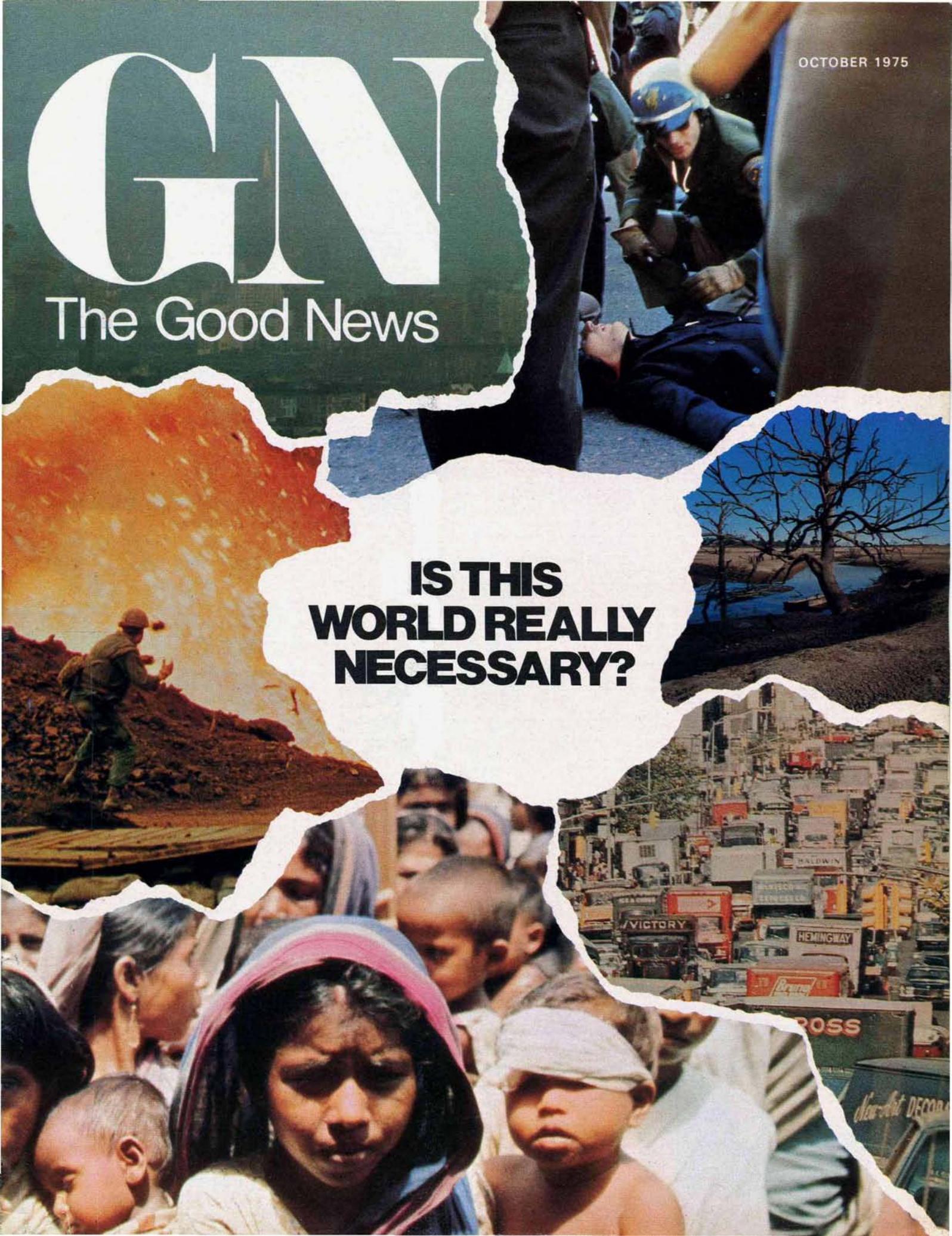


GN

The Good News

OCTOBER 1975

**IS THIS
WORLD REALLY
NECESSARY?**



GN

The Good News

Vol. XXIV No. 10

October 1975

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ABOUT OUR COVER

If God is good, kind and just, why did He create this misery-laden world for His children to live in? Why war, starvation, pain and suffering? Is there a logical reason for it all?

(See article beginning on page 22.)

*Clockwise from top right:
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Ernst Herb — GN; Black Star; James Robinson.*

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In a back-page ad appearing on a fairly recent number of the *Plain Truth*, we tested the Bible knowledge of our readership. Ten true-or-false questions were posed to our *Plain Truth* readers — without the benefit of a handy crib or answer sheet neatly tucked away elsewhere in the tabloid.

What doctrines were true and false to our readers is a little astonishing to say the least (see box on next page for the results) — just one more eye-opening revelation confirming the extent to which even this Western world of Christianity has been virtually engulfed by a plethora of paganism.

One of the seven major, incontrovertible proofs of the true Church of God is its knowledge concerning “The Real Truth About Pagan Doctrines.” I propose to answer each and every one of these ten doctrinal questions straight out of the pages of your own Bible.

The Real Source of Your Religious Beliefs

But first, why do you believe the things you do about the Bible? How did our *Plain Truth* readers arrive at

ARE YOU BRAVE ENOUGH TO FACE TRUTH ?

by Garner Ted Armstrong

How much of what you believe about religion is really true? How do you discover doctrinal truths? And if you do finally find the right doctrine, are you courageous enough to face and accept it?

their various doctrinal beliefs as shown on this short ten-question quiz? How did we all come to our religious convictions and beliefs?

Was it by actually studying the Bible for weeks, months and years — oftentimes on our knees, comparing, searching, praying for guidance and then living by what we found there?

Let’s most of us not kid ourselves. If such is your case, you are a very rare person indeed! The majority of our readers would have to admit that their religious beliefs, if they really would sit down and stop to think about it, came from anywhere but the Bible. The actual sources were *first* of all parents, perhaps an aunt, an uncle, grandparent, friends, various denominations of “churchianity,” books *about* the Bible, even concepts almost automatically “read into” the Bible, etc.

Frankly, people believe what they are taught — true or false! A human being is *not*, of himself (or herself), a rational being. Rather, as a little baby, he openly and freely admits into his little mind any and everything that is taught him.

Think about it! You were a little baby once. You were utterly help-

less — utterly dependent upon your parents for your very survival. As a growing young child, you innocently and eagerly believed most of what your parents said to you.

For example, you firmly believed Aunt Bessie's soul went to heaven if your parents said so! And that is about how most of your convictions, beliefs and concepts about the Word of God got lodged into your mind — *other people* were by far and away the main source.

There Is a Source of Truth

If you had been taught the truth of God from infancy, you would believe it today. But regardless as to what you have been taught — irrespective of what you believe about any biblical subject — there is a way for you to find out whether or not you are believing biblical truth or doctrinal lies.

There is a positive, absolute and unshakable source of truth! Jesus said: "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). 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" (II Tim. 3:16). Peter wrote: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:21).

Everywhere in the Bible, God gives cross-checks, balances and especially corroborative points on vitally important doctrinal truths. The Bible — the one source of absolute spiritual truth — is simply filled with consistent scriptures ("here a little and there a little") on the most foundational doctrines of God.

Truth Is Ego Shattering

To believe that we could actually be wrong about something — almost anything — is unfortunately a very ego-shattering experience for some (if not most) human beings. The exposure of even false religious myths and biases can be so psychologically

disruptive that it is tantamount to complete ego destruction.

When the doctrinal or religious security blanket is gone, so is the particular niche of comfort into which we can conveniently creep when some challenging new thought comes along to disturb our mental processes. We do have our first line of defenses against truth, and they are far more effective than any radar set or military advance-early-warning missile system. They unfailingly tell us that we are not wrong, but right after all!

Most people stubbornly resist any new truth with a whole series of first-line defenses and several back-up systems to boot. But when truth finally exhausts all their defenses, they are forced to resort to that one-and-only tired old excuse: "Just who do you think you are? Where did you get your authority from?" If all else fails, people tend to fall back on this "put-down."

Actually, according to the Bible, admitting that we have been wrong

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5. Bible prophecies are found only in the Old Testament True False
6. Man has an immortal soul which leaves the body at death True False
7. A "Christian" is any person who professes belief in Christ True False
8. Jesus was born on Christmas Day True False
9. Jesus' Olivet Prophecy was fulfilled in 70 A.D. True False
10. God is a Trinity True False

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	True	False	No Answer
Heaven is the reward of the saved	60	13	2
Jesus was resurrected on Easter Sunday	43	31	1
The King James Version is the original Bible text	37	35	3
Dead sinners suffer for eternity in the fires of hell	38	32	5
Bible prophecies are found only in the Old Testament	18	56	1
Man has an immortal soul which leaves the body at death	60	13	2
A "Christian" is any person who professes belief in Christ	42	32	1
Jesus was born on Christmas day	31	42	2
Jesus' Olivet Prophecy was all fulfilled in 70 A.D.	24	32	19
God is a Trinity	53	17	5

The correct answer to all of the statements is false.

all of our lives about major doctrines and revered religious concepts should be the first step to becoming a really mature human being. It is a very vital and real part of a spiritual process called repentance.

Are you willing to burn your doctrinal bridges behind you when you discover new truth in the pages of your Bible? Or are you going to continue to cling to illogical, shopworn, old religious myths that are completely inconsistent with the true biblical teaching?

Truth sometimes has a price on it — albeit not a monetary one. “Buy the truth, and sell it not,” advised wise old King Solomon (Prov. 23:23). Sometimes not going along with the long-believed opinions of family and friends brings with it some religious persecution. Sometimes it takes a little courage to free your mind from doctrines and concepts that common sense tells you are totally illogical and do not even square with what you know about nature and science, much less the Bible. True biblical doctrine just rings true!

But regardless of what you choose to do about truth, it is still there! And the Bible is an ego-shattering book. It exposes and explodes most of the major doctrines of mainstream, Western-world “Christianity” as sheer myths.

A Book of Opposites

It is a book absolutely fraught with what I've always referred to as “diametric opposites” — many times *totally opposite* to the various bizarre “doctrines and beliefs” of even the religion that is supposed to be based on a biblical foundation.

So open up your Bible and discover that it does *not* say what you probably always thought it did — but often *the exact opposite!*

No better example of this incredible irony can be found in all of the Bible than in the shocking “Sermon on the Mount” which contains the basic, down-to-earth fundamentals of *real* Christianity — the very heart, root and core of the teachings of

Christ. Again, the very basic doctrines of this world's Christianity, believe it or not, are in direct opposition to the simplest and clearest teachings of Christ found in the 5th, 6th and 7th chapters of the book of Matthew.

Heaven Is the Reward of the Saved?

The overwhelming majority of our *Plain Truth* readers (who took this little quiz) believe that “Heaven is the reward of the saved” — a place for Christian retirement. And without any exaggeration, many millions in the Western world fully expect “to get to heaven” someday. They have, in many cases, been imbued with this false concept (both consciously and unconsciously)

If you had been taught the truth of God from infancy, you would believe it today. But regardless as to what you have been taught — irrespective of what you believe — there is a way for you to find out whether or not you are believing biblical truth.

since early childhood, having accepted it without question — yet never having seen a shred of real, tangible biblical proof.

Perhaps some of them actually saw and heard a “death-bed repentance” of a “departed” loved one who claimed to have seen a “vision” of heaven — and then accepted this as absolute proof positive that this friend or relative “went to heaven.”

But millions do not realize that anciently a great and powerful spirit being became virtually obsessed with the idea of “getting to heaven.” This great spirit — called in the Bible “Satan the devil” — has managed to instill this tenacious, selfish, grasping desire to “get to heaven” in the minds and hearts of these millions. He is called in Revelation 12:9 “the great dragon” who

has deceived the whole world. He even inspired one of *his ministers* (see II Cor. 11:13-15) to ask the question, “Dear Reader: Are you willing to settle for earth?”

