREACHED TO THE WORLD, THERE WOULD BE NO CHURCH!

After the gospel is preached and the Church is formed *as a result*, those who are the called members of God's Church make it possible — by their prayers as well as by their *continual* physical and financial support — for *more* people to hear the message of the gospel. And that body of Church members also provides

more ministers by which the gospel is preached to more and more people.

The body of Christ — the Church — is therefore constituted to do the work of preaching the gospel.

Jesus Set a Precedent

Jesus of Nazareth came to this earth to deliver the gospel of the Kingdom to that local area (Galilee, Judaea, and their environs) at that time — *to set a precedent* for succeeding generations of the Church. He came to teach and train His own disciples through those experiences.

He then sent them out and told them *to do as He had done* — in fact, they were told they *would do even greater works* than Jesus! "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me [that includes all Christians at any time in history!], THE WORKS THAT I DO SHALL HE DO ALSO; and *greater works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

The commission to preach the gospel is a collective charge to all Christians at all times!

New Testament history is a chronicle of the fact that the early disciples fulfilled their commission. They preached the gospel with great zeal throughout the known world.

The apostle Paul, called *later* than the original apostles — as "one out of due season" — also carried on the commission of preaching the gospel. He was so filled with the sense of a great mission that he said — undoubtedly *with deep feeling*: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for *necessity* is laid upon me; yea *woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!*" (I Cor. 9:16.)

At the conclusion of the book of Acts, Paul is busy *on the job* in Rome, preaching *that same gospel*: "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, *preaching the kingdom of God*, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (Acts 28:30-31).

Paul realized that his whole reason for being called was to preach the gospel: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, *separated unto the gospel of God*" (Rom. 1:1).

Jesus Christ suffered more than anyone for the sake of the gospel; and His disciples ultimately followed in His footsteps. Suffering went hand in glove with the preaching of the gospel in the first century.

And their suffering is also an example of what today's true Christian can expect for putting the work of the gospel *first*. "For even *here-unto were ye called*: because Christ also suffered for us, *leaving us an example*, that ye should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21).

Most of the early apostles were martyred for the sake of the gospel.

Paul actually left a record of some of his sufferings in II Corinthians 11. He said he had been imprisoned, beaten, shipwrecked, near death on a number of occasions, stoned, nearly drowned, threatened, and in every conceivable kind of danger. But *nothing* would make him stop preaching the gospel!

Not a Christian Retirement Plan

Jesus did *not* come to set up some kind of a self-perpetuating Christian retirement plan. He did not come to bring about a peaceful, blissful, utopian, comfortable, "dropped-out," esoteric society.

He came to preach the gospel — a gospel that would bring about intense personal suffering for those who would dare to proclaim it. It is a gospel that, by the very essence of its message, *invites persecution*. He commissioned His Church to preach that message fearlessly and boldly — *never stopping* for anybody or anything. His disciples were ordained and commissioned to preach that same gospel. They did so at great personal sacrifice — and ultimately even martyrdom.

Paul's own desire was so *outside of himself* that he said he could wish himself accursed for his kinsmen

(Rom. 9:3). He would have accepted the loss of his personal salvation if that's what it would have taken to get all his fellow brethren into the Kingdom of God. His main desire was for *others* to get into the Kingdom of God.

There would *be* no salvation apart from the preaching of the gospel! There is *no* way to separate salvation from the gospel.

The local minister is there to point the way to salvation. He is sent to feed that congregation spiritual food and to "water" them so that they will grow further. Paul expressed it this way: "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers [servants] by whom ye believed, even as *the Lord gave* to every man. I have planted, Apollos watered; but *God gave* the increase" (I Cor. 3:5-6).

The foundation upon which the Church of God is built is *Christ — not any man*. It is God who calls and converts by His power and His Holy Spirit. The local congregations of God's Church are God's heritage, God's building, His planting, or whatever other analogy the Bible has used for those who are called into the Church.

The reason a local congregation gathers at the feet of the local minister — to be taught and fed spiritually — is so that it can go out and *do the Work*; so that it can be a more effective part of that great commission to preach and proclaim the gospel to all the world *before* the end of this age!

Anyone who is really a part of the body of Christ can see that Jesus Christ of Nazareth organized the Church for the purpose of fulfilling and supporting the attainment of that *number-one purpose*. Those who are *not* doing that job are *not* truly a part of the Church, *not* part of the vine; and they will simply wither up — and die!

The Signs of God's Church

"You shall know them by their fruit," said Jesus!

What is the "fruit" borne by self-

serving? What great *harvest* is gathered for Christ? You need to *prove* to yourself where the Church of which Jesus Christ Himself is living, vital, active *Head* is working today!

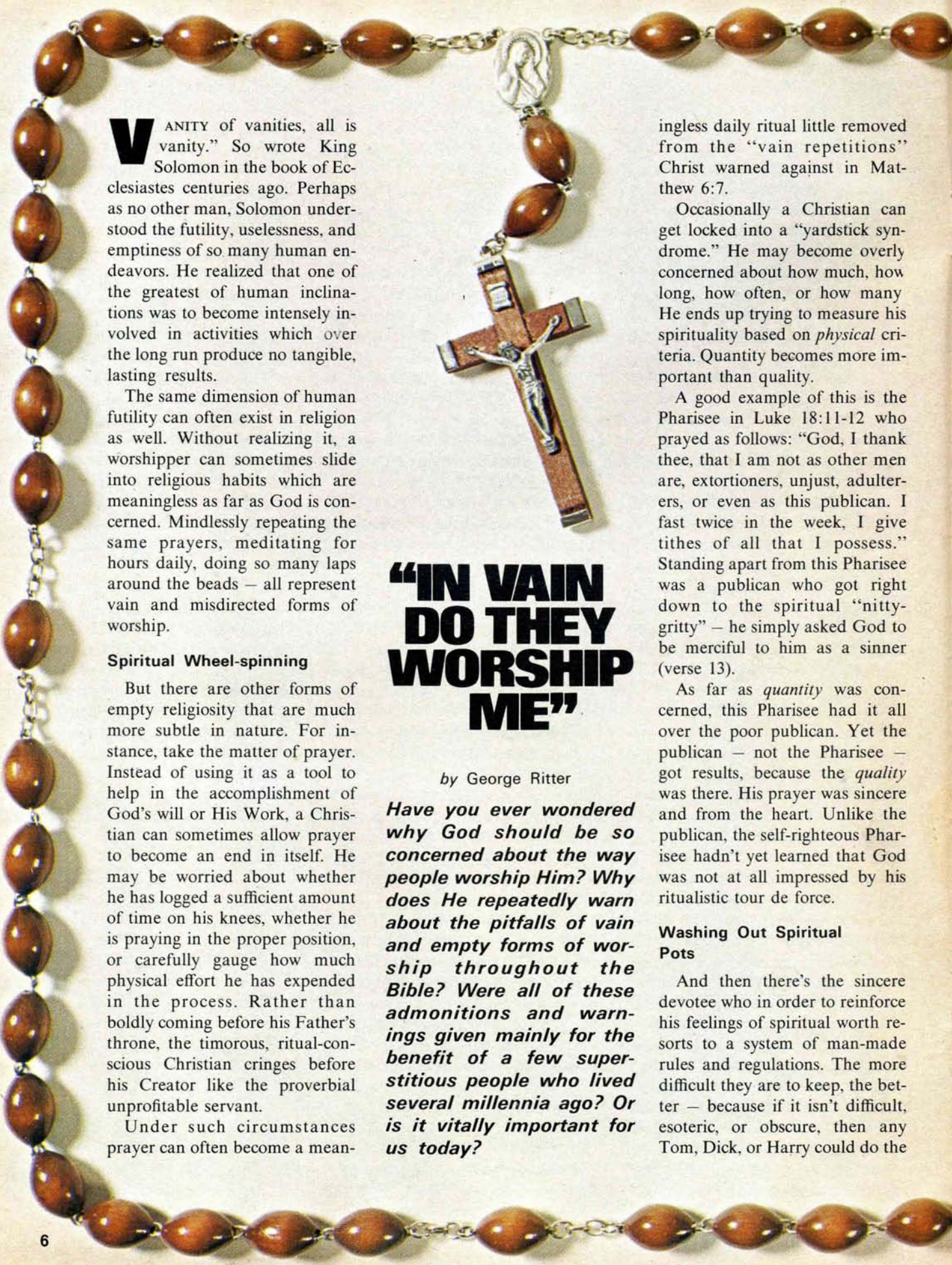
In this series, we have seen that God's true Church is given only one "official" name. That name is repeated *far* more often than any other "descriptive" term which may have included the city in which a local congregation was located. We have seen the great "sign" God gave between Himself and His people, that of the weekly *Sabbath*, and God's annual Holy Days! We have seen how God's true Church would have the overview of world events; would understand the truth about pagan doctrines; would be *organized* as Christ Himself originally established; and very importantly, would be doing the *work of God* on this earth of *fulfilling that great commission!*

Jesus said, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15). To do just that, God's Church is striving with all that is in it, humanly, calling on God's own divine power to make up for that human lack. Those privileged to have a *part* in that great humanitarian effort never cease to thank God for the opportunity! □

SPECIAL NOTICE

Many of our new subscribers have missed one or more installments of "Seven Proofs of God's Church." In order that they may be able to read the entire series, the Worldwide Church of God is producing a complete booklet including each and every vital proof. We are offering this booklet to every reader whether long-time or brand-new (even those who have all the installments may desire *Seven Proofs of God's Church* in easy-to-read booklet form). Our editorial staff is working feverishly to put this booklet together in a hurry. But please be patient if it doesn't arrive immediately after you request it by mail.

And while you're at it, why not request the companion booklet *Where Is God's True Church Today?* Both of these booklets should be read together to grasp the whole overview of the subject.



VANITY of vanities, all is vanity." So wrote King Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes centuries ago. Perhaps as no other man, Solomon understood the futility, uselessness, and emptiness of so many human endeavors. He realized that one of the greatest of human inclinations was to become intensely involved in activities which over the long run produce no tangible, lasting results.

The same dimension of human futility can often exist in religion as well. Without realizing it, a worshipper can sometimes slide into religious habits which are meaningless as far as God is concerned. Mindlessly repeating the same prayers, meditating for hours daily, doing so many laps around the beads — all represent vain and misdirected forms of worship.

Spiritual Wheel-spinning

But there are other forms of empty religiosity that are much more subtle in nature. For instance, take the matter of prayer. Instead of using it as a tool to help in the accomplishment of God's will or His Work, a Christian can sometimes allow prayer to become an end in itself. He may be worried about whether he has logged a sufficient amount of time on his knees, whether he is praying in the proper position, or carefully gauge how much physical effort he has expended in the process. Rather than boldly coming before his Father's throne, the timorous, ritual-conscious Christian cringes before his Creator like the proverbial unprofitable servant.

Under such circumstances prayer can often become a mean-

ingless daily ritual little removed from the "vain repetitions" Christ warned against in Matthew 6:7.

Occasionally a Christian can get locked into a "yardstick syndrome." He may become overly concerned about how much, how long, how often, or how many. He ends up trying to measure his spirituality based on *physical* criteria. Quantity becomes more important than quality.

A good example of this is the Pharisee in Luke 18:11-12 who prayed as follows: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Standing apart from this Pharisee was a publican who got right down to the spiritual "nitty-gritty" — he simply asked God to be merciful to him as a sinner (verse 13).

