

# I Protest

by Ray L. Straub

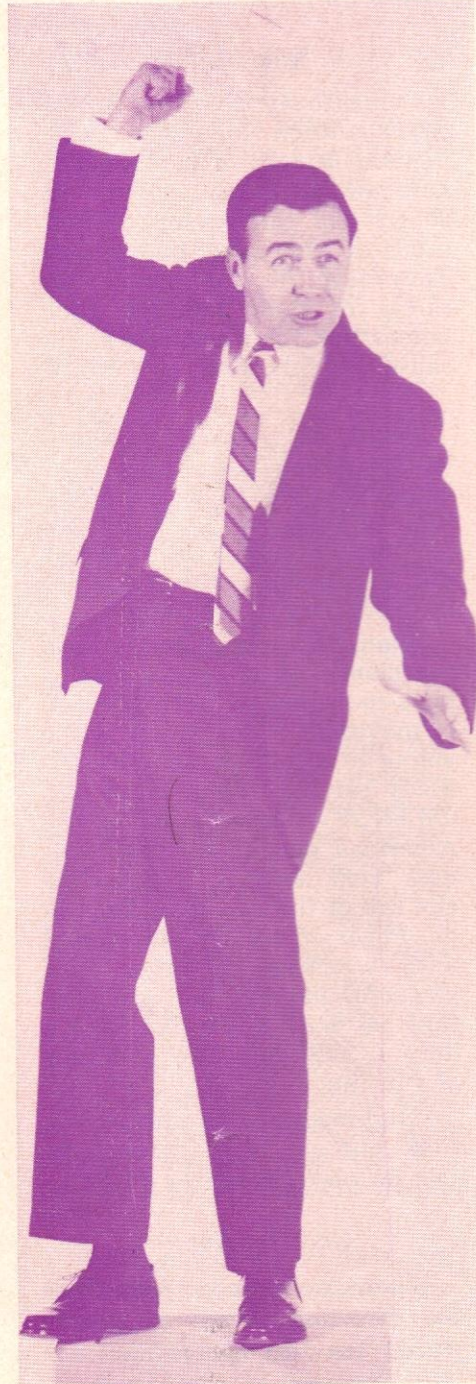
One can hardly be blamed for being dissatisfied. After all, who can be happy with circumstances as they are?

Mothers and fathers are so busy earning enough money to protect their image in the community that they lack time to talk with the family—wherever they may be. Youngsters with their explosive blend of energy and curiosity become involved in harmful experimentation. Finding it lacks sustaining interest and offers no help, they become resentful.

They hate the artificiality of their communities, the nothingness that people stand for, the preoccupation with securing luxuries that end up compounding misery.

They rebel. What they do seems ridiculous, but at least they are noticed. Normal behavior never brought them any attention, but this kind of notice brings up another problem. It still leaves one unaccepted. Where does he go from there?

How about a return to our "pleasant" society? The youth can come home and read the papers. He can follow the trials of three suspects, each involved in the assassination of a different national leader.



(Armstrong Roberts)

He can learn the latest about the Viet Nam war, the torture of the Pueblo crew. He can become aware of Red China's piracy of our ships, our disintegrating diplomatic relations with Peru. He can get information on the riots that plague our institutions of higher learning. He can watch developments in the lawsuit of Congressman Adam Clayton Powell against the U. S. House of Representatives which he hopes will prevent him from having to pay a \$25,000 fine assessed against him for the unconscionable misuse of thousands of dollars of public funds. He can try to figure out how those earning \$10,000 per year often end up paying more income tax than some who earn in excess of \$1,000,000 annually.

No, sir! You surely cannot blame a person for being dissatisfied. Why should he not protest?

Jesus led a protest movement. He announced, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in

law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:34-39).

The Master's record of protest against the establishment of His day is well known. He had no affection for the status quo. He belittled the artificiality of His peers. He was repulsed by their "acceptable" evils, and He rebelled against their snobbery. He broke their traditions. He ridiculed their ethics. He exposed their hypocrisy.

A protester *per excellence* was our Jesus! For all this we are proud of Him and glowingly confess our love for Him! He showed them something worth seeing, doing, believing. He didn't wave His flag over those Galilean hillsides long, but when He left, things were far from the same.

The Son of God did not like what He saw. He was dissatisfied. He protested. We can hardly appreciate what we see and read. We must protest.

Before registering protests, it becomes appropriate to take a little longer look at our Master Protester. He demonstrated grievances, but He did more—*much* more.

He healed the blind, the lepers, the crippled. He returned the sanity some had lost. He fed the hungry, relieved men of their sins, and even resurrected some who had died. He shouted into no ears, hurt no one, never lost His composure. He refused to allow Himself to be used by demagogues, and He tolerated no more sin amongst His disciples than what He criticized in others. Obviously,

His was a different way of protesting.