However, the first few verses in the “Sermon on the Mount” dispel and put to rest the idea that heaven is the Christian reward, and, as a bonus, teach a very vital lesson on how to study the Bible. In verse 3 of Matthew 5, Christ said: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the *kingdom of heaven*” (Mark, Luke and John all refer to it as the “*kingdom of God*”).

Now skipping ahead just a couple of verses, Jesus continued: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall *inherit the earth*” (verse 5). Does Christ then mean to imply that “the poor in spirit” are going to heaven while it is very clearly stated that “the meek” (a very similar quality of character) are to remain on earth?

No! It plainly says: “The meek shall *inherit the earth*.” Jesus said so; and so did David (cf. Matt. 5:5; Ps. 37:11, 22, 29).

The truth is that Jesus *never* promised heaven as a reward for the saved! The saints (true Christians) shall rule and reign *on the earth* (Rev. 5:10) for a period of one thousand years (Rev. 20:4). Jesus promised all *overcoming* Christians that they would rule over the nations *on this earth* with Him (see Rev. 2:26; 3:21).

Now read Matthew 5:3 again, very carefully. “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the *kingdom of heaven*.” That little word “of” makes a very great deal of difference in understanding this verse. Christ promises His elect a kingdom ruled by God, but from heaven. It is a *kingdom of heaven*, but not a *kingdom in heaven* — and there is a great distinction!

The proverbial example I've always used to illustrate this principle is the Bank of Morgan. If Jesus had said: “For theirs is the Bank of Morgan,” would that mean that He was promising (to the saved) the stocks, bonds, securities and wealth inside

of Mr. Morgan? Of course not — that would be ridiculous! The truth is that both “the poor in spirit” and “the meek” shall *inherit the earth!*

The “kingdom of heaven” is a kingdom ruled by heaven, which is to come down out of heaven — *to this earth!* As I already pointed out earlier, only Matthew used this expression anyway — Mark, Luke and John all called it “*the kingdom of God.*” Matthew, writing initially and primarily to the Jewish people of his day, used “kingdom of heaven” for a very vital reason and purpose. Many Jews regarded themselves as *already* being, since Sinai, the Kingdom of God.

The *literal* Kingdom of God (or Kingdom of the Messiah — Christ) will be a spiritual kingdom far transcending the scope of any earthly, physical kingdom of men on this earth — then or now. Matthew wanted to be doubly sure that his Jewish audience understood the important difference.

Heaven Makes No Sense

Jesus talked of a coming *resurrection* of the dead in John 5:25-29: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. . . . Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which *all* that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation [Greek, judgment].”

But the resurrection itself presents a perplexing dilemma to people who believe that the dead go immediately to heaven when they die. If Christians who die “in the Lord” are already in heaven — living in beautiful mansions and sporting white wings and the whole bit — why bother with a resurrection?

If they have been released from this sin-sick world, from their old, worn-out, disease-ridden, corruptible bodies, and if they have been with Jesus Christ in heaven — why

would Jesus take them out of heaven, bring them back to earth, plunge them back into their graves, and then go through the fantastic, laborious effort of resurrecting them? Doesn’t really make sense, does it?

I could go on and on, easily taking up this entire article just answering the first question, and I wouldn’t get to any others. The scriptures I have presented are only a few of the literally dozens of plain scriptures (and sometimes whole chapters) in the sacred Word of God which absolutely prove that the “get-to-heaven” idea of this spiritually darkened world is of purely satanic origin and strictly nonsupportable in the Bible.

One important verse I should in-

Most people stubbornly resist any new truth with a whole series of first-line defenses and several backup systems. But when truth finally exhausts all their defenses, they are forced to resort to that tired old excuse: “Just who do you think you are?”

clude here is John 3:13: “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he [Jesus] that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is [at the time John wrote his Gospel] in heaven.” And that includes the great patriarch David — a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22). The plain Word of God (which is to judge each of us) says through the mouth of Peter: “Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both *dead and buried*, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day” (Acts 2:29). Verse 34 nails the lid on the coffin of this crazy idea that the saints are already in heaven: “For David is *not* ascended into the heavens.”

This is plain biblical teaching, utterly incapable of mistranslation. No interpretation needed — it says

what it means; it means what it says!

Oh, I know that there is a scripture on heavenly mansions in John 14, but those mansions (or offices) are being prepared of God in heaven now to be brought down to this earth at Christ’s second coming. These verses are covered in technical detail in our booklet *What Is the Reward of the Saved?* Most of the scriptures that *seem* to indicate that there might be something to this heaven concept are fully and completely explained and expounded; including the one about the “thief on the cross” (Luke 23:43), Paul wanting to depart and be with Christ (Phil. 1:23-24), Paul supposedly being bodily in the third heaven (II Cor. 12:1-7), etc. Be sure to write for this free booklet and get the answers to all of these “difficult-to-be-understood” scriptures.

If you have questions concerning Enoch and Elijah and those verses that supposedly show that these two great men of God “went to heaven,” be sure to write for another free booklet entitled *Where Are Enoch and Elijah?*

Man Has an Immortal Soul?

Skipping all the way down to question six (I’ll not take them in order for purposes of continuity of subject matter), we come to the question of the fabled and much-believed doctrine of the immortality of man’s soul.

I’ll just quote directly out of the Bible some of the surest scriptures on the subject — both Old and New Testament. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” — that’s mentioned twice (Ezek. 18:4, 20). Solomon wrote: “For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast. . . .” (Eccl. 3:19). And: “For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing” (Eccl. 9:5). And in verse 10: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to



do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, *nor knowledge*, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

Solomon's father, King David, taught exactly the same doctrine. "For in death there is *no remembrance* of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" (Ps. 6:5.) Also: "Put not your trust in princes [rulers], nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help [by comparison with God]. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day [that he dies] *his thoughts perish*" (Ps. 146:3-4).

Death is the absence of life, the cessation of life — *not* the continuation of life under different circumstances. In Romans 6:23, God tells us through the pen of the apostle Paul that the wages of sin is *death*. And the "golden scripture" in all of the Bible instructs us: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him *should not perish*, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Death and life are opposites, *not* the same thing. There is a great gulf between them as the parable about

Lazarus and the rich man explains (Luke 16). Paul continues on in Romans 6:23 to tell us that "*the gift of God* [not something you already have] is eternal life."

The Soul Doesn't Make Sense Either

Some astounding questions would be precipitated if the pagan doctrine of the immortal soul were true. Why, if the "soul" immediately departs to go to its "heavenly reward" at death, did Jesus Christ resurrect His beloved friend Lazarus? Why, if the whole purpose of Jesus Christ was to save our souls, did He call Lazarus back into his frail, human body, when he had been experiencing "heavenly bliss" for four whole days? (See John 11.) Does this make sense? Is it logical? The answer is obvious!

Again, why would God want to grab all those wonderful, comfortable souls (I asked this same question about heaven) walking around among the beautiful gold bricks and put them back on this earth in a foul, old, decayed, decrepit and maybe cancer-ridden body?

Is there any sense or logic to these

WHAT HAPPENS at death? Most people erroneously believe the diametric opposite of what the Bible teaches.

crazy doctrines many people assume come out of the Bible? What do you need a resurrection for if you have already got a "soul factory"?

Jesus' True Teaching

Jesus did *not* teach any such doctrine as the "immortality of the soul." Rather, He taught that the "soul" would perish unless it (the person) repented (Luke 13:3, 5). He also showed that God has the power to burn it (the soul) up in Gehenna fire, which is the second death (Matt. 10:28; Rev. 20:14).

I could take up the space of this entire magazine explaining and expounding the many scriptures proving there is no such thing as an immortal soul, going into the Greek and Hebrew words which is proof all by itself, detailing the verses proving that only God (when compared to men, not angels) has immortality (I Tim. 6:16). In each biblical case in which the word "immortality" is used, it is something that must be obtained, and in no

case is something man already possesses.

Years ago I wrote an article on the subject which has since been edited, added to, and is now a thorough, complete and fully comprehensive biblical exegesis of the subject. I titled it: *Do You Have an Immortal Soul?* This free publication goes into the amazing origin of this false concept. It explains the verse about "souls under the altar" (Rev. 6:9-11), all about reincarnation, and many other vital aspects of the question. Be sure to request your free copy by mail.

The soul is mortal! No amount of rationalization, or of arguing, or of merely "supposing," can change these plain, straightforward truths of the Bible about this subject. Belief in this false doctrine is one of the basic and *beginning* errors of all of modern professing Christianity.

People simply don't want to believe that what is "them" — their life — could ever just cease to exist. We have an inborn, so to speak, desire for survival — which God built into our natures. And that, of itself, is certainly not wrong.

The Spirit in Man

Don't worry! God has you "on tape"; you *won't* just cease to exist!

The Bible speaks *not* of an immortal soul but of a "spirit" in man (see I Cor. 2:9-14; Job 32:8; Zech. 12:1). The spirit is not the man; it is something that is *in* the man. Joined with the physical brain (matter) of the man, it forms human mind. It is this spirit that God will use, after the death and complete dissolution of the physical body and brain (in most cases), to reproduce anew each individual at the resurrection of the dead.

It is apparently *from* the pattern locked up in this "spirit in man" (comparable to a "tape recording") that God, at the resurrection, will re-create each individual with exactly the same mind, personality and general appearance he had at death, perhaps automatically correcting any physical defects.

For instance, several famous country and western singers are now dead: Jimmy Rodgers (the one of the twenties and thirties), Hank Williams, Jim Reeves, Patsy Cline and Tex Ritter. Yet country and western fans are able to hear their voices any time they choose via recordings. But these singers are, at this moment, *totally dead*; they don't know anything; they can't think anything — yet their music lives on for posterity through the miracle of tape recording. In the same sense, movie films enable us to see long-since-dead actors and actresses in old talkies on TV. The image of the person moving about and talking in the picture is preserved as long as there is a movie projector and someone to operate it.

It takes courage to free your mind from doctrines and concepts that common sense tells you are totally illogical and do not even square with what you know about nature and science, much less the Bible. True biblical doctrine just rings true!

These "miracles" of modern science ought to give us some idea of what the Almighty God is able to do — *only much more so!*

Death Is a Sleep

But at death the conscious man utterly disappears! Death is pictured, in the Bible, as a sleep from which one must be awakened. Daniel the prophet wrote: "And many of them that *sleep* in the dust of the earth shall *awake*..." (Dan. 12:2). Matthew records: "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which *slept arose*" (Matt. 27:52). "And when thy days be fulfilled," said God to David, "thou shalt *sleep* with thy fathers..." (II Sam. 7:12).

Death is described *as a sleep* literally dozens of times in the Bible

when referring to the ancient kings of Israel and Judah. For example, "David slept with his fathers..." (I Kings 2:10). Now David's body didn't sleep while the conscious David was off in heaven — we have already seen the plain New Testament scriptures that prove he was dead, buried and in his grave — *not* in heaven. No, *David slept!* It was the conscious person who fell "asleep" in death — *later to be resurrected* to immortality — to rule the twelve nations of Israel forever!

At any rate, this booklet entitled *Do You Have an Immortal Soul?* explains all of these and many other concepts in thorough, documented, technical, scriptural detail. We have a copy on reserve for you in our mailing room.

Do Sinners Suffer for Eternity in Hell?