As far as *quantity* was concerned, this Pharisee had it all over the poor publican. Yet the publican — not the Pharisee — got results, because the *quality* was there. His prayer was sincere and from the heart. Unlike the publican, the self-righteous Pharisee hadn't yet learned that God was not at all impressed by his ritualistic tour de force.

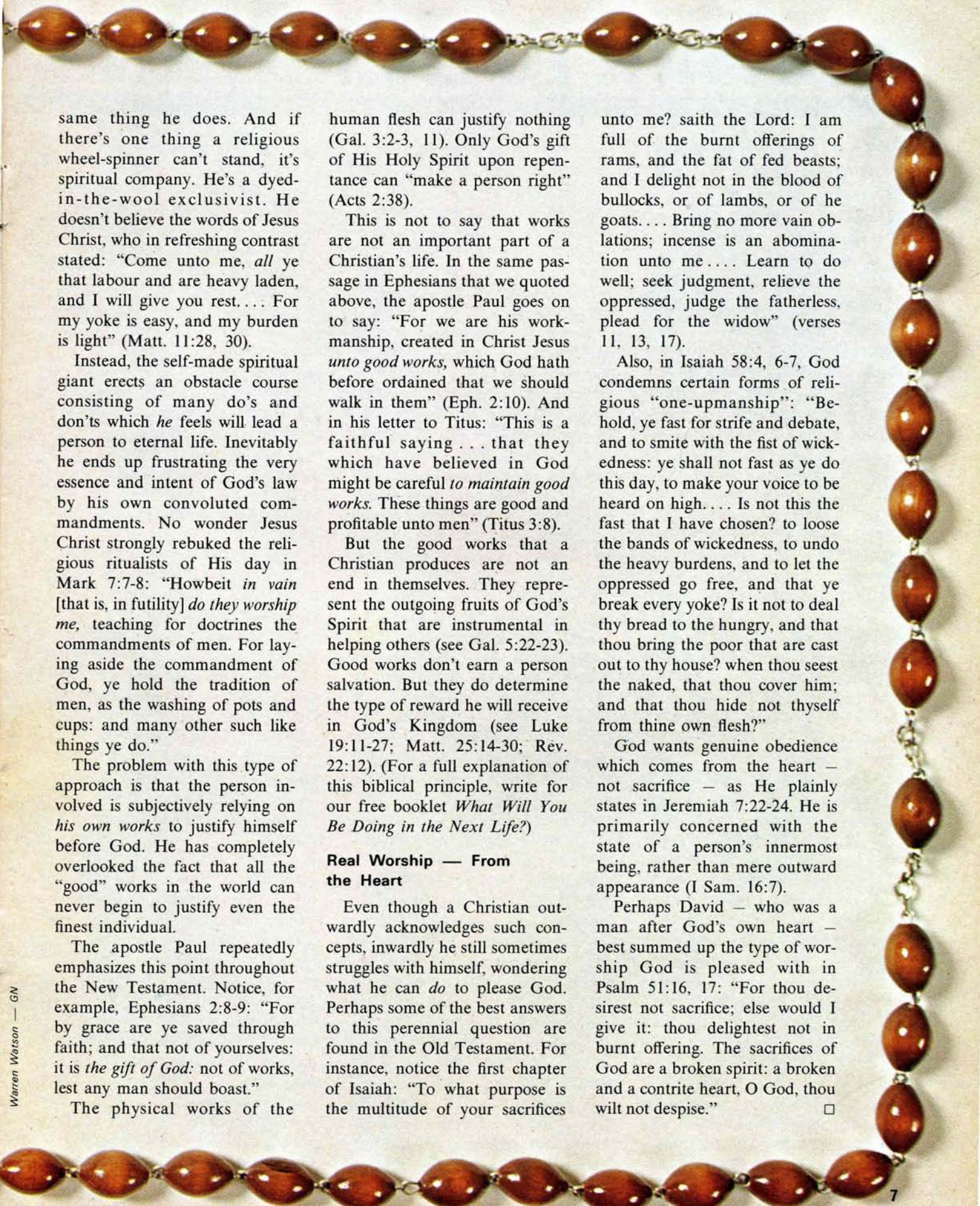
Washing Out Spiritual Pots

And then there's the sincere devotee who in order to reinforce his feelings of spiritual worth resorts to a system of man-made rules and regulations. The more difficult they are to keep, the better — because if it isn't difficult, esoteric, or obscure, then any Tom, Dick, or Harry could do the

"IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME"

by George Ritter

Have you ever wondered why God should be so concerned about the way people worship Him? Why does He repeatedly warn about the pitfalls of vain and empty forms of worship throughout the Bible? Were all of these admonitions and warnings given mainly for the benefit of a few superstitious people who lived several millennia ago? Or is it vitally important for us today?



same thing he does. And if there's one thing a religious wheel-spinner can't stand, it's spiritual company. He's a dyed-in-the-wool exclusivist. He doesn't believe the words of Jesus Christ, who in refreshing contrast stated: "Come unto me, *all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*" (Matt. 11:28, 30).

Instead, the self-made spiritual giant erects an obstacle course consisting of many do's and don'ts which *he* feels will lead a person to eternal life. Inevitably he ends up frustrating the very essence and intent of God's law by his own convoluted commandments. No wonder Jesus Christ strongly rebuked the religious ritualists of His day in Mark 7:7-8: "Howbeit *in vain* [that is, in futility] *do they worship me*, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do."

The problem with this type of approach is that the person involved is subjectively relying on *his own works* to justify himself before God. He has completely overlooked the fact that all the "good" works in the world can never begin to justify even the finest individual.

The apostle Paul repeatedly emphasizes this point throughout the New Testament. Notice, for example, Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is *the gift of God*: not of works, lest any man should boast."

The physical works of the

human flesh can justify nothing (Gal. 3:2-3, 11). Only God's gift of His Holy Spirit upon repentance can "make a person right" (Acts 2:38).

This is not to say that works are not an important part of a Christian's life. In the same passage in Ephesians that we quoted above, the apostle Paul goes on to say: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). And in his letter to Titus: "This is a faithful saying . . . that they which have believed in God might be careful *to maintain good works*. These things are good and profitable unto men" (Titus 3:8).

But the good works that a Christian produces are not an end in themselves. They represent the outgoing fruits of God's Spirit that are instrumental in helping others (see Gal. 5:22-23). Good works don't earn a person salvation. But they do determine the type of reward he will receive in God's Kingdom (see Luke 19:11-27; Matt. 25:14-30; Rev. 22:12). (For a full explanation of this biblical principle, write for our free booklet *What Will You Be Doing in the Next Life?*)

Real Worship — From the Heart

Even though a Christian outwardly acknowledges such concepts, inwardly he still sometimes struggles with himself, wondering what he can *do* to please God. Perhaps some of the best answers to this perennial question are found in the Old Testament. For instance, notice the first chapter of Isaiah: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices

unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. . . . Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me. . . . Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (verses 11, 13, 17).

Also, in Isaiah 58:4, 6-7, God condemns certain forms of religious "one-upmanship": "Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. . . . Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

God wants genuine obedience which comes from the heart — not sacrifice — as He plainly states in Jeremiah 7:22-24. He is primarily concerned with the state of a person's innermost being, rather than mere outward appearance (I Sam. 16:7).

Perhaps David — who was a man after God's own heart — best summed up the type of worship God is pleased with in Psalm 51:16, 17: "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." □

THE PATH TO LIVING FAITH

Without faith it is utterly impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Yet Jesus asked: "... When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8.) The terrifying implications of that question should give pause to any true Christian! What is this faith that God seeks in His people? How is it attained? Is it even possible to have living faith in an age of skepticism, criticism and doubt?

by Brian Knowles

Faith is a cop-out — a device used by those who are unwilling to face the facts and to acknowledge the bitter truth," claim the critics of conventional Christianity. In many instances this criticism is entirely justified!

Professing Christians have often resorted to "faith" (falsely so-called) when they are unable to resolve some theological difficulty. "I just believe it because my church teaches it, that's all — I don't *have* to understand it," is the thinking.

This type of faith is rightly subject to ridicule and criticism. This indeed is "blind faith." This is *not* the kind of faith which God seeks in His children!

Peter told the churches: "... Be ready always to *give an answer* to every man that asketh you a *reason* of the hope that is in you..." (I Peter 3:15).

Faith Must Be Built

The faith of a true Christian is not blind. It is based on *reason*. It is founded on firm *evidence*. It is established on the bedrock of *conviction*!

True faith is not suddenly ac-

quired at baptism. Rather, it is something that is *built* over a period of time. It is a product, a result of experience, study and testing. It is produced by the continual working of God's Holy Spirit in the life of an individual Christian. Paul lists faith as one of the "fruits of the Spirit" in Galatians 5:22.

There is no such thing as "instant faith." True, enduring, believing faith is not suddenly acquired. It is primarily the result of experience. The apostle Peter provides us with an excellent illustration of this point.

Before Peter was converted and granted the gift of the Holy Spirit, he had nothing more than a certain human confidence. He was impetuous and cocksure. But he did *not* have abiding, *living* faith.

The well-known account of Jesus walking on the water provides an interesting insight into this fact. Immediately after Jesus had performed one of the most notable miracles of His public ministry — the feeding of more than five thousand with five loaves and two fishes — He instructed His disciples to take a small boat back to Capernaum across the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:15-22). Jesus Himself sought a little privacy, during which time He prayed (verse 23).

While He was praying evening came and a strong wind arose on the lake (verse 24). All night long the tiny ship was buffeted about by the wind and the waves. They were unable to make it to shore. Perhaps the mast had snapped. Possibly the vessel's rudder had been lost. The disciples cowered in fear as the storm continued to buffet the small craft. Finally, somewhere between 3 and 6 a.m. (the 4th watch — verse 25), Jesus came to His beleaguered disciples, walking on the water!

At first, the disciples thought they

were seeing a spirit of some type. After all, Jesus was a physical human being at that time. Walking on water was simply not done every day by your average Galilean. Their reaction was entirely natural.

As soon as Jesus identified Himself, Peter reacted with typical impetuosity. He said: "Lord, if it be thou [apparently he still was not convinced], bid *me* come unto thee on the water" (verse 28).

Peter was acting presumptuously. His confidence was momentary and artificial. He had not thought the situation through. He wasn't even entirely sure, at that moment, if he was talking to Jesus Christ. Yet he reacted — he literally "stepped out on faith."

"And he [Christ] said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus" (verse 29).

But Peter's "faith" was insufficient to sustain him. When he began to realize the logical absurdity of the situation, his confidence and his body began to sink simultaneously! "... When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me" (verse 30). The momentary force of Peter's quickly acquired faith immediately dissipated in the face of stark reality!

Jesus turned the situation into an object lesson in living faith. "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*" (Verse 31.)

Let's analyze the situation. The skeptic will argue that Peter had *no reason* to have faith that he would be able to walk on water. After all, doing so defies the laws of physics. Science tells us that the only kind of water a person can walk on is frozen water — ice.

Must we then conclude that Jesus was unreasonable in expecting Peter to have faith under these circumstances?

Not at all.

Peter had *powerful evidence* upon which to base his faith! He had the evidence right before his eyes — Jesus was doing it! That's what gave him the initial impetus to step out of the boat.

In addition, Peter had seen strong evidence of the power of God the previous day in the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. If God could provide up to ten thousand people with food from five loaves and two fishes — could He not also provide a little buoyancy on a stormy lake?