Not all dissention solves problems or social evils. Much of it adds to them. In fact, it would be no overstatement to assert that imprudent protesting constitutes one of our most vexing social ills. A good critic either shows discretion in his commentary, or he is quiet.

The Church is called to follow her Lord in raising a protest. This is no time for comfort. Admiration of the status quo is wasted. The implied consent of silence is deceptive. Love for God that is not kept active waxes and becomes impenetrable.

We have a voice. Let's use it!

I PROTEST THE AUDACITY OF MEN WHO SPEAK IN BEHALF OF GOD WHEN THEY DO NOT LISTEN TO HIM TO FIND OUT WHAT HE SAYS.

People are sensitive to being misquoted. Almost daily the news media carry accounts of men in and out of public life who are offering corrections and/or clarifications because they claim to have been misquoted or their words were used out of context.

The right to be represented accurately is basic. It is upheld by law. A person may not like what I say, and he need not agree with me. That is *his privilege*. However, that person may not misquote me, because there is legal recourse. That is *my protection*.

If our words are so reverently regarded, what about God's? If we insist that none has the right to misuse our words, what right have we to speak erroneously in behalf of the Creator?

In this regard, Jesus asked, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). He also predicted, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have

cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22, 23).

Much confusion arises because people cannot separate the cause from the crusade. They do not realize that a person can commit an atrocious sin while attempting to cure another evil.

For instance, if a person were to discover that his neighbor had stolen a car, he might be able to stop this sin from being repeated by this criminal by murdering him. After all, one cannot deny that the sin of car theft is deplorable. The cause to prevent a thief from stealing is good. To murder him, though, would be a poor way to bring about the desired reform.

Overlooking this principle, some advocate the acceptability of violence as a means to secure reform if other means seem inadequate. There are great movements toward unifying churches, at the expense of doctrinal accuracy, in order to exert more social pressure.

Others feel that the Church can be more effective in its life-saving work if she holds hands with the devil so that she can hug people with one arm while Satan clings to them with an arm of his. They conclude that one arm on their parishioners is better than none at all. This is done in behalf of the Word of God and the message it brings. *I protest*. None has the right to speak in behalf of God if he refuses to take time to read and study what God says.

Why are people unconcerned about God's Word? Why do they not listen to what He says? Jesus gives a rather straightforward answer: "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning,

and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:43-47).

There is too little concern for truth. There is too little Bible study in churches and homes. This reflects too little concern for the Word of God. Fewer and fewer people know what is in the Bible. What God has to say seems to count less and less. How can we speak in His behalf, if we do not even know what He says?

### I PROTEST THE OPTION MEN EXERCISE IN SETTING THEIR OWN STANDARD OF OBEDIENCE.

It is obvious that when anyone presumes the right to choose which laws he feels he can obey, he is disobedient. A child is considered naughty when he ignores but one or two household rules. He need not disregard every order ever given in order to be disobedient.

I protest the halo with which leaders in public life vest themselves under the whitewashed term, "civil disobedience." The word *civil* does nothing to disguise the harsh reality that it is disobedience nonetheless.

It's argued that some laws are oppressive, discriminatory, and their observance constitutes as much of an evil as transgressing them. To publicly ignore the law is to demonstrate its unfairness. There is logic in this, but it is limited.

Besides calling attention to unjust laws, civil disobedience is also an example of self-justified infraction of duly passed law. We are a society of law.

Due process in passing or amending rules is and must remain a basic discipline. Disrespect for law is direct infringement on the rights of the masses. When these rights are disregarded, the society's privilege to rule itself is jeopardized. This forces us to face the ironic eventuality that civil disobedience, no matter how moral the motive, instead of gaining relief for the oppressed, threatens to weaken the freedoms of all. Minorities can never find healing in wounding the majority.

Further, the privilege of choosing which laws will be observed is grasped much easier and sooner than the discernment to select which laws may be broken in order to achieve social reform. The man who breaks the law against public assembly acknowledges his disobedience. The next man who breaks the law by committing arson and looting is also acknowledging his disobedience. It is merely a matter of the latter's preference for a new color television set over walking for miles down a dusty Alabama road with a lot of stuffy, confused preachers!

No one is more practiced in the paradox of selective obedience than the bulk of the "Christian" community. It is no wonder that restless, uninformed "men of the cloth" with martyr complex choose loudly to flaunt their disobedience. They lead their congregations in breaking the law of God each week.

I refer here to the Ten Commandments. So few seem to realize that in breaking the fourth, which enjoins us to "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," that they are being disobedient to God. In demonstrating transgression of this commandment, they break all of them. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do

not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law" (James 2:10, 11).

Let this truth be acknowledged: if any one of the Ten Commandments has been abrogated, they are *all* passe. There is no evidence given in any portion of Scripture that will lead one to believe that a single commandment has been extracted from the decalogue. An argument against one is an attack on all.