One time I was eating lunch with a good friend of mine in a long, narrow restaurant in downtown Pasadena. During the meal, three rather unkempt and disheveled women walked in. About halfway to the rear of the restaurant, one of the women burst out in a loud voice screaming, "Fire! Fire! Fire! Hellfire and brimstone!"

Panic struck! Diners jumped to their feet and dishes clattered to the floor as patrons tried to leave through the nearest exit in response to the one word they had heard over the hubbub of conversation — "Fire!" But the women foolishly went on informing all of the patrons they would go to hell and suffer in ever-burning flames unless they accepted Jesus Christ.

Amazingly, the majority of our *Plain Truth* readers who took the test believed (like these three self-styled prophetesses) that God would punish the wicked with the pains of "hellfire" for all of eternity.

But Jesus Christ of Nazareth said: "... Fear him [God] which is able to *destroy* both soul and body in hell [Greek, Gehenna]" (Matt. 10:28). The incorrigible sinner will be *burnt up* (Mal. 4:1), becoming *ashes* un-

der the soles of the feet of the righteous (verse 3). David wrote: "But the wicked shall *perish*, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall *consume*; into smoke they shall *consume away*" (Ps. 37:20).

Many of the very same scriptures I have used to totally disprove the doctrine of the immortality of the soul *also* completely dispel and disannul the false doctrine of an eternal, ever-burning hellfire. Someone who is *totally unconscious* could hardly be suffering excruciating pains in the "fires of hell."

An eternal, ever-burning hellfire (not the biblical lake of fire) is a figment of the distorted imaginations of the minds of men influenced by a devil who indeed will have a lake of fire prepared for him and his angels (who are now called demons, see Matt. 25:41). (I do *not* include Dante Alighieri with whatever group of churchmen and pagan philosophers helped invent the doctrine; he actually tried to dispel this doctrine as much as was possible in those dark ages of almost total religious superstition and ignorance.)

Fear Religion

In one sense, the false doctrine of hell is *worse* than all the others — worse even than the false concepts of "going to heaven" and "having an immortal soul." It has been used by "fear religionists" to promote and perpetuate a completely false notion about our very Creator — picturing Him as a God who, like the proverbial hanging judge, seeks to vent His wrath on helpless human beings. Many people conjure up in their minds a god who will consign sinners to a blistering, steeping, seething, spitting, crackling existence in an ever-burning hell — burning, burning and burning, but never quite completely burning up.

Thankfully Jesus came to free us from any and all "fear religions" that would seek to enslave us in the terror of a god of unreasoning wrath — including even professing Chris-

tian religions that teach an ever-burning hellfire that would roast men made in His very image for all eternity.

Lazarus and the Rich Man

Totally ignoring the many plain scriptures of the Bible concerning the state of the dead, many church "philosophers" (and even *present-day* ministers) have perpetuated the ever-burning hellfire myth by seizing upon a vague (to them) parable in the sixteenth chapter of Luke. Undoubtedly, thousands of lurid, frightening, raving and shouting sermons have been based on a misunderstanding of that parable account given by Jesus.

Most people simply do not realize what the Bible really says about this parable of Lazarus and the rich man. They seem to forget the fact that the rich man and the beggar *both died* and were buried (Luke 16:22). Space does not permit, however, a fully detailed explanation in this article. But we do have available a special booklet, *Is There a Real Hellfire?*, which thoroughly covers the whole subject.

The second part of the booklet explains the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. Part one covers some very vital and important points about this whole overall subject, i.e., about those "worms which never die" that Jesus spoke of in the ninth chapter of Mark, the three different Greek words — all of which are translated into the English word "hell" (one of which simply means "the grave," and has nothing to do with any hellfire). Many other "difficult-to-be-understood" verses are explained in the light of the many plain scriptures on the subject.

Space has about run out and I have only covered three of these vital questions. How are you doing about now? Are you able to accept these biblical truths into your mind? Do you have the courage to do like the Bereans did — to "search the scriptures daily, whether these things be so"? (Acts 17:11.) □

(To be continued)



Where will you go when you die?

Most of us were taught as children that good people go to heaven and bad people go to "the other place" . . . but what does the Bible say?

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- Where are ENOCH and ELIJAH?

To receive your free copies, check your selection on the enclosed card or write to: GOOD NEWS, Pasadena, California 91123.

Amos, herdsman of Tekoa, was sent from God with a powerful message of correction for the ancient House of Israel. In spite of withering opposition, he fearlessly indicted the nation for its hollow, meaningless piety, social injustice and general immorality. Amos' message must not be lost on our modern generation!

by Brian Knowles

A MESSAGE FROM

I am no prophet," protested Amos, "nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel'" (Amos 7:14-15).

Amos was hardly a theologian. He was not even a member of the priestly or prophetic castes of his day. He was neither scholar nor Levite, yet God used him mightily to bring a powerful message of warning to his own people.

The Scene

During the long and peaceful reign of Jeroboam II (circa 786-746 B.C.) the House of Israel had been lulled into a false sense of security. National borders had been extended to their maximum and the country was basking in comparative opulence and prosperity. Religious activity and ceremony was at a peak and the people had come to believe that God was smiling benignly down upon them.

Into this scene of national self-satisfaction stepped the prophet Amos. His indicting message was something less than popular and he was met with immediate opposition from the religious and political elements of his nation. He was even accused of conspiracy and disloyalty to the royal house: "Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam the king of Israel, saying, 'Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear [tolerate] all his words'" (Amos 7:10).

"The land is not able to bear all his words"! He conspired! Treason!

Disloyalty! Amaziah attempted to inflame the king's emotions against this unqualified upstart who presumed to represent God and to prophesy against the nation.

But Amos had a job to do through no choice of his own. He would not be intimidated by the priest's threats and false charges. He spoke out even more pointedly: "Now therefore hear the word of the Lord. You say, 'Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not preach against the house of Isaac.' Therefore thus says the Lord: 'Your wife shall be a harlot in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and your land shall be parceled out by line; you yourself shall die in an unclean land, and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land'" (verses 16-17).

God backed up the words of his prophet. He brought about a devastating round of famines, droughts, disease epidemics and insect-induced crop failures (Amos 4:6-10). "Yet you did not return to me," says the Lord. God warned; He punished; He threatened and He pleaded through all of His prophets including Amos (Hosea, Isaiah and Micah were contemporaries). But the stubborn Israelites still refused to repent.

All attempts to warn the people of the end result of their national conduct failed. Amos was but one of the many prophets God sent to the two nations, Israel and Judah, before their demise. As God said through Jeremiah: "... I have spoken persistently to you, but you have not listened" (Jer. 25:3).

Within three decades of Amos' proph-

ecy Israel experienced the ultimate prophesied punishment — national defeat and captivity. From 721-718 B.C., the northern house went captive to the murderous Assyrians under the leadership of the dreaded Shalmaneser (II Kings 17).

Cause and Effect

Why didn't Israel heed the messages of her prophets? What made them so complacent — so intent upon self-justification?

Amos described the national condition in chapter 6: "Woe to those who are *at ease* in Zion, and to those who *feel secure* on the mountain of Samaria, the *notable men* of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come!" (Verse 1.)

The problem was centered on the political and religious leaders who sat in the seat of government. They were "at ease," lulled into a false sense of personal security. After all, were they not the leaders of the "chief of the nations" — Israel? Was not Israel the chosen nation of God, the Covenant People? And did not its citizens come respectfully to these great sages for advice and counsel? Why should *they* become alarmed at the preachments of some self-appointed shepherd-cum-prophet?

They were willing victims of their own self-deception! The leaders and the people alike had blinded themselves to the critical seriousness of the national condition. They looked upon the deceptive barometer of temporary national prosperity as an indicator of God's approval. They allowed themselves to become preoccupied with the pleasures of high living and personal self-indulgence.

Amos indicted them for their hedonism: "Woe to those who lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the midst of the stall; who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and like David invent for themselves instruments of music; who drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, *but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!*" (Verses 4-6.)

Eat, drink and be merry — for tomorrow will never come, was the national philosophy. The nation's

"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. . . . Take away from me the noise of your songs . . . I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream."
Amos 5:21-24

elite was preoccupied with petty pleasures while the country disintegrated from within. No one seemed to be sufficiently concerned to take action. Somehow the nation's leaders were unable to exercise sufficient vision to see the end result of what was happening within Israel. Amos spoke of them as those "who put far away the evil day" (verse 3). Any national crisis was relegated to the distant future.

The national conscience was seared and no sense of guilt seemed to exist. Pride and self-satisfaction prevailed. Therefore God said

through Amos: "I abhor the pride of Jacob . . ." (verse 8).

"Pride," wrote wise King Solomon centuries earlier, "goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). The fall of the House of Israel was not far distant.

Specific Sins

What, exactly, was ancient Israel guilty of before God? What was happening within that nation that so angered God that He was willing to bring about such devastating punishment?

Amos does not leave any room for uncertainty. The record is clear. Chapters 3 through 6 of the book of Amos specifically list the many sins of which the northern house was guilty.

Before itemizing the sins of the nation, God pointed out that he had entered into a special relationship with Israel that rendered her more accountable: "Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt: *You only have I known* of all the families of the earth; *therefore* I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:1-2).

In the days of Moses, when God had brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt, He had entered into a *covenant relationship* with her. The nation was to become a showpiece for God's way of life upon the earth. They were to become a nation of priests, an example for all to follow (Isa. 42:6; Deut. 4:6-8).

Instead, the Israelites rebelled from the beginning. They failed to
(Text continued on page 12)



John Kilburn

Political Corruption

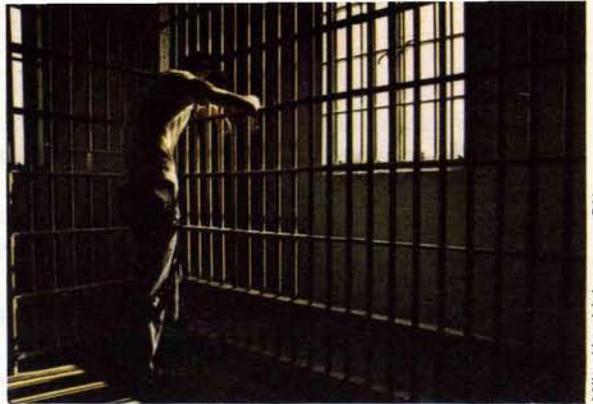
Both Britain and the United States have had their share of political scandals. The British Profumo affair and recent sex scandals, though, are paled into insignificance by American corruption. Throughout the states, public contracts are tied to "campaign gifts" — just like the contract award that eventually put the former Vice President out of office. Watergate is only the tip of an iceberg — those who are actually indicted and convicted are few in comparison to the number of politicians who operate daily in the gray areas of political morality.



John Launois — Black Star

The State of the Poor and Elderly

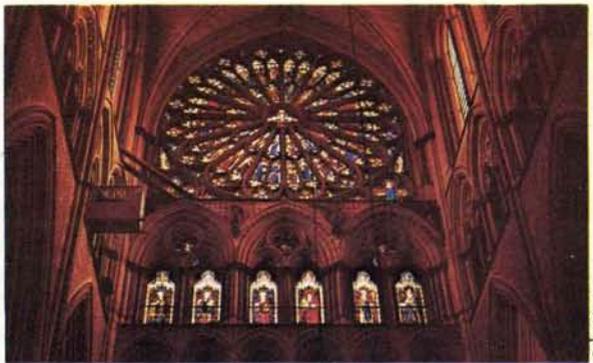
Out of sight, out of mind — the urban poor are often relegated to undesirable areas of town where they are victimized by air pollution, inadequate sanitation and rodent control, lack of educational opportunities, consumer frauds, loan sharks, muggers, high disease rates and minimal health care. Although over 13 million Americans are on the food stamp program, malnutrition is still a fact of life as elderly pensioners and Social Security recipients eke out a toast-and-tea existence in the face of spiraling inflation.