Yet there are reasons why Peter's faith failed.

Why Peter's Faith Failed

For one thing, he began to look at the physical circumstances. He focused on the howling wind, the turbulent waves and the flying spindrift. He took his mind off Jesus Christ *and His faith!* In his mind, Peter replaced superior evidence with inferior. The simple fact that Jesus Himself was *defying* the laws of nature in walking on the water should have told him that it could, indeed, be done! He was actively witnessing it.

Yet Peter chose to ignore this conclusive evidence and instead focused his attention on the circumstances with which he was more familiar.

Secondly, Peter lacked *experience*.

Experience produces confidence. It sets up a pattern of precedents upon which a person can build. The more one has experienced the miracle-working power of God, the more he begins to take it for granted — the more faith and confidence is built.

Faith must become intrinsic. It

must be enduring and abiding — an indelible part of one's spiritual personality. The exercising of faith in a given situation must ultimately become second nature to a Christian.

But this takes time and experience. Each experience provides a stepping stone for the next. Jesus provided His disciples (students) with many such experiences during the three-and-one-half years of His earthly ministry. Each of these was added to the reservoir of experience upon which the disciples drew throughout their entire ministry.

By the time the Church was established and underway, Peter had *grown* enormously in dynamic, living faith! Notice this account in the book of Acts: "Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour [3 p.m.]. And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at that gate of the temple which is called Beautiful to ask alms of those who entered the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, with John, and said, 'Look at us.' And he fixed his attention upon them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, 'I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, *walk*.' And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong" (Acts 3:1-7, RSV).

This was not the same Peter who had faltered in faith on the stormy Sea of Galilee. Here was a man charged with confidence in Jesus Christ and in the power of God. What Peter *now* had (cf. verse 6) was living, dynamic, instantly available *faith!* He now looked to the *right kind* of evidence — the power of Jesus Christ and the Spirit of

God! His faith had been *built* upon years of experience. Now that faith was *intrinsic!*

Levels of Faith

The level of Peter's faith had risen to such a degree that even his passing by resulted in incredible healings (Acts 5:15-16). The Holy Spirit had been working with him producing a backlog of faith- and confidence-building experiences. Now the exercise of faith was second nature to the apostle. He *walked* and lived in *faith*. His experiences had produced confident hope and assurance. As Paul later wrote: "... Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, *hope*" (Rom. 5:3-4).

Christ desires that all Christians achieve this level of faith. We are told no less than four separate times in Scripture: "The just shall *live* by his faith" (cf. Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). As Paul told the church at Corinth: "For we walk by faith, *not by sight*" (II Cor. 5:7). Before conversion, like Peter, we did exactly the opposite — we walked by *sight*, not by faith.

In the walking on water incident, Peter had allowed what he *saw* to overrule what he *knew*. The Christian does the opposite. His faith is based on the firm evidence of what he *knows* to be the will of God.

Peter *sank* by sight — but Jesus had *walked* on the water by faith!

Sometimes what we *see* erodes our confidence. It is especially difficult to exercise faith in our modern, technological society. It is difficult to even feel close to God in a world which denies Him at every turn.

The Bible itself has been so examined, criticized, evaluated, analyzed, critiqued and torn apart that it is hard to even know which parts of it are trustworthy! How can we be certain of the will of God in any given

circumstance unless we have some reliable revelation?

Faith in God and the Bible

The apostle Paul wrote: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16, 17).

If you can believe that statement then you should have no difficulty knowing what the will of God is in terms of exercising faith!

Paul also wrote: "But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Here, belief in God is intrinsically tied up with the matter of faith. Those who wish to walk by faith must have a sense of the *reality* of God — they must be actively conscious of His existence. Furthermore, they must believe that He is capable and willing to respond to the needs of those who diligently seek such intervention. As David said: "Thou art near, O Lord . . ." (Ps. 119:151). And again in Psalm 145:18: "The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth" (RSV). God is as close as your next sincere, believing prayer!

David also said: "He fulfils the desire of all who fear him, he also hears their cry, and saves them" (Ps. 145:19, RSV).

God is not deaf. Because of His compassionate nature He cannot help but respond to the prayers of those who truly believe, in faith, that He hears them.

But a faithful person is not unsure of himself. He does not waver in faith, but is sure that God is there and that He hears our prayers. James made this clear when he was discussing the matter of asking God for wisdom.

"But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a

wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything of the Lord" (James 1:6-8, RSV).

Faith and doubt are antonyms to God!

Abraham's Example

Abraham did not doubt that God would fulfill His promise to make him the father of many nations — even though what he *saw*, the physical evidence, told him otherwise. Abraham and his wife Sarah were long past the age when couples have children. Sarah even laughed at the whole idea that they would have a son in their old age (Gen. 18:12). But "... Abraham *believed* God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3). Abraham had simple confidence that God would indeed perform what He had promised to do. He had hope even when the physical circumstances told him he should have none (verse 18). Abraham's concept of faith is summed up in verses 19-21 of this same chapter:

"And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body [he did not walk by sight!] now dead [i.e., impotent], when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; *and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*"

Here is the simple definition of Abraham's faith. He is the father of the faithful (cf. Rom. 4:11, 16). Abraham is our prime example of faith — next to Jesus Christ Himself!

Faith is therefore predicated upon knowing the will of God. When we recognize His promises and claim them in confidence, we are exercising faith. *The greatest evidence available is the fact that God has promised something.* This is the *basis* for faith. This information overshadows the physical evidence

in many cases. Yet, this is not blind, unknowing faith. It is based upon a clear understanding of the will of the *living* God.

Misguided, Misdirected Faith

Unfortunately, many well-meaning Christians have inadvertently created a source of ridicule by sometimes misunderstanding what is meant by faith.

Perhaps a prime example is found in the snake-handling sects of the southern United States. These zealous, but often misguided, people believe that the voluntary handling of poisonous reptiles is a demonstration of faith. After all, God has made certain promises in this regard in the Bible: "These signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils [demons]; they shall speak with new tongues; *they shall take up serpents;* and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them . . ." (Mark 16:17-18).

The apostle Paul, on one occasion, accidentally took hold of a poisonous serpent on the island of Malta. "Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, when a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. . . . He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm" (Acts 28:3, 5, RSV).

These examples are often used to justify the handling of rattlesnakes, copperheads, water moccasins and other deadly reptiles.

This is an example of misguided faith based on an inaccurate understanding of God's will. Jesus was not talking about *voluntarily* picking up poisonous creatures in order to "show off" one's faith. Rather, He was referring to just such an instance as Paul encountered — an *accidental* situation.

We can understand this important truth from Jesus' own example.

Christ's Personal Example

At the beginning of his 3½-year ministry, Jesus was put through one of the most severe trials of His entire life — next to the crucifixion

itself. He was severely tempted directly and personally by the "god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4) — the devil. Jesus defeated the devil *because He knew the will of God*. Satan quoted scripture to Jesus — accurately. But the devil misused those scriptures. He misapplied them.

"Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple. And saith unto him, *If thou be the Son of God [an appeal to Christ's nonexistent vanity!], cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone*" (Matt. 4:5, 6). If you will check Psalm 91:11-12 you will find that the devil quoted the scripture quite accurately! He did not twist it. It was indeed a promise of God!

But the devil *misused* that scripture. He did not place it alongside those other scriptures which *qualified* its meaning and intent! Jesus was familiar with the *entire* Bible — after all, it was He who inspired it through the Holy Spirit in the first place (John 1:1-5). He knew that God did not intend that people should go around taking unnecessary risks or acting in a foolhardy manner simply because God had promised protection!

Rather than take the bait that Satan was offering, Jesus wisely quoted another scripture to him — a scripture which qualified the one the devil had cited: "Jesus said unto him, It is written again, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*" (Matt. 4:7; Deut. 6:16).

To cast Himself off the edge of the Temple wall would have been tempting God. It would have been taking an unnecessary risk — tempting fate. It would not have been a demonstration of courage to do so — it would have been foolish!

This is also the case with "snake handling." A number of well-meaning, but misguided, people have *died* as a result of "tempting God" in this manner.

God does promise protection

from accidental situations that may occur inadvertently. But He does not expect Christians to take unnecessary risks *in anything*. To do so is to tempt God! It is not faith or courage — but foolishness!

Faith must be based on *understanding* and *knowledge*.

Faith Toward God

It is also critically important to understand in what direction faith is to be exercised. Some have mistakenly placed their faith in "faith healers" and sideshow evangelists who seek to create a personal following. But *no man* can heal! God alone is able to heal the sick and raise the dead. Placing faith in men is a mistake: "Thus saith the Lord; *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord*" (Jer. 17:5).

By contrast, Jeremiah says: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is" (verse 7).

Faith is toward God — and God *alone*!

This does not mean that man cannot help — in the matter of healing, for example. As Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong has said on occasion: "God does for us what we *cannot* do for ourselves."

The medical profession *is* able to help those who are sick or injured. Luke, the writer of the Gospel by that name and the book of Acts, was called "the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14).

He is not called the "beloved *ex*-physician"! He traveled with Paul on his various journeys. Yet Paul himself was used of God as an instrument of healing on numerous occasions. Not that Paul ever healed anyone. He did not. God alone can heal — but He used Paul as a vehicle through which He performed miracles of healing (cf. Acts 14:8-10; 19:11-12; 20:9-10; 28:8-9).

As Jeremiah also wrote: "Heal me, O Lord, and I *shall* be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise" (Jer. 17:14).

The Christian must understand the correct role of each factor in the questions of faith and healing. It is largely a matter of understanding and balance. Any one scripture must be understood in the light of those other scriptures which apply to the situation.

Faith as a Way of Life

Faith does not apply only to healing. Faith is — or should be — a way of life. As quoted earlier, we *walk by faith*. It should be a daily, ever-present factor in every Christian life.

Faith may be applied to physical protection, healing, finances, job-hunting or job-retaining! Faith pertains to solving of marital problems or other difficulties in human relations. Faith is the key factor in claiming *any* promise of God! (See Romans 4:20, 21.)

It is faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and in His resurrection that gives the Christian hope for the future. As Paul wrote: "If *in this life only* we have hope [faith] in Christ, we are of all men most miserable!" (I Cor. 15:19.)

Faith in the glorious future promised by God to His children is the driving force in the life of every truly converted child of God. It is the motivating factor — the element that gives the Christian the confidence to face the trials of being a Christian in a godless society of skepticism and doubt.

Walk, not in the blind faith of ignorant men, but in the knowledgeable, understanding faith of the children of God! □

RECOMMENDED READING

The disciples said to Jesus: "Increase our faith." Millions today lack the faith to receive answers to their prayers — to free their minds from fears and worries. To a large extent this is due to a lack of a thorough understanding of what faith is. The Worldwide Church of God publishes an attractively printed booklet entitled *What Is Faith?* This free publication is designed to increase your faith. Write for your free copy. Worldwide mailing addresses are on the inside front cover.

UPDATE UPDATE UPDATE UPDATE UPDATE

Editor's Note: The "Update" section of the GN is designed to provide our readers with a window on this great Work of God. Here you will read of the most significant recent developments in the Work. This month we thought we would break with the usual format and do something a little different! Instead of the usual articles and pictures, we are reproducing, in full, a letter from Garner Ted Armstrong recently sent to those on our mailing list who have voluntarily, of their own free will, determined to support this Work by financial contributions of varying amounts. The letter is so chock-full of information about the Work that we thought it would rightly fit in the Update section of the GN. Many of our readers will be able to read it for the second time, but tens of thousands of you will be reading this for the first time.