A case against observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is an argument in favor of stealing, murder, adultery, etc. This logic cannot be evaded by the "jack-in-the-box" theory which arbitrarily proposes that the Ten Commandments were pushed into concealment with the lid placed on them at the death of Jesus, only to have nine of them released again in other passages of the New Testament. So anemic is this concept that its glassy-eyed existence is found only in the timid silence of those who think they know what they believe, but they do not know where to find the proof to defend it.

It is time to demonstrate. Voices need to be lifted in favor of obedience. God has respect only for His brand of righteousness. Concerning Israel, Paul observed, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3, 4).

This passage presents two valuable truths about selective obedience. First, it suggests that it is possible for us to establish a standard of righteousness which can capture our zeal, devotion, inner justifications, and satisfaction. Nonetheless, in gaining favor in the eyes of God it is of no consequence.

Secondly, this righteousness which we devise for ourselves detours us from the principles and practices that constitute the righteousness of God. Selective obedience is an outright admission of our own editorial efforts exercised on the Will of God. The Almighty will not have it. He owns this world and all that is in it. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His Word will stand. It is to be obeyed implicitly.

The revelation promises, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

**I PROTEST THE OVERBEARING INSINUATION THAT SOCIETY'S ILLS CAN BE CURED BY SOCIAL CRUSADE.**

It is wisely observed that great men and nations learn from the mistakes of the past. It must also be granted that great reformers have caused awareness that relieved oppression and stimulated a greater sense of humane concern in circles of authority.

Nonetheless, it is also observed by great minds, the late Albert Einstein among them, that man's problems are repeatedly basically the same because of what man is.

He dreams and writes poetry about utopia. He looks at his vast resources and sighs about its potential for bringing meaning and even luxury into barren lives whose hopes have grown dim. He has an imagination that conceives of good. But, he has a spirit that bites and devours.

In Romans 7 Paul defines the law of sin and death that wars in our members. It compels us to sin and is stimulated when confronted by accusation. It recognizes the virtues, but it cannot achieve them. It seeks

to avoid wrongdoing, but its efforts are futile. This law causes man to be wretched. He needs *deliverance*.

The carnal mind is an enemy of God. As such it cannot subject itself to God's laws and therefore cannot please Him (Romans 8:7, 8).

The best man can do is to acknowledge the need for social reform and make token gestures to indicate his sincerity. He cannot accomplish the righteousness he seeks. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil" (Jeremiah 13:23). It is misleading to rally the hearts of the oppressed around a cause that cannot succeed. No society has been able to cure self of its own sins. A man cannot escape wretchedness by his own efforts.

We find deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord. We must demonstrate with new life and light the power of the new birth. Our Master was a success in His protest because He had power to cleanse men of their sin. He remains the Way, the Truth, and the Life. None can find justification any other way.

**I PROTEST THE SUBSTITUTING OF REFORMATION FOR REGENERATION, OF PERSUASION FOR REDEMPTION, OF CONVINCING FOR CONVERSION.**

An old sin cannot be cured by committing new ones. Silent oppression cannot be relieved by angry, overbearing shouting. The devil cannot be routed through the use of tactics he devises.

The Church of God must express her dissatisfaction with prejudicial oppression, subtle resentments, poverty, war, fraud-

ulent use of public funds and trust, and other evils. Obviously, we are not sufficiently angry about these adversities. Even when a man's thinking is correct, his heart may not be changed at all.

To protest a man's method of achieving a worthy goal is not a criticism of his cause. It is the Church of God who claims to listen to the Words of God and to follow His Will implicitly. It is she who preaches regeneration, redemption, and conversion. The task of doing good is our struggle. We are promised help from heaven. *We must give it our very best.*

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### **WHOSE BLOOD WILL BE REQUIRED AT WHOSE HAND?**

*(Continued from page 10)*

es in Mark 13. We understand that a watchman is one who is on guard, alert, watchful and ready to give the alarm when danger is sighted. Christ not only "gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch," but He repeated the command: "Watch ye therefore," and then added, "And what I say unto you I say unto ALL, WATCH."

The porter is to watch; *all are to watch*. We see cooperation in this vital matter—so vital that our lives in the kingdom depend on it. Together we work—together we watch. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and WATCHING ("always on the alert"—Wey.) thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 5:18).