Mike Hendrickson — GN

Courts and Jails

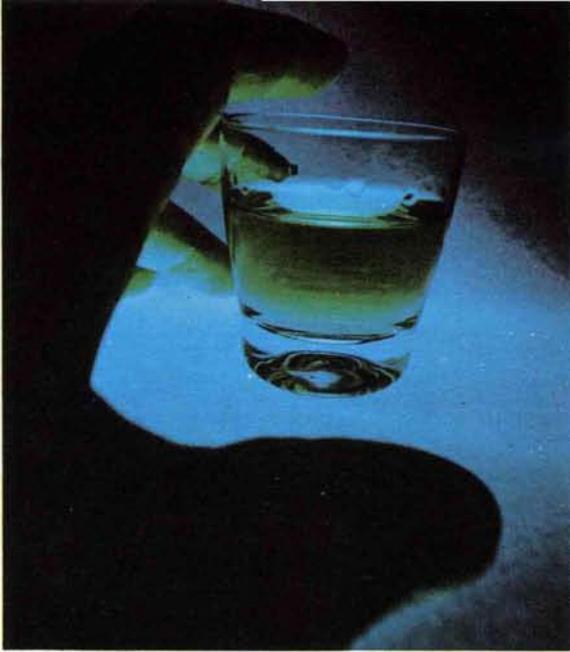
Justice is only for the wealthy in many cases. Those with the means to hire lawyers to exhaust every legal channel usually walk free, while the poor (usually minorities) comprise a disproportionate number of prison inmates. Seventy percent of America's 500,000 inmates and $\frac{2}{3}$ of Britain's 30,000 are repeaters. Prison conditions — racial polarization, rampant and oftentimes violent homosexuality, easily available hard drugs, the sale of soft jobs and good cells — plus indeterminate sentences which allow prison officials the chance to mentally torment prisoners and manipulate their behavior — have been cause for serious rioting and bloodshed in jails on both sides of the Atlantic.



GN Photo

Religion in Turmoil

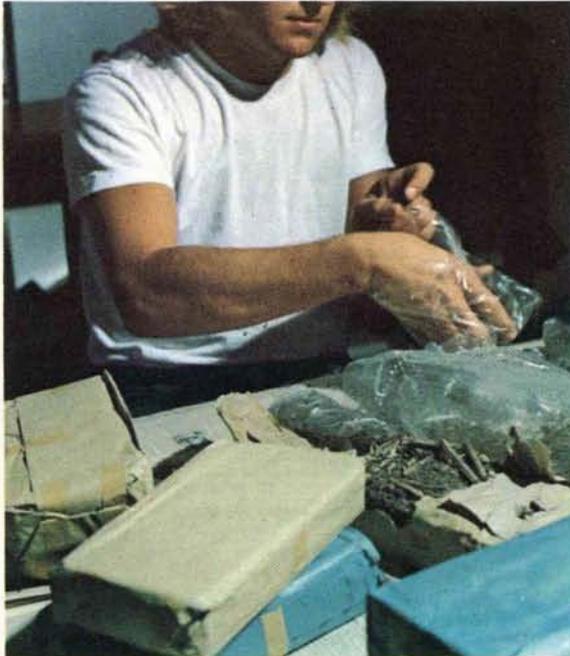
The quiet sanctity of the church has been smashed of late by the same forces troubling the rest of our society. The Roman Catholic Church and other conservative groups are being attacked from within by demands for a reevaluation of the traditional stands on priestly celibacy, birth control and ordination of women to the priesthood. Schism has rocked several denominations, including the 2.8 million Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Church attendance continues to wane (40% in the U.S. attend regularly) as United States membership slipped another .14% in 1974. The Roman Catholic Church of Canada reported a standstill membership for the same period, while the same church in England showed a loss of 250,000 per year. The Church of England also reports a significant drop in the period from 1956-1970.



Joseph A. Lonergan

Alcoholism

In 1971, 9,600,000 known U.S. alcoholics were responsible for a loss of \$12 billion in wages and productivity. Alcoholism is responsible for 50% of all fatal auto accidents. Only 5% of alcoholics are on Skid Row, though — most function as white and blue collar workers, professionals and housewives.



GN Photo

Organized Crime

Organized crime is a well-paying business. Together, loan sharking, hijacking and the sale of stolen goods are said to gross \$100 billion a year. General Motors is a \$36 billion a year industry — but drug trafficking brings in \$75 billion and illegal gambling \$50 billion. A successful drug importer can clear \$165,000 a year, tax free.



Joe Clayton

Big Business Corruption

The Equity Funding scandal, Penn Central corporate thievery, and Canada's "Hydrogate" case are all symptomatic of the present muddy business morality. Monopolies fix prices for corporate gain and corresponding consumer loss. Big companies have to pay foreign countries bribes to operate and merchandise fails to live up to its label, while consumer advocates are few and far between. Personal interest prevails as few feel obligated to blow the whistle on questionable practices.



Dave Conn — GN

Crime and Violence

Crime is on the increase at a frightening rate. The FBI reported a 17% leap in U.S. crime in 1974 over 1973. Canada showed a 5.7% jump in violent crimes. In the past decade Britain has shown a 50% growth in indictable crimes. In the past 14 years in the United States the rate of robberies has increased 225%, forcible rape 143%, aggravated assault 153%, and murder 106%. Out of all crime (reported and unreported) only 5% result in arrest, 1% in convictions and another 1% in imprisonment.

— Carole Ritter

live up to their part of the bargain. Again and again God sent prophets to warn them and remind them of the curses that were in store for those who would disobey (Lev. 26:14-46; Deut. 29:21). Prophet after prophet reminded them of their failure to fulfill the covenant obligation (Jer. 11:1-4; 22:9; 31:32; Ezek. 16:59; 44:7; Mal. 2:10). Still, the nation rebelled.

Internal decay and corruption continued to worsen. In King James terminology, "Their sins waxed worse and worse."

And just what were these sins?

Drastic Increase in Crime

Crime, graft, bribery, political corruption and resultant societal instability prevailed in the days of Amos. He spoke of "great tumults" and "oppressions" within Israel (Amos 3:9). He said: "They do not know how to do right... those who store up *violence* and *robbery* in their strongholds" (verse 10).

It was also a time of pay-offs, hush money and political corruption. Every man had his price. Therefore Amos wrote: "... How great are your sins — you who afflict the righteous, who *take a bribe*, and turn aside the needy in the gate... *It is an evil time*" (Amos 5:12-13).

Bribe-taking was commonplace. Political leaders could be bought and sold. When in government office — "in the gate" — these leaders were unwilling to dispense social justice; the "little man" bore the brunt of such corruption and lack of character.

Social Injustice

Amos lived in a day when the "rights of the poor" were made a mockery. Only those who could *buy* their way out of trouble escaped political oppression. The self-indulgent, hard-drinking wives of political leaders were instrumental in grinding the poor into the dust of Israel. Amos minced no words in addressing them: "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are in the

mountain of Samaria, *who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to their husbands, 'Bring, that we may drink!'*... the days are coming upon you, when they shall take you away with fishhooks..." (Amos 4:1-2).

Their husbands turned "justice to wormwood" and "cast down righteousness to the earth" (Amos 5:7).

So greedy for wealth were the leaders that they could hardly wait for the end of the traditional holy days to resume their corrupt, money-making activities. As always, "John Q. Public" was the victim: "Hear this, you who trample upon the needy, and bring the poor of the land to an end, saying, 'When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great, and deal deceitfully with false balances, that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and sell the refuse of the wheat?'" (Amos 8:4-6.)

It was the day of the "Almighty Shekel." *Everything* was for sale — even the "falling off" of the grain, normally given as fodder for animals, was sold to the poor for exorbitant prices. The poor became yet poorer, and many were forced to sell themselves into slavery in order to survive.

Meanwhile, the "idle rich" became richer, at the expense of the working classes. In addition to their preoccupation with pleasure-seeking pursuits, the wealthy classes involved themselves in elaborate religious rites and ceremonies. This factor represented a kind of "spiritual insurance policy" and gave them a feeling of being "right with God."

But God was not pleased with their rites or their wrongs! They were denying the true essence of the Faith and replacing it with elaborate ceremonies and traditions. Isaiah — a contemporary of Amos — said: "This people draw near with their mouth and honor me with

their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men learned by rote..." (Isa. 29:13).

God wanted justice and righteousness more than He wanted songs and ceremonies! He demanded peace instead of pageantry. The outward forms of religious worship had become hollow, meaningless vanity. The people erroneously measured righteousness quantitatively instead of qualitatively.

These endless rituals — though originally commanded through Moses — had become a stench in the nostrils of God because of hypocrisy. They had become nothing more than hollow proceedings without real meaning. Spiritually, that ancient nation was bankrupt. Therefore God said through His prophet: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies... Take away from me the noise of your songs... I will not listen. *But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream*" (Amos 5:21-24).

A Message for Today

The same God who sent Amos to Israel still sits on His throne in heaven looking out over the nations here below. Sin is no less sinful today than it was in Amos' time. Social injustice, the oppression of the poor, graft, bribery, corruption, crime and violence are every bit as abhorrent to God today as they were in the 8th century B.C.

Today's religious ceremonies — often masquerading as "Christian" but unaccompanied by true righteousness and justice — are often every bit as hollow and meaningless as those of ancient Israel. So long as Catholic "Christians" are willing to bomb, maim and kill Protestant "Christians" (and vice versa), their religion is vain and empty. It means nothing. The sheer volume of violence in today's "civilized" societies is as much an odor in the nostrils of God today as it was when the herds-

man of Tekoa walked the trails of the northern kingdom.

So long as modern politicians can be bought and sold, corrupted by political ambition, or induced to tread on the rights of the poor, they are no better than the "cows of Bashan" or the "husbands in the gates" described by Amos. So long as crime — organized and disorganized — can flourish within modern society, the words of Amos have powerful meaning for today's world.

The United States claims to be "One Nation Under God." Its coinage reads "In God We Trust." In spite of these noble and high-sounding words, how much of God do we see in Britain and the United States? How much mercy, true justice, honesty and purity of heart and intent? In Britain, according to one source, only about 2% of the people attend church regularly. The Soviet Union, with an atheistic government, claims 3%!

In the United States, organized Christianity is rapidly losing its influence. Noted religion writer Leo Rosten was recently quoted in *Saturday Review*: "... The fortresses of faith are experiencing the most profound alterations in centuries. Church authority is being challenged on a dozen fronts. Traditional creeds are being drastically revised. Hallowed canons are being shelved. Religious practices are changing daily. Church leaders are beleaguered by new, bold, persistent demands — from their clergy no less than from their congregations.

"It is not hyperbole to say that we are witnessing a remarkable erosion of consensus within the citadel of belief" ("Ferment in Our Churches," *Saturday Review*, July 12, 1975).

Rosten also spoke of the "mounting skepticism about the validity or effectiveness of church teachings." He said: "About 75% of the American people think religion is losing its influence" (*ibid.*).

Religion that does not *change* its adherents for the better is merely a

form of godliness. It means nothing to God.

"Politics as usual" is an admission of corruption that is ultimately destined to exact a heavy national price. As long as the nation's courts and prisons are still full and overflowing we are in deep moral trouble. So long as simple monetary greed and lust for power are the criteria for union/management relationships, the nations are headed for certain oblivion. The utter pride and stubbornness of human political and religious leaders is in itself a terminal moral illness.

But Will We Listen?

God sent a herdsman from Tekoa to warn ancient Israel to help them get their priorities straight. Of course they didn't listen. They rejected the humble prophet of God and labeled him a traitor.