Incidentally, we welcome comments from our readers on this or any other topic discussed in the magazine. Communication is a two-way street! So let us hear from you. We look forward to reading what you have to say.

Dear Friend and Fellow Laborer:

Greetings! This very serious letter is hard to write--I have just finished reading extensive reports from each of our major divisions in God's Work and many letters from many of you.

God's Work is just now on the brink of its greatest growth; about to make the greatest and most powerful impact on the whole earth--and yet, at this very time, our income has taken a disturbing negative drift which I am forced to report to you. But first, let me show you the many wonderful areas where solid GROWTH is occurring--and where GREAT growth, if God allows, is just ahead.

I'll tell you about it just as I have been studying it--but in brief reports from each vitally important area:

CAMPAIGNS, WORLDWIDE:

My father has just returned from India, where he powerfully spoke night after night to substantial groups of leading business and civic leaders--even though a burst of anti-Americanism resulting from international problems forced the cancellation of his larger-scale campaign in Bombay (now rescheduled even bigger for late 1975).

Shortly after I write this, I shall be heading for San Francisco and our campaign there, where we're expecting capacity crowds. Soon the campaigns in Minneapolis and Pittsburgh will be coming up. The TV specials of my Portland campaign are ready and will be shown in as many medium-sized and larger cities this summer as finances permit! We will have extensive promotion ahead of these one-hour specials, and in many areas our own Church members will be setting up booths in local fairs and exhibitions offering our literature and emphasizing the TV specials just prior to broadcast date. Viewers will be invited to use our WATS telephone number, toll free, to obtain the address of our local church or to obtain the minister's name and telephone number in their own city. DOZENS of cities will be reached with a POWERFUL message--I hope tens of thousands of you are able to view the TV specials!

TELEVISION

Not only will the TV specials be aired in many, many cities, but other half-hour TV specials, including the programs on the "hunger bomb" (showing the truth about the world's dwindling food supplies), "alcoholism," and the "occult," will be shown during the summer and autumn months. Collectively, these will reach MILLIONS of people!

Our engineering department is building, and will soon complete, a small remote (portable) TV unit which will be invaluable to me for doing "on-the-spot" TV programs. Further, I can actually pack camera, power unit, and crew of 3 aboard the Falcon (total weight about 1,500 pounds), to obtain interviews and overseas programs when possible.

Currently the crush of so many heavy responsibilities has gotten me a little behind in weekly television, and I must do at least three programs in the next two days, plus keeping up with DAILY radio!

RADIO

For years, I have hoped to someday be ON THE NETWORKS with the "World Tomorrow" program--but that has not proved possible because of the terribly high costs. BUT we have recently made significant steps in the media division, which includes a DIRECT AUDIO LINE to EIGHTEEN MAJOR RADIO STATIONS! That means each station is picking up my radio broadcast over the line RIGHT AS I AM "LIVE" on the air! They either play it that same day or evening, or at the latest, by the next day--so it is never more than 24 hours behind the original program time in Pasadena! This gives me FAR more up-to-the-moment coverage on EIGHTEEN stations in large cities! It means the programs are much, much more current!

Also, as you know, I am utilizing our men overseas more and more. I regularly receive telephone reports from those who are right on the spot of major world events (such as Ray Kosanke who reported from the Arab "OPEC" Summit in Algiers just the other

day, and my son, Mark, who called in a report from Jerusalem following the Arab terrorist attack on Tel Aviv). This gives a vital new dimension to the radio program--and dozens of letters have told of their excitement over hearing these fresh, on-the-scene reports from overseas!

THE PLAIN TRUTH

HUNDREDS of letters have told us how pleased they are with the new, more timely, more informative, more frequent "PT" format--and subscriptions are already growing! During fiscal 1975-1976 we plan to support a U.S. PLAIN TRUTH circulation of over two to three and a half MILLION subscribers, eventually soaring to over FIVE MILLION worldwide by June 30, 1976. Eventually we hope to reach upwards of TWENTY PERCENT OF ALL HOUSEHOLDS IN THE UNITED STATES! Such fantastic growth is essential to fulfill our commission!

THE GOOD NEWS

This powerful, beautiful magazine with strong scriptural articles now reaches just over a quarter of a million readers, about 33,000 of whom are members of the Worldwide Church of God! We are hopeful of increasing GN circulation to 500,000 and beyond in the next 15 months. Costs of printing have recently been cut in half by using our new "self cover," and the use of exclusive "b & w" printing. [Editor's Note: For the time being we are continuing to use some color in the GN, but it has been greatly reduced in recent issues.] I am mentioning the GN on the telecasts and on the radio from time to time, and new ads on the back page of the PLAIN TRUTH will invite additional MILLIONS to write for these stronger, doctrinal, Biblical and inspirational articles!

AMBASSADOR COLLEGE

We have been given full "candidacy" status at the college in Pasadena, with praise given our academic curriculum, faculty, physical plant and student life. We expect that full accreditation will become reality in another two years.

Plans are presently being implemented to expand our already fine academic program with majors offered in General Studies, Business Administration, Chemistry, English, Spanish, History, Home Economics, Mass Communications, Physical Education, Speech, Theology (all in Pasadena); Liberal Arts, Agribusiness, Theology, and Computer Science (in Big Sandy).

AND, very importantly for MANY who might want to take an Ambassador College Bible Course by tape cassette FOR COLLEGE CREDIT--we are hoping to offer two courses in the autumn of 1976. The College in Bricket Wood has been shut down, vastly reducing expenditures; and all students who wished were absorbed by the other two campuses. Big Sandy is also moving toward accreditation, and many important new improvements are being made. Both colleges finished their very first year in intercollegiate athletic competition with "won" records in their basketball programs.

Ambassador College, in both Pasadena and Big Sandy, are distinctive institutions dedicated to building strong individuals--emphasizing character development, high moral and ethical standards, and deep spiritual values as well as providing students with top-quality academic course work. Both colleges, with expanding student enrollments, are here to serve you--our friends and fellow laborers--and your college-age children. Those who would like further information about the College are encouraged to request the College catalog.

"THE WORK" AS A WHOLE:

On all fronts--in the Church, in the colleges, and in our electronic and printed media--we are moving ahead very powerfully!

During 1974, we processed TWO MILLION, nine hundred eighteen thousand, five hundred thirty-seven pieces of mail from our listeners and subscribers! Each of these represents fellow human beings--PEOPLE--like you and me, whose lives have been touched by God's Work, and who have been inspired to respond by requesting literature.

Our TELEPHONE RESPONSE is off to a fine beginning this year, with two new records set! Even though February was the shortest month of the year, we had a record set for the month and a record single day (with more than FOUR THOUSAND CALLS responding to a television program in one day!) and a record WEEK (over TEN THOUSAND CALLS coming in!). For the one record program, we also received over 23,000 "busy-outs" which simply means we must be able to afford more telephone lines to serve increasing numbers of people!

The CORRESPONDENCE COURSE is deeply appreciated by the many thousands of students who take it--and we are now laying plans to more greatly strengthen and improve this course--really getting into the "strong meat" of God's Word, and offering a more intensive, powerful course of serious STUDY of the Bible for those who thirst for God's truth!

Our MINISTERS are instituting more Bible studies on a personal level, and making it more and more known in their local communities that we have local Church services and Bible studies to which any in the public, if they sincerely wish, are most welcome. More than FOUR THOUSAND new members began attending regularly during 1974--and we are expecting much greater growth through 1975! Our ministers are very sincerely inspired with their continually widening responsibilities; many are becoming more involved with local civic groups, youth programs, and making themselves known and available to help serve the people in their communities in whatever way they can. (Any of you who wish to know the location of God's Church in your area may call our toll-free number: (800)-423-4444.) [Editor's Note: Readers in California, Hawaii, and Alaska may call (213)-577-5225 collect. Readers residing in Australia, Britain, Canada and South Africa may consult the box on page 22 for addresses and/or phone numbers.]

During the last year, because of the combined force of staggering inflation and recession, we have had to make many far-reaching budgetary surgeries! We have:

- 1) Reduced the worldwide payroll 30% from the end of 1973 to the present.
- 2) Closed the campus in England.
- 3) Closed down our Imperial Schools (grade and high schools in three locations), thus conserving operating costs and absorbing some teachers into the ministry or the colleges.
- 4) Sold our press facilities in Pasadena, decreasing overhead and releasing important executive time. (We are negotiating for the sale of our Radlett facility near the campus in England.)
- 5) Reduced the cost of the PLAIN TRUTH by changing its format to enable us to immediately DOUBLE THE FREQUENCY, and INCREASE circulation!
- 6) Reduced the cost of the GN by FIFTY PERCENT by streamlining production and altering layout slightly.
- 7) Reduced in ALL OTHER DIVISIONS to a large degree (our Television Production Department for example), striving to keep costs down.

ALL THESE CUTS were vitally necessary to REDUCE OUTFLOW of cash--but none of them directly affect INCOME--they merely reduce OUTGO!

But INCOME is down several percentage points in comparison with this same time last year.

Recently I preached a sermon on the spirit of "giving" in Pasadena and sent it out to the hundreds of our local congregations around the world. [Editor's Note: This sermon will appear in article form in future issues of the GN.] It was received with enthusiastic response--I only wish all you co-workers and others who, while not really "full time" with us in this great Work, have given of your substance--could have heard it too! GIVING IS VOLUNTARY, I emphasized! Jesus Christ said, "GIVE, and it shall be given unto you!" He COMMANDED us to give--but He allows us to decide WHETHER or not we will!

Right now, the ONLY real solution for God's great Work is to INCREASE INCOME! Frankly, as I review this letter--looking at the many vital areas where we are able to powerfully affect the lives of MILLIONS of human beings--I don't see a single thing we can cut further! The Correspondence Course? Cut out the television programs? Stop the radio broadcasts? Cancel the PLAIN TRUTH? Stop the GOOD NEWS magazine?

HOW CAN WE???

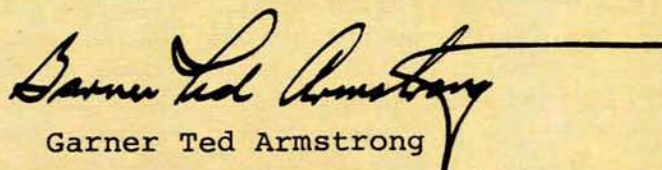
That's why I'm writing this letter. I wish I didn't have to--humanly, I feel apologetic, writing in such fashion. Still, even in the days of Moses, God MADE Moses tell the people plainly of the need--and they "GAVE WILLINGLY" for the project (God's tabernacle) during that day.

So there it is--the whole picture in as few words as I can give it! Frankly, I believe if more of us were PRAYING earnestly to our God--beseeching Him to move others to put their shoulders to the wheel of the most VITAL Work today, HELPING the rest of us to finish His great Work--then those prevailing prayers would rise up to God like a POWERFUL witness, showing our Creator our hearts are truly in His Work on earth; and that He would hear from heaven, answer every need! He PROMISES He will--but He wants us to ask first!

We just cannot let present trends continue--when this whole world trembles on the edge of chaotic upheavals; economies are deeply sick; wars flare and greater war threatens--we must keep this last-ditch witness and warning message going in POWER to the world!