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*All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.*

—EDMUND BURKE

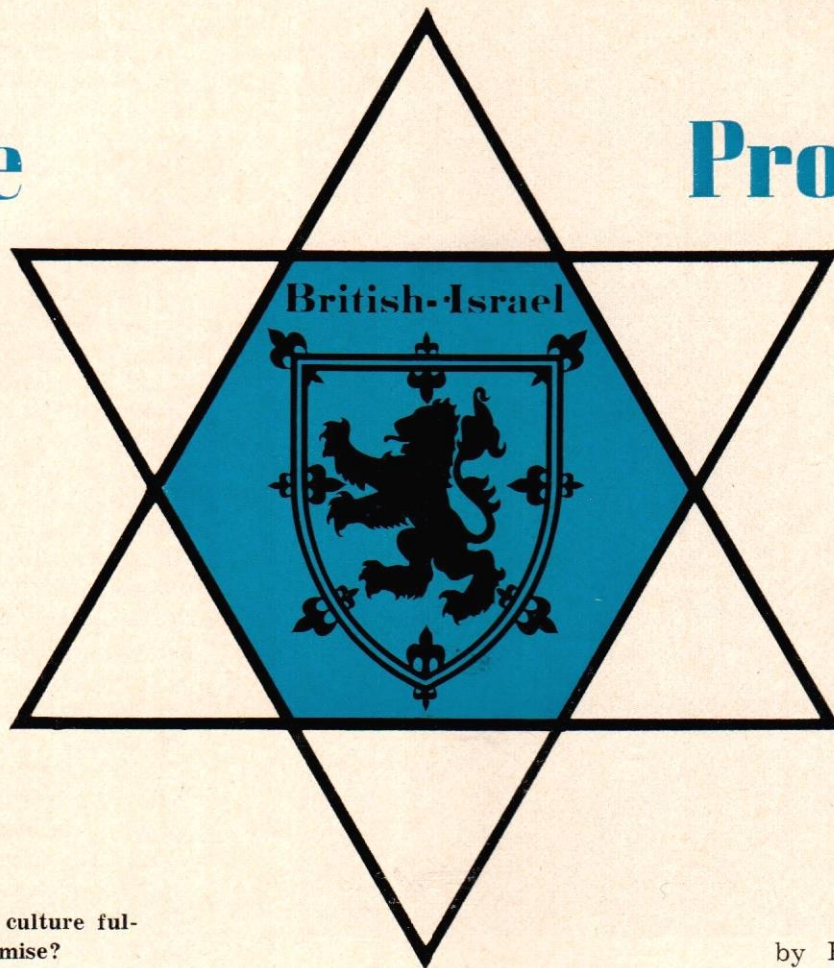
*There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up.*

—JOHN ANDREW HOLMES

# ABRAHAMIC

## The

## Promise



Is the Anglo-Saxon culture fulfillment of this promise?

by Ray L. Straub

**M**uch is preached and written about the Abrahamic promise. It has given rise to a substantially vocal doctrine called British-Israelism. Others term it the Anglo-Israeli teaching. It claims to be enlightening. Its subscribers boast that once one understands their viewpoint, all of Scripture unfolds clearly and magnificently.

Instead the doctrine is confusing, befuddling, speculative, and it betrays a catastrophic neglect of New Testament information on the development of the Abrahamic promise. Where the British-Israel theory has been accepted, there is danger of losing one's understanding of the real meaning of this signifi-

cant promise given by God to Abraham. The Anglo-Israeli confusion is not harmless. If light is not sought, the entire meaning of a sizeable segment of important Scripture is obscured.

Briefly, the British-Israel theory attempts to explain how that history reflects the fulfillment of accumulative promises issued by God to Abraham, Jacob and Ephraim and Manasseh, and Jacob to his own sons. It is contended that all of these promises given—and apparently no more—are part of the Abrahamic promise.

The fulfillment is supposedly reflected in three major areas. Dan was to be a serpent by the

way. Therefore, any names given to areas, cities, rivers or monuments which have the letters "d" and "n" in any combination allegedly are proof that their history relates to Israel. Since names with these letters in them lie in every direction, it becomes appropriate to describe the path of Dan as one laid by a snake.

Jacob's blessing to Ephraim, the younger of Joseph's sons, was that his seed would become a multitude of nations. The British Commonwealth is marked as the fulfillment of this prediction. Manasseh, Ephraim's older brother, received a smaller benediction, and the United States has been identi-

fied as the benefactor to this blessing.

No doubt some are wondering how that some nations of the British Commonwealth could have been figured as "seed" of England, since their civilizations predate the "parent." No doubt some of the Oriental and African members have trouble identifying the Saxon culture as their common progenitor!

Further, the United States is a nation made up of a multitude of cultures. No informed person could maintain that even the early settlers of this country had common parentage that would postdate the exile of the house of Israel. How can we be the children of Manasseh?

It is not the concern of this message to point out fantastic assertions of the Anglo-Israel theory. Rather, the meaning and fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise receives our attention.

The first narration of God's commitment to Abraham is found in Genesis 12:2, 3. It is next written in Genesis 13:14-17, "And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it: for I will give it unto thee."

Supposedly, this passage informs us that Abraham was promised the possession of the entire world. We contend that while this impression may not be wholly inaccurate, it must be properly interpreted. References to be supplied later will assure that the entire world would not be given to the liter-

al Hebrew nation. Were this to be the case, there would be no nations other than those of Israeli origin.

The direct meaning of these verses was not that Abram would inherit the world just because he was invited to look into all directions at the land he would possess.