Messages like that of Amos are rarely taken seriously by those in political or ecclesiastical power. They are relegated, most often, to the same category as doomsday prophets, Jeremiahs and religious fanatics who have paraded before the populace from time immemorial.

But Amos' prophecies came true. The House of Israel entered a time of national captivity and suffering unparalleled in its long history of nine dynasties and nineteen kings.

Amos' Message — For Us?

Whether you accept the idea that our peoples are the modern descendants of the ancient House of Israel or not, Amos' message is still valid for us today. Why? Because God has *one standard* for all of mankind. Sin is sin wherever it is found.

And, as the apostle Paul wrote: "... Is God the God of Jews only? *Is he not the God of Gentiles also?* Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one..." (Rom. 3:29).

If these frightening parallels between ancient Israel and our peoples today hold true, then it might be best to close this article with yet another message from Amos: "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" □

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

The Relationship Between the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation and the Worldwide Church of God

by Herbert W. Armstrong, Board Chairman,
President and Pastor-General of the Worldwide Church of God

Although the Ambassador Auditorium was built on the Ambassador College campus to serve the college, it was dedicated to the honor of *the Great God*. Therefore, at the beginning of construction I emphasized to our people that it must never be in any way commercialized.

We have always wanted to share with our community such cultural, artistic, educational and musical events as we were able. For years we have invited the public to share with us such productions two or three times annually, either at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium or in our own facilities on campus. The beautiful new auditorium provided a superb new facility. We wanted to provide such programs more often. But *how?* — when we could not commercialize it by direct sale of tickets.

Several of us put our minds to work on the opportunity — keeping it noncommercial and nonprofit as we have always done.

The new Foundation emerged as the most unique means of bringing many top-rated cultural, musical and educational programs here, while benefiting many charitable and humanitarian organizations at the same time! It was a *natural!* Immediately we were all emotionally excited and inspired to have such an opportunity to doubly serve the community.

We have always stressed the fact that Ambassador College is a cultural and character-building institution. We have wanted to contribute to the cultural and character upbuilding of the communities in which our colleges are located, as part of our self-accepted responsibility.

But I want to emphasize that the new Ambassador International Cultural Foundation (AICF) is entirely *separate* from the Worldwide Church of God and Ambassador College. Many of its Board members and advisers are in no way connected with the Worldwide Church of God.

We are also organizing Ambassador International Cultural Foundations in Tokyo and in Bombay, where most of the directors are prominent in government, educational, or industrial life and in no manner connected with the Worldwide Church of God.

What do we hope to get out of it?

Let me explain candidly and forthrightly that 49 years ago I personally came to believe that the saying "It is more blessed to GIVE than to receive" is the *practical* way of life, and I then dedicated my life to that principle, as a *way of life*. I have put it into practice in the Ambassador College campuses, and in all our operations, and I have *proved* it is practical as well as *right*. We seek not to *get* but to *give*.

What do we expect to get out of this? Just what I have been getting out of life these 49 years — great personal fulfillment, the joy of finding it truly *is* more blessed to give than to receive — the satisfaction no opposition or criticism can take from me — the realization of having helped many thousands — and perhaps many millions!

Worldwide Church of God — Nonproselyting, Nonmissionary

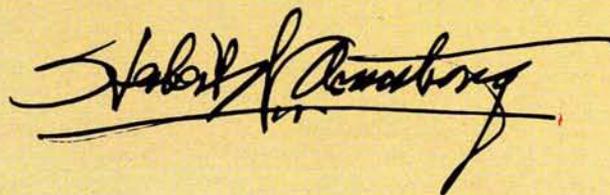
The Worldwide Church of God is completely nonproselyting, and always has been. We have no missionary program, have no program either in the Church or Ambassador College for training missionaries.

It is emphatically contrary to our belief and practice for any minister or representative of this Church to directly or personally solicit any potential member or urge anyone to become a member.

I, personally, a number of times in speaking before audiences up to 10,000 or 12,000 of our members at the Feast of Tabernacles services, have said to these congregations, "Not one of you has ever been solicited personally, or urged by any representative of this Church to become a member. In no case have we approached you — but you had to approach us."

It is our belief and practice that our great commission is to proclaim our belief in all the world for a witness to all nations — but not with the objective of making converts, or gaining members.

Important: The word "gospel" has an entirely different meaning to us than the commonly understood meaning of that term. We neither believe nor preach what is commonly known as "the gospel" in the organized Christian world. It has *nothing* to do with proselytizing. What we proclaim is the "Missing Dimension in Knowledge" that had not been discovered by science, nor proclaimed by any religion — and that it is not in contradiction or opposition to ANY religion, but in reality is outside the field of religion. *We are not competitive*, and certainly do not intend to be, in any sense. Our goal is to work for humanity's *good*, and the way of *world peace*. Because of the entirely different meaning the word "gospel" has come to mean to the world in general, I am personally coming to use it very sparingly.



Leapfrogging Around Latin America

Bogotá, Colombia:

The witness to the Spanish-speaking peoples of the world continues to show encouraging growth. *La Pura Verdad*, the *Plain Truth* in Spanish, now has a circulation of over 150,000 and continues to grow at an average rate of 3,000 per month. Almost 29,000 people are taking the Correspondence Course. We now have over 400 Spanish-speaking brethren, the bulk of them living in Latin America.

Ministering to these members scattered throughout Latin America, as well as contacting the scores of individuals requesting a visit, is the challenging job given to three men: Señores Fernando Barriga, Pablo Gonzalez and Robert Flores. The latter two have been particularly active in Latin America this year.

(Worldwide Church of God ministers and representatives call only on those people who have *first* contacted this Work and specifically requested private counseling of their own free will and volition. Our ministers do *not* proselyte.)

The first half of 1975 saw Señor Robert Flores acting virtually as "minister at large" for Latin America. In two months of travel extending from February 16 through April 18, Señor Flores visited members and prospective members in Colombia, Argentina, Venezuela, Chile, Peru and Ecuador.

Leapfrogging "Flores style" involves visiting not only the modern



and progressive capitals of South America, but also the out-of-the-way places that are reached only by train or careening bus.

The first stops on his itinerary took him to Caracas, Valencia and Ciudad Bolivar, Venezuela, where he visited a number of prospectives and baptized one person. The Church in Venezuela has been progressing slowly, but we now have several members and even more prospectives.

From Venezuela, Señor Flores moved next door to Colombia for a visit with the members in Bogotá and then a trip into the interior of the country. An all-day bus trip through winding Andean roads to El Banco kept him on a forced fast with no chance to eat or drink. He finally arrived in El Banco at 10 p.m. and eventually found something to eat at a local market, located midst El Banco's mud streets.

ROBERT FLORES, shown here speaking to first all Spanish-speaking church in Los Angeles area, has been serving as "minister at large" for Latin America.

After Colombia, Señor Flores made a short stopover in Peru to visit with our members there, but had to hurry on to Argentina to spend the beginning of the spring festival with the Church in Bahia Blanca. The Church in Argentina has been showing good growth, including the recent establishment of a Boy Scout troop, all under the direction of a local deacon who is in charge in the absence of a minister.

The second half of the Days of Unleavened Bread was spent with the Church in Santiago, Chile. In addition to spending time preaching, visiting and counseling, Señor Flores inquired into methods of obtaining full legal registration for the

Church in Chile so that we may handle more growth in the future.

Upon his return to Peru after the festival, he made arrangements for the members in Lima to meet weekly in a local hotel under the guidance of a local member who presents material from Headquarters to them. While in Peru, Señor Flores performed a wedding in a town some thirty miles from Lima. The groom was one of our first Peruvian members. We now have 11 members and 70 prospectives there.

From Peru, Señor Flores proceeded to Quito, Ecuador, where he baptized three; he then flew to Bogotá for a Sabbath meeting with twenty-seven in attendance. After that, he finally returned to Headquarters hoping for a well-deserved rest. Instead, he arrived just in time to raise up the first all Spanish-speaking Church in the Los Angeles area. During the entire trip he visited close to 150 people and baptized 18.

In addition to Señor Flores' visits to Colombia, the Bogotá Bible study has seen some very encouraging growth under the direction of Pablo Gonzalez, who divides every month into two weeks spent in Bogotá and two weeks in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

As a result of letters sent to a number of long-time subscribers informing them that Señor Gonzalez would begin visiting Colombia on a regular basis, he found himself deluged with over 900 visit requests. Rather than asking many individuals to wait for many months before a visit could be arranged, a number of Bible studies were organized in Bogotá for those who could attend. A total of four special meetings were held for four different groups selected from the 900. The meetings,

held from February through April, had attendances of 57, 35, 30 and 63 (a total of 185). In addition, Señor Gonzalez arranged as many private meetings as possible (he also conducted weekly Sabbath services while in Bogotá).

In his report on the meetings, he stated that "those present were from all walks of life: lawyers, doctors, politicians, university professors, students, priests, nuns, businessmen and plain, simple people. They were interested in finding out more about Ambassador College, the Worldwide Church of God, Herbert W. Armstrong and Garner Ted Armstrong. Many were encouraged to study and prove things. With few exceptions, everyone wanted to have a personal chat with me at a future date. Some have already come and talked. Others will be contacted in the future."

It is hoped that in the not-too-distant future, the growth of the Church in Colombia will make it worthwhile for Señor Gonzalez and his family to become permanent Colombian residents.

— Mark O. Rorem

African Diary:

Zambia, Rhodesia, South Africa

Johannesburg, South Africa:

On arriving at my hotel in Lusaka, Zambia on May 15, a knock at the door interrupted the unpacking of my bags. On opening the door I found my first visitor — a member who stopped by to see if I had ar-

rived. That was the beginning of five action-packed days of visiting, touring and counseling with the brethren. (Our ministry contacts only those individuals who have *initially* requested personal help and advice from the Church. In the past, some few in Africa have literally had to wait for years before we could dispatch a minister to their area. Our ministers are *not* missionaries.)

Twenty-seven attended the Sabbath and Pentecost services, some coming from the copper belt in northern Zambia, others from the northeastern region of Petuake and the desert area of the southwest.

In my departing remarks, I assured the brethren that God's Work was just beginning in the vast continent, and urged them to continue to pray for oneness of spirit so vital at this stage of the Work. I was happy to find that all are holding up the hands of our leaders as well as supporting the Work in many other ways. Their particular interest, however, is the establishing of a church in their country.

From Zambia, I traveled to Blantyre, Malawi to confer with Mr. Bob Fahey, director of the South African office, with whom we are cooperating to establish working relations with the Black African Division of God's Work.

I learned plans had been made for two lectures each in the cities of Bulawayo and Salisbury, Rhodesia. On arrival, an interracial study was held in the beautiful hall located on the second floor of the Jamieson Hotel. There were about forty in attendance. Our hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Owen Willis, had arranged for advanced notice of the lectures, so I was not surprised when on arriving in Bulawayo a record number

turned out. On the Sabbath, May 31, 135 anxiously awaited our arrival; 85 were new. The following day 120 enthusiastic people came, and 80 were new. Most of these were readers of the *Plain Truth*. The response to the lectures was remarkable in that they answered many unanswered questions some had been asking their spiritual leaders for years.

It is difficult to realize the spiritual hunger that plagues this world until you look into the faces of those in a *Plain Truth* lecture. After each session, a number would come to my room for counseling and to ask further questions. One afternoon 27 asked to come up after lunch for information concerning the Work of God, Ambassador College and any other news available. They re-



Mr. Harold Jackson

mained five hours! The following week was spent in and around Johannesburg, the South African metropolis. Two lectures were given in Sowetto, the Bantu city located a few miles outside Johannesburg. The Church attendance numbers 50. However, 135 turned out, 85 for the first time.