Thank you for listening--and thank you in advance for whatever you feel you can do--most especially for your prayers and encouragement!

Sincerely, in Jesus' name,


Garner Ted Armstrong

The Church in Action



BURMA-At Last!

How would you like to wait for ten years or more for a visit from one of God's ministers?

In 1959 Herbert Zam Hei and his friend Fulbert Tum Kyo from the northern Chin Hills in Burma saw a copy of the British edition of *Reader's Digest* with an ad offering the *Proof of the Bible* and the *Plain Truth* magazine. In 1964, after reading the *Plain Truth* and other Ambassador College publications, they requested a visit from our Sydney, Australia office.

In 1962 an elderly Baptist missionary gave a copy of the *Plain Truth* to Saw Lay Beh in the Myaung Mya district of the Irrawaddy delta west of Rangoon. Four years later he wrote to our office in Australia requesting baptism. However, during the '60s Burma had a policy which greatly restricted foreign tourists from visiting the country. In 1971 when Arthur Docken and Gene Hughes made a visiting and baptizing tour of Southeast Asia, they were unable to obtain visas to include Burma.

Finally, in 1972, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Royer, while returning from

the Feast of Tabernacles in the Philippines, were able to obtain 24-hour visas to visit Rangoon. There they met Herbert Zam Hei, who was at that time studying there. Baptized in the Inya Lake at Rangoon, Mr. Zam Hei became the first member of the Worldwide Church of God in Burma. Unfortunately, Saw Lay Beh arrived in Rangoon the day following the Royers' departure.

During the past ten years, both Herbert Zam Hei in the Chin Hills and Saw Lay Beh in the Irrawaddy delta have had quite an influence on their friends and relatives as they have related truth to them from their study of God's Word. As a result, we have had several requests for baptism from both areas.

Early last year, after moving to Singapore with my family, I planned to visit Burma. By this time the restrictions had been relaxed so that it was possible to obtain a seven-day tourist visa. But again and again my trip had to be postponed. In June food riots broke out in Rangoon. Then widespread floods forced another delay. On August 26 I wrote to Saw Lay Beh about the flooding and received this

reply dated September 5, 1974: "Very recently our Irrawaddy River delta was affected by a flood leaving over one million refugees. But thank God, none of us who are requesting baptism have been affected by the flood. I greatly appreciate your deep concern for us."

My next attempt was to be in December and I notified those interested. But on November 26 former UN Secretary-General U Thant died of cancer in New York and his body was flown to Rangoon for burial. During the funeral procession students from Rangoon University seized the body and took it to the grounds of the university for burial. On December 11, a state of emergency was declared in Rangoon because of this student agitation. After widespread rioting that left at least nine people dead and 74 injured, a curfew was placed on the city. It wasn't lifted altogether until February. Along with the curfew, an order was issued banning any gathering of more than five persons within the city limits.

Needless to say, my trip was again postponed.

Finally, in February of this year, I made the trip. Leaving Singapore on the morning of the 15th, I arrived in Bangkok after a one-day stopover in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. At Bangkok I was met by Steve Pelfrey, a senior student of Ambassador College who has just taken a year out of college to study the Thai language at Cheingmai



16:15), so Saw Lay Beh and his "house" — beginning with his 76-year-old mother and ending with his 22-year-old son — were "baptized in the name of the Lord." Out of the 16 new members, only two are not related to Saw Lay Beh.

On Wednesday morning, after a two-hour delay because of heavy fog, Steve and I boarded a Fokker Friendship and headed for Mandalay. When the plane touched down in Pagan, Steve decided to spend a day of sightseeing in the ancient city on the banks of the Irrawaddy.

I spent two days visiting and counseling with ten people who were able to meet me at the Mandalay Hotel. When Steve arrived from Pagan, he and I, along with Herbert Zam Hei, climbed the 1,729 steps of Mandalay Hill to see the incredible complex of Buddhist shrines and to view the vast plains of the city below. Later, we were allowed to drive behind the walls of Mandalay Palace, the citadel of the last of the Burmese kings.

After determining who was ready for baptism, we drove to the Irrawaddy River, where seven people from the Chin Hills were added to the body of Christ. One man had walked 70 miles in five days on a jungle trail and then traveled by bus for another 124 miles from Haka to Kalemmyo, where he flew to Mandalay for baptism. He had left home eight days before I met him in Mandalay. Another man had walked

University in northern Thailand. On Monday morning, February 17, Steve and I boarded Burma Airways' one and only jet and flew to Rangoon. We found everyone to be very friendly, cooperative and helpful from the moment we stepped off the plane. Arriving at the Strand Hotel, we were met by Herbert Zam Hei (who had come down to Rangoon from the Chin Hills a day or two earlier). Soon we were encompassed by 16 Karen people from the Irrawaddy delta who had been waiting in Rangoon for 24 hours after an all-night motor launch ride. Saw Lay Beh and his family did not want to miss out on a visit this time.

Of the 16 baptismal candidates only four could understand English. Even though Steve had become quite fluent in the Thai language, he didn't know a word of the Karen language spoken by these hill people. Using Saw Lay Beh and U Saw Hla as interpreters, we spent the rest of the day counseling and getting acquainted. The following day we hired a couple of jeeps and journeyed to nearby Inya Lake.

Even as Cornelius (and the Philippian jailor) "with all his house" and Lydia "and her household" were baptized (Acts 10:2; 11:14;

GN photos
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Guy Ames counsels in Rangoon. Sixteen new members — 14 from the same family! Mr. and Mrs. Saw Lay Beh. Eight new members in Mandalay. Herbert Zam Hei, Steve Pelfrey and Guy Ames pose in front of statue at the foot of Mandalay Hill.

forty miles in two days before traveling the rest of the way from Haka. One of the questions these two school teachers had was: "Would it be all right to shoot a tiger attacking our horse on the Sabbath?"

Even though we now have eight members in the Chin Hills and another 16 in the Irrawaddy delta, there are another 30 people in the Chin Hills requesting baptism who couldn't come to Mandalay. Since the Chin Hills' Special Division of Burma is off limits to tourists, perhaps a future tour can be scheduled to go as far as Kalemmyo, where there is an airport just at the edge of the hills. Also, we hope a minister can go to Burma for the coming Feast of Tabernacles. These people need and desire continued guidance from and contact with God's Work. Their lot in life is not the easiest, and they need the prayers of God's people around the world.

— Guy L. Ames

“WHAT ARE YOU WAITING

by John R. Schroeder

What are you waiting for?” said Ananias to Saul. “Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away . . .” (Acts 22:16, NIV).

Now why would a Christian layman in the first century say a thing like that to Saul of Tarsus? Only three days before, Saul had been struck down by Jesus of Nazareth on his way to Damascus to torture Christians. He had spent the three days totally unseeing — blinded by the brightness of Christ’s appearance. That unprecedented experience began the transformation of Saul from a self-righteous religionist into perhaps the greatest Christian of his time.

Saul’s future lifework was outlined rather immediately after his total about-face. But before he could become Paul, or even begin to commence to fulfill his Christ-given commission, Jesus inducted him into God’s Work through the deeply symbolic ceremony of baptism. While Ananias was the Christ-sent human instrument that put the old Saul to death by dunking him under water, it was Jesus Himself who gave Paul God’s Holy Spirit.

But why would such a ceremony be necessary? Would not Paul’s obvious repentance be sufficient? Why go to the trouble of being plunged under water — possibly fully clothed? How could the baptismal ceremony wash Paul’s sins away?

To begin to give an answer to these questions, it is necessary to understand that the cleansing concept of baptism is richly rooted in the pages of the Old Testament.

Old Testament Antecedents

Water baptism is prefigured by a number of graphic accounts in the first Testament. Perhaps the most poignant example is the symbolic

baptism of all of Israel in the Red Sea — leaving the old, corrupt Egyptian way of life and emerging into the prospect of living their lives anew through the vehicle of the freshly revealed righteousness of God’s law.

The apostle Paul really grasped the Old Testament role of baptism and was deeply desirous of teaching its meaning to the Corinthian church. He wrote: “I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and *all were baptized into Moses* in the cloud and in the sea” (I Cor. 10:1,2, RSV).

Noah’s Flood was also a type of New Testament baptism. Peter wrote: “. . . Eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even *baptism* doth also now save us . . . by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (I Peter 3:20-21).

Accounts of ceremonial cleansing by water are too numerous to fully document; nonetheless, here are just a few. The High Priest Aaron was not allowed to enter the Holy Place without first bathing his flesh in water (Lev. 16:1-4). Both husband and wife were to bathe themselves after marital relations (Lev. 15:16-18). Even after leprosy had disappeared, the patient was not dequarantined and restored to normal society without first washing his clothes in water (Lev. 14:8). On the occasion of many an animal sacrifice, the priest had to wash his clothing and take a bath (Num. 19:1-7).

Naaman, chief general of the Syrian army, was afflicted by leprosy in the time of Elisha. He approached God’s prophet to solicit total recovery. Elisha’s instructions were: “Go and wash in the river Jordan seven times.” That seemed silly to this dignified, perhaps even pompous, general of the army. Naaman just didn’t want to do it according to

Elisha’s explicit directions. His reply was: “Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage” (II Kings 5:12, RSV). His aides later persuaded Naaman to cool off and put aside his vanity. He followed Elisha’s seemingly “stupid” instructions and was totally healed of a terminal skin condition.

The point is that the bathing of the flesh and the clothing that touched the flesh was the prescribed formula for ridding the Israelites (and willing Gentiles) of a whole host of physical and sometimes spiritual problems. God has always wanted men to be clean: physically, mentally and spiritually.

But these water-based ceremonies in the Old Testament were only a type of the New Testament spiritual cleansing that finds its fulfillment in Christ. These pre-Christian antecedents could not really cleanse sinners of spiritual defilement and make them eligible candidates for God’s Kingdom.

Jeremiah put his finger on the problem: “Though you wash yourself with lye [a harsh cleansing agent] and use much soap [in water], the stain of your guilt is still before me” (Jer. 2:22, RSV).

The apostle Paul puts the Old Testament ceremonial washings into even sharper focus: “According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various ablutions [washings], regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation [Christ’s blood sacrifice on the cross]” (Heb. 9:9-10, RSV). They could only be a sign. They could never really cleanse the mind itself.

Jesus Christ did what all the of-

FOR?"

ferings, sacrifices and ceremonial washings combined could not do. The shedding of His life's blood broke the barrier between God and man forever. Man's repentance followed by Christ's ministration to man of the Holy Spirit then actually changes the mind. However, all of those Old Testament washings did symbolically prefigure important New Testament principles, not the least of which is water baptism.

The Baptismal Bridge

John the Baptist built a bridge between Old Testament ritualism and Christ. His baptism paved the way for Christ's baptism of the Holy Spirit. It added more clarity to the picture of God's plan of salvation. John recognized that the proper mental approach — repentance — must precede baptism. He sharply rebuked the "religious" types of His day, saying: "Bear fruit that befits repentance" (Matt. 3:8, RSV). John would have no part of baptizing those whose attitudes were wedded to sin.

Later he told those who were really willing to repent of their sins: "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he [Christ] who is coming after me is mightier than I... he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (verse 11, RSV).

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

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented

him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he [John] consented. And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water..." (Matt. 3:13-16, RSV).