He was, in fact, standing in the land of Canaan, told to look in all directions, and then TO WALK THE LENGTH AND BREADTH OF IT.

In Genesis 28:13, 14, God tells Jacob in a dream, "...I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Here again is the promise made that Abraham's seed would occupy land in all directions. What is important to note in this passage is that this promise was made available to *Jacob and his seed*. Note carefully that *Jacob was included* in this promise. It is not just for *his seed*. Obviously, Jacob and his seed, during Jacob's lifetime, never possessed nor occupied all of the world.

Turning to the most comprehensive record of the promise given to Abraham, we note carefully some important background information which enables us to observe the unfolding of the commitment in the New Testament. "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

"And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, say-

ing, As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Genesis 17:1-8). It is worthwhile to note that this passage confirms that Abraham was promised the LAND OF CANAAN.

"And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant" (Genesis 17:9-14).

The initiation of the rite of circumcision with the issuance of the promise to Abraham is of a paramount importance. Overlooking this nullifies any attempt to understand the promise itself.

Interestingly, one did not need to be born a Hebrew in order to be included as heir to the promise as long as he was circumcised. Conversely, even though one might have been born a Hebrew, refusal to submit to circumcision caused one

to be cut off from the promise. We must conclude that it was more important to be circumcised than to be born a Hebrew! This truth must be borne in mind as we review New Testament developments.

A significant assertion is in order here. There is no reason to conclude that the blessings given by Isaac to his sons, or by Jacob to both his sons and grandsons are accumulative promises to be added to that given by God to Abraham. Doing so not only lacks logic, it is misleading.

Genesis 48:15-20 gives the blessing of Jacob to his grandsons. While doing so, he in no way suggests that the blessings he gave were to be added to the promise given by God to Abraham. Genesis 49 begins with predictions Jacob makes about his sons. Following the blessing to the youngest, Benjamin, we read these words, "All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing *he* blessed them" (Genesis 49:28). Many conclude that the blessings Jacob gave were the same as that given by God to Abraham, assuming that any blessing uttered by Jacob is confirmation of the Abrahamic promise.

The grounds upon which this teaching is rejected is found in Genesis 47:7, 10, where it is reported that Joseph took his father to meet Pharaoh, whereupon Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Does this mean that Pharaoh then became heir to the Abrahamic promise? Was he circumcised? Would his posterity share equally with the twelve tribes of Israel? Hardly. It is obvious that there is no reason to conclude that the promise of God to Abraham was extended by the blessings that Isaac and Jacob pronounced upon their sons.

As soon as one concedes that all the blessings pronounced by Jacob may not have been part of the Abrahamic promise, he

makes an accurate concession that strikes a fatal blow to the British-Israel doctrine. If the blessings given were not accumulative—and they were not—even the coincidental fulfillment of the blessing given by Jacob would have nothing to do with the promise to Abraham. To suggest that fulfillment of Jacob's predictions about his sons is fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise is unwarranted and undefendable.

In offering an explanation of the development of the Abrahamic promise, we again call attention to the importance of the rite of circumcision, given as a token of the covenant.

Exodus 4:24-26 reports an interesting incident about Moses as he was returning to Egypt from Midian where he had just spent forty years. By now he was married and had a young son.

They lodged one night at an inn. Here Moses became so sick he was about to die. Noting this, his wife took a sharp stone and circumcised their young son. In the process she showed intense contempt for the ritual. However, as soon as it was performed, Moses recovered.

This little story has been difficult to explain because its meaning is subtle. Moses' sudden deathly sickness was relieved as soon as his son was circumcised. Zipporah, Moses' wife, was repulsed by the rite, which is explanation for why it had not been done previously. Moses was on a mission for God, but he was unqualified to do so until his household was reconciled to the Will of God. The son had to be circumcised, which gives good indication of this ritual's importance.

Exodus 12 contains instructions to the Israelites as they were preparing to escape from slavery in Egypt. They were told to observe the Passover as a memorial of their deliverance. Note the following instructions, found in Exodus 12, 43, 44, 48, "And the Lord said unto Moses

and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: there shall no stranger eat thereof: but every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof."

Again, the importance of circumcision was demonstrated when Israel passed through the Jordan River on dry land into Canaan. Joshua saw to it that all of the males were circumcised. This had to be done because none of the men that left Egypt were permitted to enter Canaan. Since there was no circumcising done in the wilderness, it was necessary immediately upon their arrival in the promised land. Consistently, this token is associated with the covenant itself.

Having established the importance of the token of the covenant, we turn to the deeper more extended meaning of the rite. "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked" (Deuteronomy 10:16). "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live" (Deuteronomy 30:6). These two verses in Old Testament Scripture introduce us to the spiritual implications of circumcision. They reveal the essential meaning behind the ritual.