— Harold Jackson

TV Specials, Bible Lectures Promote Growth in Rhodesia

Salisbury, Rhodesia:

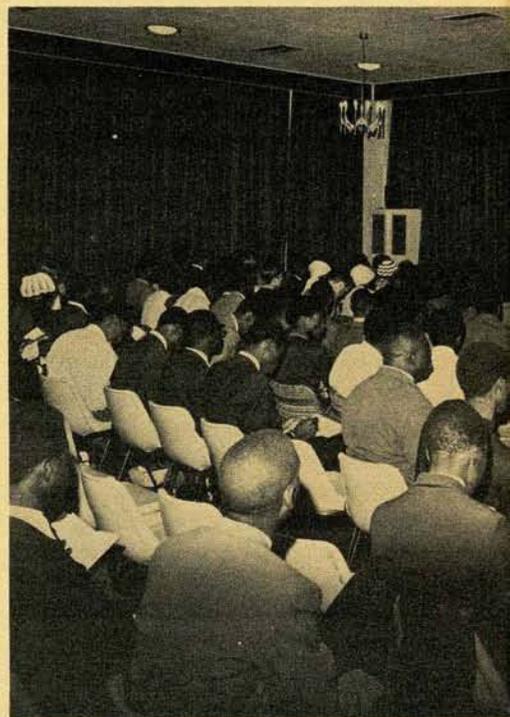
The past year has been an encouraging one for the Church in Rhodesia. Though the country is facing political uncertainty, the Work has made a number of breakthroughs.

The year began with the screening by Rhodesia Television (RTV) in Salisbury of Garner Ted Armstrong's TV special *Is This the End Time?* (filmed during a New Orleans campaign). RTV officials later said the program was the most successful religious program they had aired in their 15-year history. An estimated 26,000 people saw it, almost 50 percent more than the normal viewing audience for that type of program.

The RTV switchboard was kept busy the next day answering inquiries about the special; all together almost 200 phone calls and letters were received.

The television critic on the national newspaper, *The Rhodesia Herald*, published a review describing Mr. Armstrong as "brilliant" and the program as "amazing." He added that Mr. Armstrong's description of the dropping of the atomic bomb "surpassed all previous accounts." The *Sunday Mail* critic wrote that the program was "devastating."

With the screening of the program by the RTV station in Bulawayo, the entire country was covered by Mr. Armstrong's message. Officials of RTV (the only tele-

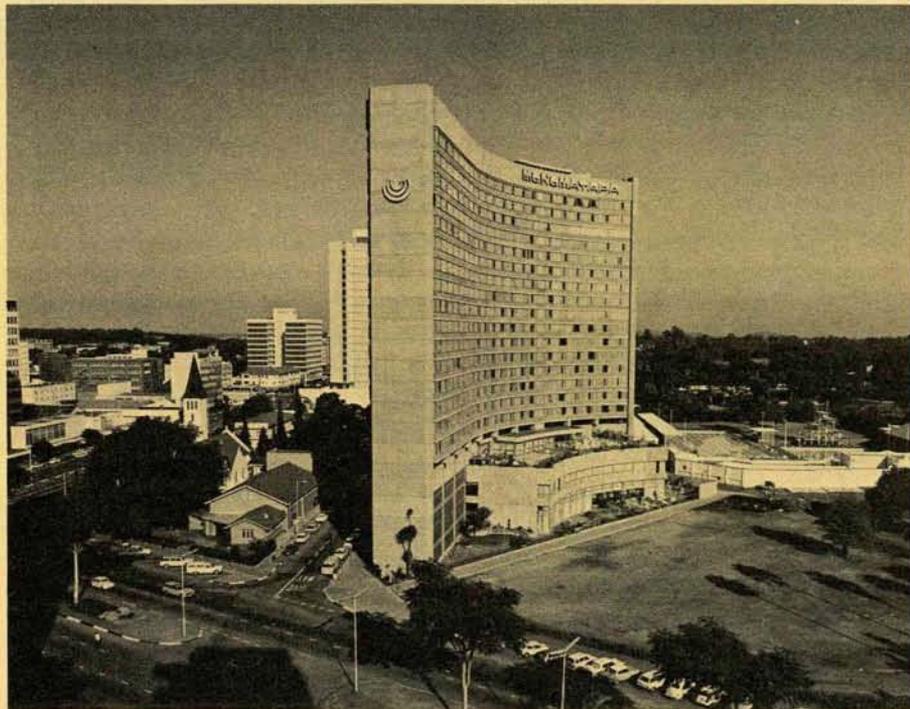
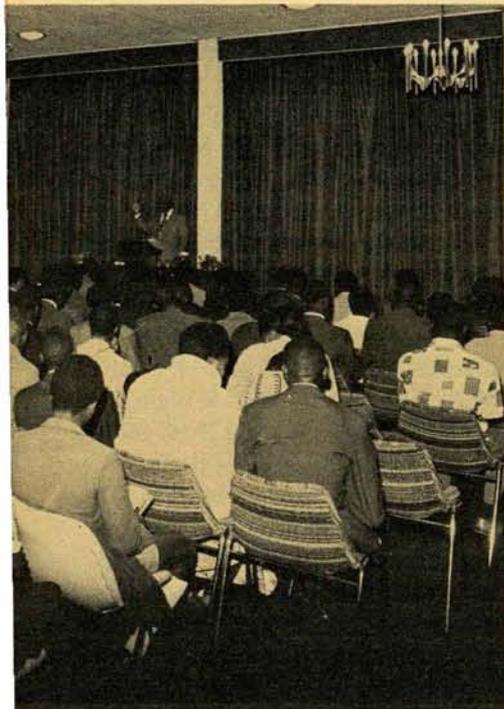


vision network in the country) are now anxious to receive more of Mr. Armstrong's programs. But showing U.S.-produced television programs is difficult because the videotape system used in the United States cannot be used here.

However, the Ambassador College Agency here hopes to obtain from Pasadena film versions of Mr. Armstrong's Portland, Oregon, campaign and a half-hour special.

Because of the favorable response, and since a number of people wrote in after the program asking to see it again, we decided to arrange a public showing of *Is This the End Time?* as well as *Herbert W. Armstrong: Ambassador for World Peace* before two *Plain Truth* lectures that were planned for Salisbury in May.

The Church tried every method it could to advertise the show. Advertisements appeared in the press; members walked miles delivering



GN Photos

handbills over half of this city (on what turned out to be the hottest day ever recorded in May); a member who is a photographer prepared slides for the major cinemas.

As the evening drew closer, everything seemed to be going wrong. The day before the show, the local board of censors informed the agency that it lacked the necessary certificates and that getting them in time would be impossible.

But six hours before the scheduled time of showing the certificates were granted.

Customs officials said the Ambassador College Agency would not be allowed to have a batch of *Plain Truth* magazines airfreighted specially for the evening. They added that the agency could not obtain them for two weeks. And yet, thanks to the persistence of two men on the staff here, the magazines appeared in less than an hour, five hours before the show.

Then, after a series of lesser difficulties, came the last straw. Just before the showing the projector malfunctioned. First the sound went and then the picture. However, a projector repairman was in the audience. Thanks to him everything was soon all set to go and running smoothly.

The response was surprising. More than 400 attended. It was the biggest crowd ever in the hall, which is the most prestigious in Salisbury. As more and more people came, the doors had to be closed and a repeat showing had to be arranged for the next night. Altogether 440 nonmembers attended, a gratifying result, especially considering the European population of Salisbury is only 110,000.

The film was followed one week later by two *Plain Truth* Bible lectures conducted by Robert Fahey, director of the Work in South Africa. Mr. Fahey spoke out pow-

HOTEL IN SALISBURY (above) was the site of public showing of two films. Harold Jackson (above left) speaks at *Plain Truth* lecture.

erfully about the Kingdom of God to audiences of 104 and 138 people, including 71 and 114 nonmembers.

One encouraging first was a series of *Plain Truth* lectures in Africa specifically designed for the Negro population. Harold Jackson of the Work's Bricket Wood, England, office, director of the Black African Work, extended a trip to Zambia in late May (see preceding story) to take the lectures. Results were favorable. In the southern part of the country, in Bulawayo, audiences of 135 and 120, including 85 and 80 nonmembers, came.

In Salisbury the figures were 221 and 150, with 138 and 78 nonmembers.

— Owen Willis
Director, Salisbury Office

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT

by Lester L. Grabbe

Jesus was an Essene. Jesus was already anticipated in His crucifixion and resurrection appearance by the leader of the Qumran sect more than a century earlier.

Significant sections of the New Testament have surfaced among the Dead Sea Scrolls which bid fair to revolutionize scholarship.

These are some of the more sensational claims for the Dead Sea Scrolls which have appeared in newspaper headlines over the last few years. We will examine the veracity of such assertions. Yet they illustrate what many people may not have realized: the Dead Sea Scrolls are important not only for the *Old* Testament, but also for the *New*.

Did Christianity Begin at Qumran?

Some of the more extravagant claims made are outlined in a box on page 29. Suffice it to say that only one of those listed, John Allegro, can claim any scholarly expertise in the area. Yet his statements which have caused the most public excitement were based on anything but sound scholarship. No wonder they were generally repudiated by everyone from his father-in-law (the late Professor H. H. Rowley of Manchester University) and colleagues on down.

Some of the wilder pronouncements from journalists included charges of "conspiracy" among scholars to withhold the "truth" about what the Dead Sea Scrolls showed in regard to early Christian-

ity. Edmund Wilson, for example, suggested New Testament scholars were "boycotting" the revelations of the Scrolls. The irresponsibility of such melodramatic exclamations is really all the refutation needed.

Yet one could also point out that information on the Scrolls is hardly the property of a few secretive scholars working clandestinely in sequestered cells. Thousands of articles — a large percentage of them in English — and dozens of books are easily available. Many of these are quite readable for any adult with a normal education. The books, reviews, challenges of the theses of colleagues, expression of contrary opinions, and the diverse religious backgrounds of those writing on the subject give the impression of anything but a united conspiracy.

Of course, these simple facts may still not be convincing to a few. After all, there are still people who believe in the Illuminati!

A quick comparison between the beliefs and practices of the Qumran sect show essential differences between it and the early Christian Church. Some of these include:

- The Qumran group lived in isolation in the desert, having little or no contact with outsiders. Jesus and His disciples had free exchange with others and even ate with publicans and those looked upon as sinners.

- Jesus and His followers often frequented the Temple area when in Jerusalem. The Qumranites, on the other hand, regarded the Temple and priesthood as polluted and refused to have anything to do with the Temple ritual.

- There is no clear evidence that Jesus kept any of the major annual

festivals at any other time than did the Jews regulated by the priesthood (leaving aside the question of the Last Supper). All the references in the Gospels give no hint of His using a different calendar from that used by the official religious authority. The Qumran group was quite different since it followed a purely solar calendar. Its festivals often fell at a time quite different from those within the rest of Judaism.

- The Qumranites are usually identified with the Essenes. Yet neither the Essenes nor the Qumran community are anywhere named or referred to in the New Testament. This is not likely to have been the case if Jesus was one of them or greatly influenced by them.

Other important differences could also be listed. No wonder Qumran scholar Pierre Benoit could write: "To say that Jesus was not one of the Essenes is an understatement"! ("Qumran and the New Testament," *Paul and Qumran*, 13.)