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

Actually, full immersion was generally practiced until the late 1200's A.D. In the year 1155, theologian Thomas Aquinas wrote: "Baptism may be given not only by immer-

sion, but also by affusion of water, or sprinkling with it. But it is the safer way to baptize by immersion, because that is the most common custom" (quoted by Wall, *His Baptism*, vol. II, pp. 391-393).

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

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

RECOMMENDED READING

The following three booklets and articles are highly recommended for additional reading in conjunction with the biblical topic of baptism.

1) All About Water Baptism

Is water baptism essential to salvation? What about the thief on the cross? Should babies and children be baptized? Suppose you were baptized "in the name of the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit"? Should you be baptized over again in the name of Jesus only? Must the ordinance be performed by an ordained minister?

2) How You Can Be Imbued With the Power of God

The Church in apostolic days was filled with power. Yet today many professing Christians are spiritually lifeless. Why? And how can you, yourself, be filled with the power that motivated the early Church — the power of God's Holy Spirit?

3) Just What Do You Mean — Conversion?

Is it possible for one to actually sin, while he or she is a Christian, and still remain a truly converted Christian? Few know how one is converted — whether suddenly, all at once, or gradually. Does conversion happen immediately, or is it a process?

A copy of each of these three free booklets (or reprints) is on reserve for you in our mailing room. Write for one or all today. See the inside front cover for the address of our office nearest you.

Important New Testament Symbolism

Of course, total immersion of and by itself is no more effective, spiritually speaking, than scrupulously washing a bunch of pots and pans. Water has no mystical or magical effects on the person immersed. But the symbolism is so profound that the candidate must demonstrate his repentance and faith by literally observing the baptismal ritual.

So much is this true that even after the Gentile Cornelius and his household had received the Holy Spirit before water baptism — a very rare exception to normal procedure — the apostle Peter said to them: "Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:47-48, RSV).

The simple rite of water baptism is meant to mark a miraculous change in the repentant sinner. It is an embarking on a new, clean, right way of life that will end up in great

reward and happiness. Its symbolism is meant to instill a permanent change of direction, with spiritual cleansing throughout the remainder of one's natural life.

Once you are truly baptized, there is no longer need for further physical rites as previously required in the elaborate ritualistic system of the Old Testament. From then on when you stumble and sin, Christ cleanses you symbolically with His blood (I John 1:7-9), and "with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26).

Through continual repentance, prayer, and habitual Bible study for the purpose of personal correction, the true Christian moves steadily in the direction of a perfection which was not possible through repeated physical ablutions and washings.

Baptism Without Repentance?

It is absolutely worse than useless to go through the baptismal ceremony without really repenting of your sins *first*. God simply will not honor such a baptism. Peter, in his very first sermon following the inauguration of the first-century Church of God on the day of Pentecost, gives the baptismal candidate the correct order of events: "Repent [first], and be baptized every one of you . . ." (Acts 2:38).

However, no matter who you are, once you have really repented there is no longer any reason to delay water baptism. Six month's probation, or some such other stipulation, is *not* required.

Last month's issue contained two very profound articles on the subject of repentance: "In the Image of God?" and "Here's How You Can Change Your World." Many of you were undoubtedly deeply moved by those articles. If so, all you really need now is an Ananias to counsel with you about baptism. Many such dedicated servants of God are available in the world today. (See the adjacent box.)

"What are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away." □

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.)
- United Kingdom, Europe, India, Africa and the West Indies: P.O. Box 111, St. Albans, Herts., England
- Australia: G.P.O. Box 202, Burleigh Heads, Queensland 4220 (Or dial this number: 075-35-4233 — reverse the charges.)
- Canada: P.O. Box 44, Station A, Vancouver, B.C. V6C 2M2.
- South Africa: P.O. Box 1060, Johannesburg 2000 (Or dial this number: 011-216406.)

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

QUESTION: "Do you have a booklet on how to read and understand the Bible? Could you advise me what Bible to buy? I have a New Testament called 'Good News for Modern Man.' Is that okay? What about 'The Living Bible'?"

Mrs. Lorne F.,
St. Albans, Vermont

ANSWER: We have two free booklets entitled *Read the Bible* and *How to Study the Bible*. The first explains how to approach and accomplish the task of reading your Bible completely through from Genesis to Revelation. The second booklet concerns itself with important keys that are vital to biblical understanding.

In terms of translations, the Worldwide Church of God also publishes a well-researched article assessing the relative merits of various versions of the Bible. Entitled "Which Translations Should You Use?" this reprint article gives valuable points in choosing and using a translation. *Good News for Modern Man* and *The Living Bible* are among the translations and paraphrased versions discussed.

Q: "I would like a list of the authors who wrote the 66 books of the Bible under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. Who wrote the first Bible?"

Herman S.,
Euclid, Ohio

A: The Bible is a collection of inspired books written by various men at different stages in history. The last book apparently was written in the 90s A.D. But though written by men, it is important to realize that the original finished work is *God's Word* to man. Even though God used human beings as His instruments to transmit His Holy

Q&A

Word, the preparation and approval of every book was directly inspired and supervised by the Creator (II Tim. 3:16; II Peter 1:21).

Since God in many cases has not revealed it, it is obviously impossible for contemporary scholars peering through 2,000 years and more of history to be completely dogmatic about the human authorship of every book in the Bible. The following is, therefore, only a summary of the likely or possible authors of many biblical books.

Moses is generally regarded to be the author of the Torah or Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible).

Joshua could have been the author of most of the book that bears his name, although some scholars feel that the prophet Samuel could have written or added to it (cf. Joshua 24:29-33). Samuel is generally credited with the authorship of Judges, but he probably used written records and oral traditions from earlier judges, priests and scribes.

Samuel also appears to be the author of the first 24 chapters of I Samuel, which comprise his lifetime. There are, of course, other possibilities. The books of Samuel and Kings, originally one book (or scroll), were placed (in the Jewish version) just prior to the book of Isaiah. Some feel that Isaiah compiled and/or wrote the entire Samuel-Kings scroll as an historical introduction to his major prophetic work — the book of Isaiah. He was contemporaneous with some of the historical events narrated in II Kings. A later prophet would have added the ending of II Kings.

All the major and minor prophets (and Daniel) apparently wrote the books bearing their names. The 150 Psalms had various authors. David

wrote the lion's share, but Solomon, Moses (Psalm 90), Asaph and others wrote one or more. Proverbs is basically the work of Solomon (I Kings 4:32; Eccl. 12:9), although he undoubtedly included many proverbs written or spoken earlier by ancient wise men. Also, certain portions of the book of Proverbs were probably added by other authors and official editors (cf. Prov. 25:1; 30:1; 31:1).

Ezra and Nehemiah wrote their own books. Ezra is also thought by some scholars to have written (or at least edited) I and II Chronicles.

The books of the New Testament generally bear the author's name, either in the title or the opening sentence. Acts was written by Luke, and John wrote the book of Revelation. Hebrews is considered to be either by Paul or by an associate who put down Paul's thoughts.

Q: "Should we use the Apocrypha? If not, why was reference made to II Esdras in one of your books?"

**John N.,
Orlando, Florida**

A: We occasionally may refer to the Apocrypha for useful historical information, especially in the period from Malachi to Matthew — between the Testaments. Remember that Paul quoted either from a writing (book) or a speech of a Cretian poet in his letter to Titus (1:12).

Reliable secular and ecclesiastical sources (even apart from the Bible) can afford us valuable historical insight. However, the Apocrypha itself should not be relied on for divine guidance. For further information about this particular collection of books, write for our free article "Do We Have the Complete Bible?"

Q: "I am reading with interest 'Seven Proofs of God's Church.' In the first proof you quoted Ephesians 4:11-12 and I Corinthians 12:28,

which say that the true government of God consists of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Does the government of your church include these offices or am I misreading what you are saying?"

**E. J. B.,
Suffield, Connecticut**

A: The terms "apostle," "prophet," "evangelist" and "teacher" represent various functions or gifts of the ministry. Each is performed as a result of the Holy Spirit working with the natural talents and abilities of the individuals. Technically, the word "apostle" means *messenger* or *ambassador*. He is one who is sent with a message.

In the early New Testament Church, it was the function of a prophet to communicate to the apostles special messages which God had personally revealed to them (cf. Acts 11:28; 21:10-11). But today we have *the complete* Word of God. Apparently there are no such prophets at the present time.

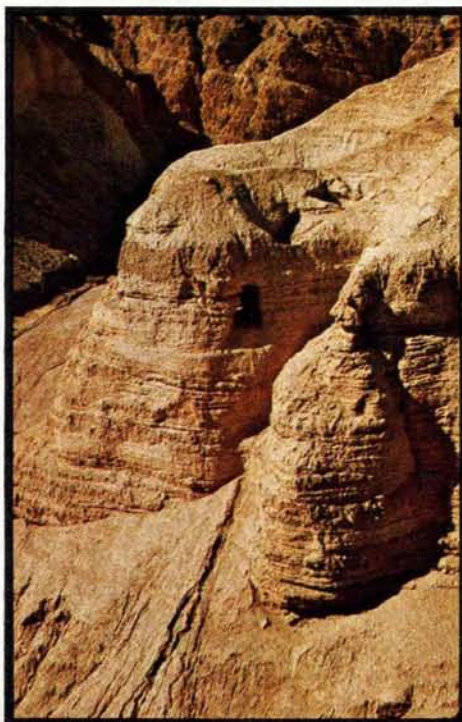
An evangelist is one who evangelizes. Timothy was an evangelist who was sent by Paul to evangelize. Titus also fell into this ministerial classification. A pastor is a "shepherd" — one who shepherds or pastors the "sheep" or the "flock" which is raised up as a result of the work of apostles and evangelists. Some ministers are also teachers. They are particularly adept at communicating biblical truth — they edify and educate the congregations as teachers.

All ministers are elders — even apostles (I Peter 5:1). But not all elders are apostles! The Church of God today recognizes these offices and functions in its ministry. Each type of ministerial service is the result of the indwelling and working of the Holy Spirit of God. □

NEW TESTAMENT AMONG THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS?



FRENCH PROFESSOR Baillet (above) studies fragments of Dead Sea Scrolls discovered at Qumran (right). The first of the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947 by a fifteen-year-old Bedouin boy. According to one story, he threw a stone at a runaway goat. The stone landed in a cave, and the boy heard the tinkle of breaking pottery. This led him to the manuscripts.



Ernst Herb — GN

Cave Number 7 near Kirbet Qumran did not seem nearly so rewarding as some of the others. Other caves, such as Cave 1 and Cave 11, had yielded some quite lengthy fragments of biblical and extra-biblical writings. These fragments, making up the so-called “Dead Sea Scrolls,” included a great deal of material from the Old Testament. Cave 1, as a prime example, had yielded an almost complete scroll of the book of Isaiah.

Cave 7 (abbreviated 7Q by scholars), however, contained only papyrus fragments, most of which had no more than a few Greek letters on them. It was certainly not the most promising find.

Yet now some of these scraps of decayed papyrus have made world headlines as possibly the oldest remains of the New Testament in existence!

Astonishing Identification Claimed

Jesuit scholar Jose O’Callaghan is the one responsible for the present excitement. His first official report in the journal *Biblica* suggested two identifications in Mark and one in James. This Spanish article entitled “New Testament Papyri in Qumran Cave?” (“¿Papiros neotestamentarios en la cueva 7 de Qumran?,” *Biblica* 53, 1972, pp. 91-100) began a series of articles.