Let us reason carefully. If there is a deeper, spiritual meaning to this *token* of the covenant, it is likely that there is spiritual involvement with the *covenant*. It now behooves us to see if we can find some Scriptural evidence to support this logic.

The evidence is found in Romans 4. "For what saith the

scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had yet being uncircumcised; that the righteousness might be imputed to them also.

"For the promise, that he should be heir of the world, *was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but THROUGH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH* (emphasis ours). For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect" (Verses 3, 10, 13, 14).

What is the meaning of the phrase, "of the law"? Whom does it identify?

The answers are found in Romans 2:17, "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law..." The terms "Jew" and "Israel" are used interchangeably in Romans, as can be noted in chapter 9, verses 24 and 27. Hence, "those of the law" refers quite definitely to Israel. With this in mind, we look again to Romans 4:13, "For the promise, that he should be heir of the world was NOT (emphasis ours) to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."

We proceed to examine the passage of Scripture which reveals clearly that the promise of God to Abraham ceased to be applied physically but took on a WHOLLY spiritual application. "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto" (Galatians 3:14, 15).

It was previously suggested that the blessings given by Isa-

ac and Jacob were not additions to the Abrahamic promise. All doubt concerning this should be erased by the reading of the last verse quoted. It states categorically that once a covenant is made between two parties, NO MAN CAN VOID IT OR ADD TO IT.

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith NOT, AND TO SEEDS AS OF MANY: BUT AS OF ONE, AND TO THY SEED WHICH IS CHRIST (emphasis ours).

"And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (Galatians 3:16-18). Here again is the phrase, "of the law," referring to the nation, Israel.

Both of these verses, Romans 4:13 and Galatians 3:18, say it plainly. It can be easily understood. One cannot become heir to the promise of Abraham "by the law" which refers to birth or national origin. There is only ONE way in which we may become heirs of the Abrahamic promise. It is stated simply in Galatians 3:29, "And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." This says nothing about any countries, ethnic groups, or of national origin. It does state that in regard to the Abrahamic promise, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Whether we live in or come from an Anglo-Saxon culture has not the slightest bearing on our relationship to the promise given to Abraham.

The promise of the inheritance to Abraham had a mean-

ing that overshadowed the possession of the promised land of Canaan. This portion is yet to be fulfilled. Paul acknowledges in Romans 4:13, that the promise did suggest that Abraham would be heir of the world. This does not mean, however, that Jacob's sons would find that their posterity consisted of the Anglo-Saxon nations. That is not the world.

We still have part of the promise to inherit. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whether he went. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

"There sprang there even one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. But now they desire a better country, which is an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:8, 10, 12, 13, 16).

When Paul writes in Galatians 6:15, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," he is obviously and conclusively discounting any importance the flesh may have in the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise, which was previously forthrightly attested to by circumcision. Even as there is no longer significance in the rite of circumcision, there is no longer physical involvement with the Abrahamic promise.

When we are Christ's—and only then—are we Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.



# The Mystery of the Plan of God

by Ray L. Straub

Many people are fascinated by mysteries. Thousands of dollars are made each year by those who have the ability to exploit this attraction by writing novels and magazine articles, producing movie and television stories, and otherwise supplying entertainment which arouses, then satisfies man's appetite for mystery and intrigue.

Much of the New Testament in the Bible divulges a mystery. 1 Timothy 3:16 begins, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness..."

In Ephesians 3:9, Paul announced his burden "... to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." Few of us consider the Bible to be a book of mystery. The meaning of some passages may seem mysterious to some, but this involves no intrigue, which is so much a part of the mystery with which many are pre-occupied.

The word "mystery" as it is used in the Holy Scriptures, differs, as one might presume, from the term as we use it in classifying our literature or entertainment. In the Bible, it refers to profound truths, so involved that they cannot be grasped fully. Instead they must

be accepted as truth by faith. This helps us to understand Paul's use of the word when he observed, "Great is the mystery of godliness."

The mystery mentioned in both of the texts previously quoted, deal with the magnificent truth that God has had a plan for the earth since before He created it. Even the plan of salvation predates creation.

Many may protest, contending that the plan of salvation only became necessary following the fall of man back in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. Had they not sinned, no plan for the redemption of man would have been needed, hence it could not have come into consideration until after God found that man disobeyed Him.

While the logic of this contention cannot be denied, it cannot be accepted as factual either because there is too much conflicting Scriptural evidence. We cite the following:

2 Timothy 1:9 says, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Note the same information given in Ephesians 3:9-11, "And

to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Ephesians 1:4 says, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

The final proof text revealing that the plan of salvation was in the mind of God before creation is found in Titus 1:1, 2: "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of truth which is after godliness; in the hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."

Some wonder, quite reasonably, why God would have tested man in the beginning when it was known to Him all along that somewhere along the line somebody would fail the test. The failure would seem inevitable since the plan of salvation

was already existing in the mind of God. This is the kind of reasoning that probably moved Paul to refer to these truths as mysteries.