Positive Parallels

Even though neither Jesus nor his followers were Essenes (nor did the early Church have its roots in Qumran), this does not mean the Dead Sea Scrolls are not important documents for better understanding sections of the New Testament. Along with other early material such as rabbinic literature, intertestamental and Hellenistic Jewish writings, the Qumran scrolls help to elucidate the thought and language of Judaism in the time of Jesus.

One thing the Scrolls have helped show is the continued use of the Hebrew language. Scholars once tended to think Hebrew ceased to

be used among the Jews in favor of Aramaic. The Dead Sea Scrolls, however, contain material in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek — showing the use of all three languages in Palestine at the time. Yet much of the material is in Hebrew. This Hebrew often imitates the language of the Bible which had become somewhat archaic by that time. But the vernacular Mishnaic Hebrew of the writers shines through in various expressions and in some of the more secular writings less influenced by the language of the Bible.

The New Testament was written in Greek. Yet that language is often influenced by Hebrew and Aramaic expressions. Thus, some Greek expressions are simply literal translations of Semitic expressions and would have sounded rather peculiar to a native Greek. The Semitic idioms which lay behind some of the idiosyncratic Greek wordings of the New Testament have now surfaced for the first time in the Scrolls.

One very interesting example is Luke 2:14. This is best known through the King James, "Peace on earth, good will among men." However, scholars have long known this is not the reading of the earliest manuscripts. Instead of "good will" (*eudokia* in Greek), the oldest attested reading is "of good will" (*eudokias*). There was no known parallel Hebrew expression until some of the Scrolls were deciphered. It was found that the expression "good will" or "good pleasure" was used in a number of places (Hebrew *rason*). In two passages in a collection of hymns (1QH iv, 32-33; xi, 9), the expression "sons of his good will" (Hebrew *bene rasono*)

was used — a Hebrew equivalent of the Greek "men of good will" (*anthropoi eudokias*).

This not only supported the reading of the oldest Greek manuscripts, but also helped explain its meaning. As E. Vogt wrote: "The Qumran texts do more than lend decisive support to this reading. They also indicate that 'God's good pleasure' here refers more naturally to the will of God to confer grace on those he has chosen, than to God's delighting in and approving of the goodness in men's lives" (*The Scrolls and the New Testament*, edited by K. Stendahl, 117). Dr. Vogt suggested the best translation of the last part of Luke 2:14 is "peace among men of God's good pleasure," meaning those whom God has chosen.

Common Thought Milieu

There are also a number of expressions of thought and concept which Qumran shares with the New Testament. This does not necessarily mean the New Testament writers drew on Qumran literature but rather that both groups shared in a common language and thought heritage within Judaism of the time. Because of the vicissitudes of history it just happens that ideas and language widespread in the time of the New Testament have come down to us only in the Qumran literature.

As Raymond Brown wrote specifically in relation to some interesting parallels between the Johannine writings: "The resemblances do not seem to indicate immediate relationship, however, as if St. John were himself a sectarian or were personally familiar with the Qum-

ran literature. Rather they indicate a more general acquaintance with the thought and style of expression which we have found at Qumran" (*The Scrolls and the New Testament*, p. 206).

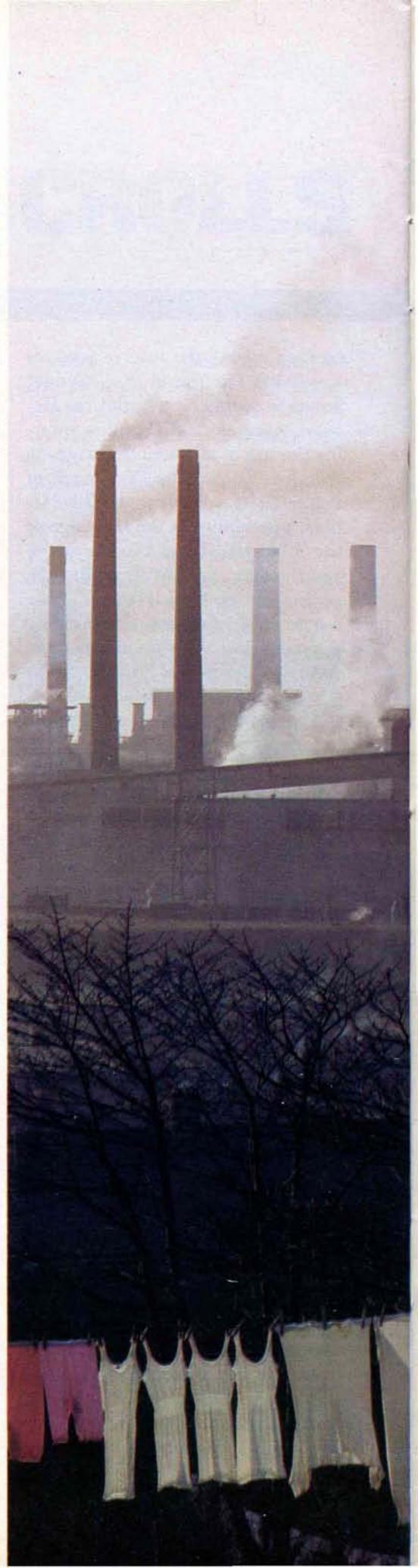
One of the resemblances Professor Brown specifically discusses is the figure of "light" and "darkness" which has a prominent place in the writings of John. The figure is a natural one and hardly surprising, yet its use in the Gospel of John is frequent enough to be a characteristic feature. Important passages include John 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:35-36. Two expressions used throughout the Scrolls are "sons of light" and "sons of darkness." One sectarian writing, the so-called *War Scroll* (1QM), describes an end-time, eschatological battle between the forces of good ("sons of light") and the forces of evil ("sons of darkness").

However, despite the strikingly similar imagery, there are some significant differences. What constitutes a "son of light" with the Qumran sect is the acceptance of the sect's particular biblical interpretation. The ultimate criterion for John is faith in Christ. As Raymond Brown states: "It should be evident the basic difference between the two theologies is Christ" (*op. cit.*, pp. 194, 195). For a Christian the difference is enormous.

Quotations in the New Testament

Another interesting discovery coming from the Dead Sea Scrolls relates to quotations of Old Testament passages in the New Testament. The New Testament writers

(Continued on page 29)





IS THIS WORLD REALLY NECESSARY?



If God is good, kind and just, why did He create this misery-laden world for His children to live in? How come He allows war, torture, mass starvation and ecological atrocities? Why is nature itself cruelly balanced by the "law of the jungle"? Did God create all this misery out of a sense of divine cruelty or sadism — or is there a logical reason for it all?

by Carole Ritter

One of our *Good News* readers asked the following question: "If God is so just, why does He allow babies to suffer so horribly before death — for example, a baby abandoned in a garbage can to die of painful exposure or starvation, or a child trapped in a burning house, or a toddler being mauled by a mad dog? What kind of lesson does it teach these children who are too young to comprehend life?"

Such penetrating questions have troubled philosophers and theologians for ages. Those of us who are parents could have trouble believing in a God who causes small children to suffer unnecessarily. In fact, it is hard to picture a Father who subjects *adult* human beings (His children whom He supposedly loves) to wars, starvation, plagues and martyrdom — unless there is an awfully good reason for it.

One of the greatest philosophers of all time, King Solomon of ancient Israel, lamented: "... It is an unhappy business that God has given to the sons of men to be busy with. I have seen everything that is done under the sun.... What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered" (Eccl. 1:13-15).

He viewed corruption in government as one of the facts of life: "If you see in a province the poor oppressed and justice and right violently taken away, do not be amazed at the matter; for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them"

(Eccl. 5:8). He saw accidents as part of the natural order of things: "... The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all" (Eccl. 9:11).

Continuing in the same cynical vein, he wrote: "What has a man from all the toil and strain with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of pain, and his work is a vexation; even in the night his mind does not rest" (Eccl. 2:22-23). Solomon "saw all the oppressions that are practiced under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them!... And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive; but better than both is he who has not yet been, and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun" (Eccl. 4:1-3).

Is God an Ogre?

Along with Solomon, we too might ask why all this misery is permitted. Would it really be better never to have drawn breath? Is God some kind of sadistic monster who enjoys watching people suffer? Or is there a better explanation for this world and its sorrows?

God says He loves people. John 3:16 reads: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him." Then why hasn't the world "been saved through him"? What is taking Him so long? You would think an all-powerful God would be able to do away with man's misery by divine fiat. Why hasn't He stopped all the suffering, or does He even want to?

Freedom of Choice

God Himself did not create evil. He looked at His creation and saw that "it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).

He placed Adam and Eve in paradise, told them His ways were best, and made the "tree of life" (symbol of the immortality they could have if they went His way) readily available to them. He told them to choose the tree of life, but they ate from the forbidden tree instead. If they had eaten from the right tree, they would have symbolically chosen to obey God's laws — the only way to peace, happiness and every good result.

But they chose instead to follow the way of Satan the devil. In effect, they rejected God's government and willingly placed themselves under Satan's rule. And people ever since have followed their lead, choosing to follow Satan's way rather than God's.

God would rather mankind had chosen His way, but He *allowed* them to do their own thing (see Judges 21:25). Thus the world runs on greed, hatred, rebellion, jealousy — all the motivations that produce wars, heartache and the other assorted miseries we see around us today. "Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct" (Rom. 1:28). God didn't create this kind of world, but since we ourselves chose it He allows us to live in it. His way would have brought us peace and happiness, but He didn't want to cram it down our throats.

The Devil Made Us Do It

But we can't blame Adam alone for this world's troubles. God allowed Adam to choose, and he chose Satan's government. Now that Satan is in charge, he influences world leaders to go to war with each other (see Revelation 16:14 and Daniel 10:12-13). He is the real "god" of this world (II Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; John 12:31). He inspires great religious figures to hand down illogical, unreasonable edicts that further this world's ignorance, overpopulation, hunger and disease.

Satan, appearing as an "angel of light" (II Cor. 11:14), has been the

force behind every "holy war," inquisition, or crusade since the creation of mankind. In Matthew 4:8-9, Satan offered the kingdoms of this world to Christ as a temptation. He could do this because he had them to give. In short, Satan is the one who makes this potentially fine world such a miserable place in which to live.

But what good does it do for God to allow Satan free rein? Why should man have to be ruled by his mortal enemy — couldn't God have come up with something a little less painful?

Since we have chosen Satan's way, God is going to let us see it through to its natural conclusion — man's ultimate total destruction unless Christ intervenes (Matt. 24:22). We are being brought to the point where we are beginning to realize that mankind cannot solve his problems alone — that only God can rescue us from our plight. We are being given time to discover collectively and individually that Satan's way is futile; that we should have gone along with God's rule in the first place.

God's Merciful Plan

One point that many fail to understand is that God's overall plan does not include calling everyone to salvation now in this age (for more information on this, write for our free reprint article "Is This the Only Day of Salvation?"). Some people are quite concerned about the unsaved starving masses of India, the gigantic numbers of Communist Chinese who have never even heard the name of Jesus Christ; in short, *everybody* who dies "unbaptized" or "unchurched."

But all of these people are eventually going to have their chance for salvation. Those who have suffered and died, never really knowing God's way, will be resurrected to physical life in a utopian setting. This is the period of time referred to as the "white throne judgment" in Revelation 20:11-12. During this age the children who had such a

rough time of it in their first life will be able to grow to adulthood. They will be able to compare the sufferings of Satan's world with the happiness of God's. They will have a chance to choose God's way for eternity, and to be changed to immortal spirit beings like Christ their elder brother (Heb. 2:11).