The fragments he had studied were found about 1955 in a cave on the northwest shores of the Dead Sea, an area at that time controlled by Jordan. They were published in volume III of *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* in 1962 (*Les ‘petites grottes’ de Qumran*, edited by Baillet, Milik, and de Vaux).

Two of the 19 fragments found in that cave were identified as portions of the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament into Greek. The other 17 were left unidentified by the editors of volume III, though

listed as "Biblical texts?" — with a question mark.

When Dr. O'Callaghan had occasion to study photos of the papyrus remains, however, the partial word *-nnes-* of fragment 5 (7Q5) caught his eye. It had been tentatively restored as *egennesen* ("he begat"), the editors thinking it was perhaps a portion of a genealogy. But this word sparked a different reaction in the papyrologist's mind. It reminded him of the familiar New Testament word "Gennesaret" or area near the Sea of Galilee.

Taking this flash of inspiration, O'Callaghan soon found a passage which seemed to fit quite nicely — Mark 6:52-53. This was in December 1971. Since that time, he has presented quite a number of other identifications.

First Reactions

Such an amazing claim could not fail to raise eyebrows across the scholarly world. O'Callaghan himself presented his finding with some qualifications. But something so exciting as this could not help creating something of a hubbub, especially when it hit the news wires in popular (and often distorted) form.

Perhaps one extreme might be represented by William White, Jr., who wrote on the subject for the conservative lay publication *Eternity*. While noting that there was some possibility of misidentification, Dr. White still concluded among other things that Mark was written down very near to the time of Jesus' ministry and that the "traditional view that the New Testament is a self-contained collection is vindicated."

White's enthusiasm is not necessarily matched by other scholars, though. Such eminent men as Frank M. Cross, Jr., Dead Sea Scroll expert at Harvard, and New Testament scholar David Flusser of the Hebrew University have voiced their skepticism.

William H. Brownlee, one of the first men to work with the Dead Sea Scrolls after their discovery in 1947, has expressed his misgivings as well, so far mostly in private. As others, he cited the extremely tenuous nature of any identification since the fragments contain only a few letters each, and a good portion of these are partially mutilated. For example, fragment 5 contains traces of 21 letters. But of these, only 9 are listed as visible beyond dispute. Fragment 6,1 (7Q6,1) has only two whole characters even though traces of eleven can be seen.

In the three years since O'Callaghan's first article, quite a few other scholars have pointed out the tenuousness of the claim.

Such an amazing claim could not fail to raise eyebrows across the scholarly world. O'Callaghan himself presented his finding with some qualifications. But something so exciting as this could not help creating something of a hubbub.

Further Questions

The identifications are based on an assumed length of lines determined from the general line length in the two Old Testament papyri from the same cave. The three suggested reconstructions published in O'Callaghan's first article seem to fit these reasonably well. But since no fragment covers the width of an entire column, it is impossible to know for sure how wide the columns actually were.

Another problem is that two of the three restorations leave out phrases overwhelmingly supported by the textual evidence. For example, the restoration based on

Mark 6:52-53 leaves out the phrase "upon the land." The one on James 1:23-24 leaves out "for himself." Although some small amount of manuscript evidence is cited as justification, it is so meager one could easily pass it off as negligible.

There are also problems of dating, since fragment 5 could be as early as 50 B.C. Most scholars would find such an early Mark rather unusual!

A final question which immediately comes to the mind of any Qumran scholar is this: How would New Testament material get into one of the Qumran caves, considering that the Qumran community was hostile to other Jews, much less Christians? One can always suggest possibilities. But really plausible explanations seem to take their time coming up.

What Could a Positive Identification Prove?

Debate on this issue is still in its initial stages and is not likely to die down for some time. On such a small amount of evidence, one can only talk of "possibilities" or at most "probabilities." Positive identification requires the rest of the manuscript, which has most probably long since decayed.

But even if incontrovertible evidence proved a copy of the Gospel of Mark was written as early as A.D. 50, would that "prove the Bible" as some evangelical scholars seem to assume? Of course not. The value of the Bible does not lie in its age or proof of human authorship.

The "proof" of the Bible does not lie in external evidence. It doesn't depend on bits of papyrus, moth-eaten parchment, or cryptic human scribblings. In the end, everything hinges on its *message*. It is that powerfully urgent message which challenges each new hearer even now, thousands of years after the last biblical writer died.

— Lester L. Grabbe

THE WAVESHEAF RITUAL- PROOF OF CHRIST AND THE

by Lawson C. Briggs

The ancient priests of Jerusalem had a ritual. One in which — astonishingly — the entire secret of the death-resurrection-mission of Christ the Messiah, and the birth, life and destiny of the true Christian Church was acted out.

It was no accident that multitudes of first-century Jews, knowing as they did the facts of this ritual, were convinced of the authenticity of Jesus and His message, and that they eagerly accepted the new name of Christian: "... The number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

The long previous existence of the ritual — and its known and established provenance from God, the God of Israel and the God of the universe — was proof positive to their minds that this new development in the religion of Israel indeed was the unfolding and revelation of the truth of God the Creator.

Looking at that same ritual and its perfect, detailed fulfillment in Christ and the Church, we on this end of a 2000-year time tunnel still find it equally impressive and convincing. And to us, it is not only a tremendous testimony to the divinity and authenticity of Christ but to the accuracy and authority of the Old Testament Scriptures as well.

The ritual was prophecy — which came to pass!

Given Through Moses

The original command was given back in the wilderness — thirty-nine years before the Israelites came into the Promised Land and had a harvest to which it could apply. It was

given by the God of the Old Testament, who was to become the very Jesus Christ of the New Testament to whom the ritual pointed.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it" (Lev. 23:9-11).

You will notice that the "wave-sheaf" was to be lifted up and waved toward heaven, as a symbol of something actually being transferred to heaven to be presented and accepted by the One who sits on the throne of the universe.

The sheaf had to be of the "firstfruits" — the first of the harvest to be reaped. "And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings" (verse 14).

Why did the sheaf have to be offered first — before the rest of the harvest could be used? Because it represented Christ: "Christ [is] risen from the dead, and become the *firstfruits* of them that slept" (I Cor. 15:20). "... Every man in his own order: Christ the *firstfruits*; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (verse 23). "Christ... the *first* that should rise from the dead"; "... that he might be the *firstborn* among many brethren"; "... the *firstborn* from the dead"; "the *first begotten*" (Acts 26:23; Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18; Heb. 1:6).

The ritual was to be repeated

each year as the harvest season arrived. It was closely tied in with the annual cycle of holy days which picture God's plan of His *spiritual* harvest.

"And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days [that is, until *Pentecost*, which means "fiftieth day"]... [Then] ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the Lord... And the priest shall wave... the bread of the firstfruits for a wave offering before the Lord..." (Lev. 23:15-16, 17, 20).

Here is a time period — represented by 50 days — to elapse after the offering and acceptance of Christ, after which something or someone (represented by two loaves, in which preparation *leaven* had a part!) become eligible to also be lifted and waved toward the heavens.

The meaning of the latter symbolism will become obvious when we thoroughly understand the earlier part of the ritual.

More to the Ritual in Practice

There was more to the way the Jews actually handled the wave-sheaf than we have yet noticed. More than was actually commanded in the Bible.

Did some or someone among the prophets and priests of Israel, perhaps centuries before, truly understand the events and circumstances surrounding the first coming

and departure of the Messiah? Or did God in some way simply reveal it to the priests that the wavesheaf should be handled in the detailed way they did it? We do not know. But we can see the reason, as we examine those perhaps even man-made and man-added details, why thousands of first-century Jews came to see Jesus was Christ.

Christ was a chosen one — chosen by the Father before the foundation of the world (I Peter 1:19-20; Eph. 1:4; Rev. 13:8), chosen by the high priest and the leaders of the Jews (John 11:49-52), chosen by the people (Mark 11:7-10). Not just any sheaf carelessly grabbed on a Sunday morning out of all the barley which was then beginning to be reaped could represent Him. Nor could just any sheaf have fittingly demonstrated the extreme pre-eminence of Christ's firstfruits as regards time since then — already now nearly twenty centuries.

The Mishnah, a collection of Jewish law and traditions, describes the ceremony of cutting, preparing and waving the wavesheaf. Since the Mishnah is generally thought to have been put into writing only about A.D. 200, some of the information about events before the destruction of the Temple (A.D. 70) may not always be totally accurate. But the general picture of the wavesheaf ceremony is borne out by other sources and what we know of the situation at the time. Here is the traditional ceremony as handed down through the Mishnah:

"How was it done? The messengers of the court went out . . . and bound the standing grain into sheaves so that it would be easy for cutting" (*Menahoth* 10,3; our own translation).

Following the above-quoted pas-

sage, the Mishna dramatically describes the cutting loose of the stalks of grain from the ground. Standing in the field, over the chosen and bound sheaf, sickle in hand and surrounded by others who were there to make sure all was done exactly right, the priest asked: "Is the sun set?" They answered "Yes!" "Shall I reap?" And they answered, "Reap!" He then cut the bound grain.

Having chosen and eventually reaped the sheaf, the priests went even further to make it a wholly suitable representation of Christ (though probably not themselves fully apprehending just what they were illustrating). What they obviously could not do while the grain was standing, they now did. "They used to parch it with fire. . . . They used to beat it with reeds and the stems of plants that the grains should not be crushed [before the parching]" (*Menahoth* 10,4).

Surely here is more than a hint of the physical beating — scourging — Christ underwent at the hands of the Romans, yet done in the type carefully enough not to crush the grain. Why? Because not a bone of Him was to be broken (Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12; Ps. 34:20; John 19:36). Then the grain was parched, symbolic of the scorching reception this world gave the Son of God throughout His entire human life, and especially in His final hours.

Then, as if this were not enough, the priests "put it in a grist-mill and took therefrom a tenth [of an ephah of flour] which was sifted through thirteen sieves . . . they put in oil, and the frankincense thereof. . ." (*ibid.*). Here again they pictured Christ's trials and testings (siftings), His Holy Spirit (the oil), His prayers and the sweet savor to God of His holiness (frankincense — Rev. 8:3).

Thus were the aspects of Christ's life and death represented by ritual. God had not had all these details written into the Bible in the first place. But He nevertheless used them in the working out of His plan to identify His Son and Messiah, so that a tremendous witness was borne to the Jews concerning Jesus of Nazareth.

The Passover Itself a Similar Example

God did a similar thing with Jewish practice in the events leading up to and culminating in the actual death of Christ as Passover Lamb. The Jews in Jesus' time were killing their lambs almost 24 hours late, perhaps about 3 p.m. on the afternoon of Nisan 14 (see box on next page). In the later years (before Jerusalem and the second Temple were destroyed by the Romans), because of the sheer multitude of the lambs which were brought into the Temple courts for slaughter, the priests had to begin to kill them even as early as noon.

And to further identify and authenticate His divine, anointed Passover Lamb as the bearer away of the sins of the world, God honored their way!

Yes, He did. Even so far as to darken the earth about noon as Christ hung on the cross and began to die, and to actually let Him expire by about 3 p.m. (Luke 23:44-46; Mark 15:33-34; Matt. 27:45-46).

The time the Jews thus set actually pictured the hour Christ our Passover did die. For the unbelieving of the Jews, the limited view this gave of the sacrifice of Christ was sufficient. It was a witness. It was enough they could have believed.