The Bible also reveals that in the mind of God there was a time table that determined when His Son, Jesus, would come to earth to offer the Supreme and efficacious sacrifice. In offering portions of Scripture to support this declaration, we advise that the thought of each must be kept in mind carefully to establish this truth. A single one of these texts, even though it lends the concept excellent support, used alone might not offer sufficiently conclusive evidence. However, the three used together should emphasize and clarify the truth quite satisfactorily.

Note first Romans 5:6, "For when we were yet without strength, *in due time* Christ died for the ungodly."

Galatians 4:4 says, "But *when the fulness of the time was come*, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." We now have two statements on this matter. First, *in due time* Christ died. Secondly, when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son.

Acts 2:23 says, "Him, being delivered by the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge* of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

The mention of the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God would certainly have reference, at least in part, to the time, or fulness of time, referred to in the preceding passages. Therefore, we can conclude that God not only had in mind the plan of salvation since before the world began, but He also had a time appointed for the coming of Jesus to die for the sins of mankind.

Jesus' advent as a babe and departure in triumph over death is but a part of God's plan for man and the earth. There are many promises mentioned that will yet find fulfillment. Peter reassures that "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness . . ." (2 Peter 3:9).

God's dealings with the Hebrew nation are a continuing confirmation that His promises abide and are true. Almost the entire Old Testament gives a progressive account of God's determination to execute His plans for the earth.

God's purpose is revealed briefly in Ephesians 1:9-12, "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of time (note the time factor mentioned here—that in the dispensation of the fulness of time), he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also *we have obtained an inheritance*, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."

This passage reaffirms that the plan of salvation was predestined, and that this plan will include eventual glorification and an inheritance. Confirming this, it is essential that we note verses 13 and 14 of Ephesians 1, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." Obviously, the obtaining of an inheritance involves future glorification, and vice versa.

Recognizing this to be the purpose of God, we can perceive a much fuller meaning given in the promise to Abraham. It was told that Abraham would be the father of a great nation, and that he would inherit a promised land. It was further stated that this promise would be fulfilled in Christ. Before Jesus came, one would become heir to the promise by means of a natural birth into a family of Israel. After the coming of Jesus, one became heir to the promises by receiving Christ as his Saviour. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29).

To Abraham was given the promise of a posterity and a land of material blessings. The Old Testament provides a history of the various experiences between God and man which showed the determination of God to bless His people by delivering His promises.

The New Testament reveals the spiritual development of God's plan toward eventual glorification. This is why Jesus became the mediator of a better covenant, in the place of Abraham through which the original material promises were given.

Any reference to the possibility of material blessings enjoyed today (as) being part of the Abrahamic promise are without foundation and represent a misunderstanding of the intent and meaning of the promises. God revealed His glory through the giving of material success in the Old Testament.

Now the seed has come, and He provides the assurance of glory through spiritual revelation; by a spiritual birth, and by spiritual discernment. Note the words of 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit:* for

the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

The Abrahamic promise was the means by which God began a progressive revelation of His plan and purpose for this earth. He proved His ability to make good His promises through the conception in Sarah, Abraham's wife, when she was beyond the age to bear children. Through this child of promise, Isaac, a very great nation came into being.

While the nation, Israel, was (and still is) an essential part of the material revelation of God's plan, it was His purpose that this nation would be excluded from the spiritual phase currently in existence. This is observed by Paul in Romans 9: 2-5 and 31, 32, “. . . I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenant, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

“But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.”

Does this suggest that Israel received their portion of the promises of God before Christ, the seed came? No, for God will continue to use Israel to demonstrate confirmation of His intention to fulfill His purpose of glorification. Israel will provide proof that God means what He says. His promises are true.

A passage which stands as a marvel in its concise nature is found in Romans 8:28-30. It gives in five steps the entire

purpose He has in mind for Israel. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

The nation, Israel, is identified as the foreknown in Romans 11:2 which says, “God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.” Being identified as the foreknown, they were destined, they will be called, and they will be justified and glorified. Note verses 26-29 of Romans 11: “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (or retraction).”

No part of the plan of God has yet failed in delivering its promises. The salvation of the House of Jacob will be further proof of God's determination to complete His purpose. His promises are made without retraction.

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#### “MOSAIC LEFTOVERS”

(Continued from page 10)

death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Unless you *know* Christ as Lord and Saviour, all the obedience in the world is useless. But after initial salvation, obedience to God *must* follow, or the crown will be lost.

#### THE LAST GENERATION

(Continued from page 6)

awakening. Under the name of “religion,” and the millions of words of camouflage, there stares back at us the awful spectre of the selfishness and greed of the political organizations that are their basis. What can such “beasts” offer the soul in doubt and fear? Only the Word of God, free from man's misinterpretations, can give the peace and assurance we need. It is what man searches for from the time he starts to think for himself until he finds God, or dies in sin and despair. There is no substitute. There can never be a substitute.