This is the hope that kept cynical King Solomon alive — the knowledge that, although things were totally unjust in the satanic world he saw around him, "God will [finally] judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter, and for every work" (Eccl. 3:17). All people, good and bad, oppressors and oppressed, will be called into account during this period of judging. If they fail to accept God's ways and repent, they will be punished (Rev. 20:14-15). And if they live righteously, they will be rewarded. The last chapter of Ecclesiastes reaffirms this basic truth: "For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Eccl. 12:14). Even Satan will eventually receive his just deserts (Rev. 20:10; Jude 13).

The End of Satan's Rule

When Christ returns at the beginning of the millennium, Satan will be imprisoned (Rev. 20:1-3), and even the nature of wild animals will be changed. God will turn lions into gentle herbivores; snakes will no longer be poisonous — "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9).

Looking back on a half-dozen or so millennia of suffering, people living then will be able to make a clear-cut comparison between the two ways of life. Even so, the lesson of history will be hard for many to digest. They will probably experiment for themselves, just like Adam and Eve.

The Bible prophesies that toward the end of the millennium there will be multitudes who have experienced

nothing but peace. Some may not have it clear in their minds which way is best, and these will be ripe for the picking when Satan is "loosed [for] a little season" (Rev. 20:3, 7, KJV). They will be deceived into attacking the very God who gave them peace and plenty (verse 9). They, too, will have to learn their lesson the hard way.

God's Perspective

In the meantime, whether we realize it or not, all of us are learning now by the things we go through in this world. The more we hurt, the more disgusted we become with Satan's government — and the more determined we will be to follow God's way when it is clearly revealed to us.

If we could back off and view the universe and this world from the perspective of eternity, we might come closer to comprehending why God has allowed us to take such a painful course.

It may be hard for us to understand from our limited vantage point, but in God's eyes "the flesh is of no avail." Rather, "It is the spirit that gives life" (John 6:63). God cares a lot more about which way we are going to choose for eternity than He does about whether or not our physical flesh is comfortable for the moment. He is still a merciful God who hates to see us going Satan's way, but He can't stop us without totally stripping away our free moral agency.

But — and here is the good news — once we have learned the lesson that His way is best, He promises to do away with all suffering. He "shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4, KJV).

So yes, this world with all its ugliness really is necessary. It is an integral part of a wisely thought-out plan. But once it has served its purpose, it will be replaced by a new earth filled with peace. □



THE SHEEP INSTINCT **AND YOU**

by George Ritter



National Publicity Studios

Does conversion mean the end of all active, creative and original thought processes? Were Christians meant to have everything spoon-fed, spelled out and also to be relieved of making major personal decisions on their own? Does Christianity involve a non-thinking type of existence where the individual accepts everything at face value without substantiation or proof?

Not too long ago, one of our readers had this to say after taking exception to a recent *Good News* article: "Now I feel I must take each article apart looking for possible errors rather than just believing the whole magazine like I used to. And it was such a relief when *The Good News* used to come, because here was a magazine that I could just sit down and relax and read without playing the game of true or false with."

The reader raises a good point. Shouldn't a converted Christian be able to "sit down and relax" without giving what he or she reads or hears a second thought? Isn't that part of being a good, loyal, sheep-like follower?

The Nature of the Flock

There's no question about the fact that the Bible often refers to God's people as sheep, the flock, or the little flock. But what is this meant to signify? In the tenth chapter of the book of John, Jesus Christ refers to the flock as follows: "A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. . . . I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father . . ." (verses 5, 14-15, RSV).

Fine, but couldn't any self-respecting sheep do this? The differences between the real shepherd and would-be impostors should be more than obvious. The problem, though, is that distinctions between the two are often very subtle and unobtrusive. Considering the fact that even Satan the devil can pawn himself off as an "angel of light" (II Cor. 11:14), this little bit of perceptive ability turns out to be no mean feat. It sounds as if Christ were describing a very discerning group of sheep.

Notice another statement Christ made about His sheep in Matthew 10:16: "Behold, I send you

forth as *sheep* in the midst of wolves: *be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*"

Christ's words are pretty plain. He doesn't want a flock of *dumb* sheep representing Him! He wants some pretty sharp individuals. Now maybe you say, "Sure — that's a command for the ministry." If you want to take it that way, fine. It doesn't really change anything, because the people — or the flock — are supposed to emulate the best qualities they find in their ministers (I Cor. 11:1; Heb. 13:7).

A Thinking Flock

God didn't intend that people outside the Church be the only ones who actively use their heads. The New Testament is full of enjoiners to Christians to diligently engage their mental gears, especially regarding spiritual matters. Paul's command to "prove all things" (I Thes. 5:21) was certainly not meant to be suspended upon a person's baptism. The apostle John warned the "sheep" of his day to "try [test, discern] the spirits" (I John 4:1). Again, this can't be done by gullibly swallowing every religious morsel that is thrown your way.

The art of making sound decisions was and still is every Christian's responsibility. In I Corinthians 6:1-3 (RSV), the apostle Paul wrote: "When one of you has a grievance against a brother, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? *How much more, matters pertaining to this life!*"

An Educated Flock

Education and learning should be an ongoing, active facet of every Christian's life. Some of the last

"For thirty years, on the air and in the Plain Truth, I have been saying: 'Don't believe me — believe your Bible — believe God!' Always I say — and so does Garner Ted Armstrong — 'Check up!' Listen without prejudice, with an open mind, then check up — go to your Bible, and believe what you read there."

Herbert W. Armstrong, Plain Truth,
September 1963

"Again I say, 'Don't believe us; believe what you read in your Bible.' Don't believe us — just because we say so. But believe us if and when you find we speak according to the very Word of God, and then only believe us as we speak according to that Word!"

Garner Ted Armstrong, Plain Truth,
February 1965

"I think our readers know by now that we always say: 'Don't believe what we say because you believe in us.' We say, 'Listen with an open mind, without prejudice, then check up in your own Bible — prove whether it is true and believe what you find proved!'"

Herbert W. Armstrong, Plain Truth,
May 1966

words the apostle Peter wrote included the exhortation to "grow in grace and knowledge" (II Pet. 3:18). Paul had this to say in writing to the Colossians: "... We have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:9-10, RSV).

This type of spiritual and mental growth is one of the primary factors that separates "the men from the boys," so to speak. As Paul wrote in the book of Hebrews: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:12-14).

A Stable Flock

A Christian cannot hope to achieve this level of spiritual maturity unless he is willing to think about, evaluate and assess the information that he is constantly confronted with. And unless or until he reaches this point, he may discover that he is resting his beliefs on very shaky spiritual ground. For example, he may easily find himself being "tossed to and fro... with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14).

He could end up like the person Christ described in Matthew 7:26 who built his house on a foundation of sand. Or he may be typified by the seed that was sown on rocky ground. In this case the newly germinated plants that quickly sprouted looked good on the surface, but their staying power was limited (Matt. 13). The reason, as

Christ explained, was that this class of converts "had no root in themselves" (verse 21).

Or a person could end up like some in the early Corinthian church who were lining up behind their favorite hero. Some were of Paul, others of Apollos. Clearly, most, if not all of them, were failing to stand on their own two spiritual feet (I Cor. 3:2-4).

The blatting, brainless "group-think" approach just can't hack it when the chips are down and trials come. And increased trials, pressures and difficulties are prophesied to come. As the apostle Paul said: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (II Tim. 3:13). He continues in Acts 20:29: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." Again, would-be shepherds were posing as leaders of the flock. Paul's advice to said flock: "... Continue to hold to the things that you have learned and of which you are convinced, knowing from whom you learned them" (II Tim. 3:14, *The Amplified Bible*).

Don't be a victim of the sheep instinct. Prove your own faith now (II Cor. 13:5), that you may be able to stand with Jesus Christ when He returns to this earth. □

RECOMMENDED READING

The following volumes listed contain excellent material on how the sheep instinct works. The first three deal with some rather unsavory episodes of the past (basically from a negative standpoint). The last book listed is an example of one way various aspects of the sheep instinct can be overcome. Most or all are available at local bookstores and/or libraries.

- Lederer, William J. *A Nation of Sheep*. W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1961.
- Speer, Albert. *Inside the Third Reich*. The MacMillan Co., 1970.
- Woodham-Smith, Cecil. *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. New American Library, 1953.
- Flesch, Rudolf. *The Art of Clear Thinking*. Harper, 1951.

DEAD SEA SCROLLS

(Continued from page 21)

used a variety of sources for quotations. Sometimes they translated directly from the Hebrew. But since the New Testament was in Greek and aimed mainly at Greek speakers, about two thirds of the quotations are from the Septuagint directly or with minor changes. The reason is that Greek-speaking people were familiar with the Old Testament through the Septuagint translation just as many people today know the Bible primarily through the King James Version.

Some New Testament quotations seem to be taken from the Targumic versions (Aramaic translations and

paraphrases of the scripture). But certain sections of the New Testament quoted from textual-types unknown before the Scrolls were found. Several of the quotations in speeches in Acts, for example, exhibit a particular type of wording which is paralleled in the Qumran writings. This shows the New Testament writers were not just making up their own edition of the passage but actually quoting from versions known and used among the Jews at that time.

Conclusions

This article has given only a few examples of the way in which the Qumran scrolls are helpful for a better understanding of the New

Testament. A thorough treatment would require a book or books. But the examples given should illustrate the value of the Scrolls.

As with the Old Testament, so with the New Testament: the manuscripts from the wilderness of the Dead Sea are an important contribution toward our understanding of the origin of the early Church and the first Christian writings. Any information which throws light on the cultural, religious and literary environment of the first Christian century can also help in elucidating and expanding our understanding of the apostolic writings.

The sensational claims about the Scrolls have on the whole died a natural and certainly unmourned death. Jesus was not an Essene; the Church did not receive its birth and nourishment from Qumran: "The continued study of the scrolls should contribute to the better understanding of New Testament background and origins. But there is nothing in the contents of the scrolls or in a careful comparison of them with the New Testament which warrants hasty statements that the Christian gospel was taken over from the Qumran sect or is basically dependent on that sect for its message and way of life" (F. V. Filson, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament," *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology*, 155).

Whether the recent claims of finding portions of the New Testament among the Scrolls will prove true is a matter for history to tell. But the present indications are rather negative. (See the article on the subject in the June 1975 GN.)

To read the New Testament only in the light of the Qumran documents would create a gross distortion of the truth. But to approach it as if it had received no influence from its environment also produces a caricature. Only when the New Testament documents are viewed against their entire first-century background do their true uniqueness and superiority become absolutely lucid. □

Beware of Sensational Claims

Many laymen have been misled by irresponsible and incorrect claims. These have usually come from journalists or other nonexperts, though occasionally even a scholar in the field has succumbed to the temptation of sensationalism. Here are a few misstatements to avoid:

A. Powell Davies, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, talked of a "Battle of the Scrolls" in which he made it appear as if theologians were opposing the implications of the Scrolls for early Christianity.

J. Lehmann states in his book, *Rabbi J*, that Jesus "did find the cardinal point of his truth and his teaching among the Essenes" (p. 143).

Edmund Wilson, while by no means a scholar, has a reasonably well-researched book in *The Dead Sea Scrolls 1947-1969*. However, in the first edition of the book (1955), he

stated: "New Testament scholars, it seems, have almost without exception boycotted the whole subject of the scrolls." That statement is still found in his later edition (p. 100) even though it was clearly inaccurate.

John M. Allegro, certainly a capable scholar in the language and text of the Qumran manuscripts, shocked and dismayed his colleagues by unprofessional activities (such as unauthorized publication of a text assigned to another scholar) and a number of unscholarly statements about the Scrolls (documented in W. S. LaSor, *Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, 19ff, and to some extent in Wilson, *op. cit.*, 162ff). He has since gone on to publish claims about the origins of Christianity in a mushroom cult which no legitimate scholar has taken seriously.

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