As it was, they did picture for themselves, for the time when they

shall have the perception to see and believe, the death of *their* Savior, as *their* Passover as well as ours. Only the Christians needed — and now need — to understand and keep the Passover ordinance after the example of Jesus at the beginning of Nisan 14. Because only they perceive their future need of prior protection when God will slay more than firstborn, and throughout the world will “pass over” only those over whom is the blood of the Christ who let Himself at midnight be seized in their stead by the “death angel” mob in Gethsemane.

Back to the Wavesheaf

In the time of Jesus the wavesheaf was offered on the Sunday during Passover week. This is clear since the priests — who were mostly Sadducees — were in charge of the Temple and all the Temple ceremony (Acts 4:1-6; 5:17). The timing and symbolism of this ceremony

would have been overwhelming to those who knew the events of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

The wave sheaf had been chosen in advance, as Christ was. It was tied in a bundle, symbolizing his captivity. It was cut loose from the ground just at sunset — just the time at which Christ rose from the dead after three days and three nights in the tomb. The cutting of the grain symbolized Christ’s actual resurrection. Like the sheaf now loosed from the soil, the resurrected Christ became free from any physical dependence on air, water or sustenance that had tied Him, as it has tied all other humans, to this earth out of which we grow.

Thus, in the ritual, Christ was slain and resurrected. But He had not yet ascended into heaven.

So finally the priests waved the product of their (mis?)treatment of the wavesheaf toward heaven and the Father. And in like manner as

the “sheaf” was raised and let down, Christ ascended to heaven to His Father, and returned on that same day (John 20:17; Matt. 28:9).

The barley and wheat harvest continued from the day of the wave-sheaf to Pentecost. It was a type of the spiritual harvest which has been underway in the Church ever since. But no more of it was waved till the fiftieth day. Then two wave loaves were made of flour brought of the habitations of the people. The priest raised them, waved them toward heaven and lowered them. What of these two loaves? Obviously they represented the many additional firstfruits to be given eternal life from both Old Testament and New Testament periods (James 1:18; Rom. 16:5; Rev. 14:1-4). The loaves were baked with leaven, which represented sin (I Cor. 5:7), for none of us — as Christ — have never sinned.

No specific point in the ritual seems designed to show our actual cutting loose from the earth, the end of our dependence on the physical, because our resurrection and ascension into the air to meet Christ are all one event. Some will yet be living at that time and will not be resurrected at all, but “changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye” (I Cor. 15:51-52; I Thess. 4:13-18). But just as the priest raised the loaves up and let them down, so shall we all ascend into the clouds before returning almost immediately to earth with Christ, as His feet stand in that day on the mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4).

To us the *general* analogy of I Corinthians 15:35-44, 49 primarily refers. But the ritual of Leviticus 23, with all its added features, primarily and vividly describes and identifies Christ.

No wonder that tens of thousands of first-century Jews — the people who knew the most about Bible prophecies (and the Exodus and about Leviticus 23) — believed. Was it all just coincidence that had come to pass in their day? Ridiculous!

Can it all help you too to believe? ☐

The Jews’ Passover

When God gave the Israelites a law to kill and eat the Passover on the 14th day of Nisan (Exodus 12), he did not tell them to kill the lamb late in the afternoon and finally get it roasted to eat after the sundown beginning the 15th — after the Passover day was ended. (Remember that a biblical day begins with a dark half, then concludes with a light half — see Leviticus 23:32; Genesis 1:5, 8, 13). He told them: “In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord’s passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread . . .” (Lev. 23:5-6).

The Jews for many centuries have made the eating of the lamb the same as the feast of unleavened bread (how can it be feast of “unleavened bread” when it is the feast of “lamb”?). Thus they have confused the two festivals, making them one. But it is obvious, from Christ’s own “last supper” example, that the originally commanded time to slay the lamb was early in the beginning of the 14th — as Exodus 12:6 puts it, “between the two evenings”

— between sunset and darkness.

As God of the Old Testament, Christ foreknew He would change the emblems of the Passover to the bread and wine, and He knew what day and hour He wanted it to occur. Therefore He told the Israelites to slay the lamb in the evening, put its blood on the doorposts, roast and eat it and stay indoors till morning (Ex. 12:6-8, 22). Why? Because only those firstborn humans who were within such already marked and protected houses would be spared at midnight. The Lord would “pass over” that house — at midnight, still in the first and dark half of the 24-hour day — and that “passing over” was to give that day — the 14th — its name, Passover (verses 12, 23, 29).

If the death angel (representing the Lord Himself) had not “passed over” until the night part of the 15th, that day — the 15th — would have been the Passover, and not the 14th.

If they had slain and eaten the Passover lamb at the same time of day as the Jews later came to do, their firstborn would not have been spared!

Neglected Keys to a Joyous Marriage

I want to thank you for the article "Neglected Keys to a Joyous Marriage," in the March issue of the GN by Dr. Roderick C. Meredith. Tears came to my eyes as I looked at the cover wondering why we couldn't have done what is best for us. It seems we would rather jeopardize our lives instead of protecting them. What a wonderful solution is given to us in this article that will cause us to bear the kind of fruit for others' benefit. Thank you for encouraging more successful marriages in this article.

Mrs. Elsie F.,
Olathe, Kansas

I've been enjoying *The Good News* magazine now (since receiving my first copy in November 1973) for seventeen months. The article "Neglected Keys to a Joyous Marriage" seemed to be printed just for me. It seemed like the story of my life, where Mr. Meredith was questioning the woman concerning her marriage. After reading the article, I, too, realize that I've got to do better in my marriage. I was only sixteen when I married. I've been married twenty years, and in many ways I haven't grown up yet. I want to thank you for sending *The Good News* to me.

Mrs. Jack N.,
Bessemer, Alabama

• *The GN/Booklet editorial staff is busily working to produce more timely, genuinely helpful feature articles and booklets on various aspects of marriage and family life.*

Don't Pass Over the Passover

I just finished reading your March issue of *The Good News*. I am appalled that you are advocating Christians to celebrate the Passover and other Jewish holy days. Your complete dismissal of Christ's birth, death and resurrection, plus the teachings of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles in this age of grace, is more than I can stand. The Passover was fulfilled when Christ died on the cross and shed His blood for us. The Jews celebrate all the Jewish holy days because they don't believe Christ was the true Messiah, God's Son. There is no reason for a born-again Christian to celebrate those days.

Why don't you teach the fruits of the Spirit and the beautiful message of God's love, grace and mercy to us — this is the message for today! This is the message that brings us closer to God and helps us live in love and look forward to reigning with Christ in heaven and not on earth as the Jews will do. I'm sorry to see your magazine go in that Jewish direction and not forward in Christ — therefore, please cancel my subscription.

Mrs. H. O.,
Grants Pass, Oregon

• *The Holy Days are not exclusively "Jewish." Moses was instructed concerning "the feasts of the Lord" (Lev. 23:2, 4). Jesus instituted the New Testament symbols of unleavened bread and wine on the occasion of*

the Passover (Luke 22:15-20). Christians are to follow Christ's example (1 Pet. 2:21; John 13:15-17). The Gentile Corinthian church (under the overall supervision of the apostle Paul) followed it by keeping the Passover (1 Cor. 11:20-34). Paul also instructed that church to observe the festival of unleavened bread (1 Cor. 5:7-8). Each of the Holy Days picture vital steps in God's master plan, showing how He will bestow grace, mercy, truth and love upon the whole world.

In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Gal. 3:28-29). God does not distribute eternal spiritual rewards according to race distinctions.

On occasions I have heard that the Worldwide Church of God is the only Church which keeps the holy days of Leviticus 23. *The Directory of Sabbath-Observing Groups*, published by the Bible Sabbath Association in Fairview, Oklahoma, lists at least 15 groups which observe the holy days in addition to the Worldwide Church of God.

M. J. B.,
Steamboat Springs, Colorado

• *We realize that other small, scattered groups (not only in the United States, but also in other countries) do observe God's holy days in some form. However, not a single major denomination that we know of even professes to keep these days. If you are one who is not familiar with the theological basis for observing these annual biblical Sabbaths, please write for our free booklet "Pagan Holidays — or God's Holy Days — Which?"*

Christ the Creator

I wish to commend Mr. George Ritter for his excellent "Christ the Creator" in the December GN. Terrific — how we constantly limit God's power. The truth, once revealed, is so evident, and yet we go through life never really paying too much attention to our surroundings and the miracles of creation. I really do feel articles such as this bring into focus the absolute wonder of Christ's mind. Wow!

Mrs. Robert R.,
Seattle, Washington

Your Best Investment

In your March issue of *The Good News*, the article "Part 2: Your Best Investment" opens as an explanation with this: "In the February issue we showed that money is not the root of evil." I say of course it is not the root of evil, as that is not the correct quote of the original, which I suppose is taken from Shakespeare. But from whom, ever, the proper quote is "The love of money is the root of evil" — not money by itself, as money is a necessity, a medium of exchange in our free enterprise system. It is only when the love of money becomes so strong in one that he will go to any means to get it that its love gets one into trouble.

E. B.,
Canoga Park, California

• *The quote is from 1 Timothy 6:10: "The love of money is the [a] root of all*

evil..." (KJV). J. B. Phillips' translation grasps the true intent: "For loving money leads to all kinds of evil..."

I have been reading your magazine articles in *The Good News* on economics. I find your presentation factual, stimulating and enlightening. As a fellow Christian and a graduate in economics, I am elated to see Christians finally dealing in "concrete" terms with an oft-taboo subject: money.

I would also like to take this opportunity to share with you the views of another Christian. The man I am referring to is Dr. Gary North. He is the senior economist for the Pacific Coast Coin Exchange and author of the book entitled *An Introduction to Christian Economics* (The Craig Press, 1973). In the section entitled "Use Money God's Way," I felt you stopped short on developing this point. You did not make reference to the key role that indebtedness plays in our society and what God's Word says about it.

I would like to direct you to Proverbs 22:7 and Romans 13:8. These verses provide a basis to build on in an analysis such as yours. They lay a foundation for the belief that a believer should not indent himself because he is mortgaging his future and placing himself in a position of servitude. I mention this point only as an example that is in no way meant to be an exhaustive analysis of the role debt should or should not play in a Christian's life. For this reason I would like to recommend you read Mr. North's book.

Thomas W.,
New Brighton, Pennsylvania

• *Romans 13:8 has often been misunderstood to mean that a Christian should not incur any financial debts. As translated in the King James English, it reads: "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." In context with the rest of the chapter, this verse is really explaining the difference between what man's law requires and what God's law requires. Man's governments require that he pay taxes, be obedient to civil laws and ordinances, etc. But to fellowman, God's law requires that we owe him love. Romans 13:8 is not speaking of money debts. It is not wrong for a Christian to borrow money.*

Personal Finances

I have just finished reading [the booklet] *Managing Your Personal Finances*, and now I am aware of what I was not doing. Tomorrow's check will see 10 percent to God and His Work.

Malia J.,
Elwood, Illinois

Personal Counsel

Please give me information on whom I can find to baptize me. I have read your November GN and am convinced.

Muriel L.,
Milford, Connecticut

• *Others who are interested should check the box on page 22 of this issue.*

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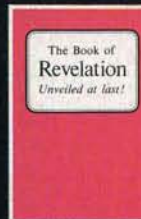
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