God gave man a brain with which to think and feel. We have reasoning power, and above that we have the God-given capacity to feel the Spirit of God leading us in the way of righteousness. It is the relationship between God and each individual that will stand or fall in the day of judgment. If one is sincere and wants the truth, the Holy Spirit will lead into all truth; we cannot worship our ancestors and say they are righteous, and follow them or anyone else unless we know from the infallible word of God that they are right. We must never let man stand between us and God. Man is flesh and cannot save us. No man on earth represents God unless he teaches the exact words of God as they were given to the writers inspired by God. God gave them a pattern by which we are to live.

Christ has no Vicar on earth. Only the Holy Ghost (Holy Spirit, Comforter) is Christ's representative here—no mortal can truthfully claim this office. We are all equal in Christ if we are doing the will of His Father in heaven. No man has the right to teach another contrary to the Word of God, and claim he is a follower of the Master. No man has a right to

interpret the words of the Bible on his own. It must interpret itself, or it cannot stand. Traditions of men are of no

more importance than Old Wives Tales, handed down from generation to generation. Our eternal life is too important to

trust to mortal weakness. Any time we hear a man or an organization claim they have  
(Continued on page 27)

## FAITH AND THE SCARLET CORD

(Continued from page 3)

kingdom of God is the grandest, most sublime ever given to man in which to take a part. What a grandeur it will be on that glorious gathering day when someone, on Eden's tranquil shore will reach out the hand and say, "You are the one through whom the Spirit of God plead with me, until I gave myself to God." The heroic man when his neighbor's house was burning sped up the creaking stairs, and almost suffocating by the smoke, entering the burning room, snatched a babe from its cradle, and the woman lingering by the window, and bore them both down the ladder in his arms, and thus saved them at the peril of his own life. He can tell you what a great thing it is to save a fellow-creature. The youth who sprang into the surging river at the hazard of his own life, and snatched a drowning man from death. He can tell you when he again stood upon the shore, what a great thing it was to save a life. Dear reader, can you tell others what a great thing it is to save a soul? It is only our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ that can tell you what it means to save a soul from perdition. He is the only One that can truly save sinners.

What a great thrill it is to save the life of a fellow sinner! No one can realize the grandeur that fills the soul, to have been the means through which a lost soul is restored to an honorable place in the society of the righteous.

A minister was preaching to a large congregation when he said, "There is a gospel for you; it is a kind of sanctuary for wicked men, unto which the worst of people may run and be saved." Yes, that is the stale objection which Celsus used against Origen in his discussion. "But," said Origen, "It is true, Celsus, that Christ's is a sanctuary for thieves, robbers, murderers, and harlots. But know this, it is not a sanctuary merely, it is a hospital also; for it heals their sins, delivers them from their diseases, and they are not afterwards what they were before they received the gospel." We are not extending an invitation for any one to come to Christ and then continue in his sins. This would be an absurdity. Let us state it this way, the chief of sinners are as welcome to come to Christ as are the best of saints. The fountain filled with blood is opened to the greatest sinner; the balm of Calvary was compounded for the sin-sick; life came

into the world to raise those dead in trespasses and sin. Ye perishing and guilty souls, may God give you Rahab's faith, then you shall have this salvation, and shall with her stand among the white-robed, spotless throng, singing unending hallelujahs to God and the Lamb!

Rahab's faith was of such a nature that she could stand alone in her convictions. She must have left her "Harlot's booth" on top of the walls (We say walls because there actually were two walls a few feet apart) and sought shelter in the midst of the populace. This was most likely her parental home. Here she gathered all her kin, parents and brethren. It was in the window of this home she displayed the scarlet cord, and waited until the walls had been thrown down. The window displaying the scarlet cord was sought out and the dweller within led out of the city to mingle with the Israelites. There Rahab and her relatives rested while the city was ransacked and burned.

It is an easy matter to believe what everybody holds true, but to live up to convictions such as none but one's self is entertaining is quite a different matter. Such convictions must have their origin in the leadings of the Holy Spirit.

Elijah experienced what it meant to stand alone. Although the multitude had helped him to kill four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of the groves, when Jezebel's decree was issued, all these stood ready to treat Elijah in the same way that they had treated these officers of Baal worshipers. And so Elijah felt himself alone in his struggle for God and His truth.

Rahab did not parley with unbelief; nor reasoned as one in doubt, but firmly *believed* that the walls of Jericho would crumble before the people of God. And true to her belief at the proper time the walls crumbled and fell to the ground as if pushed over by a mighty hand, and the scarlot-corded dwellers led to safety.

Those living in the closing hours of the world's history must have the same profound faith in order to be able to face any hazard, so long as they know that they hold the "Scarlet Cord," which means salvation from every lurking danger. The moral is, the "Scarlet Cord" in the window of your soul, and the angel of the Lord will lead you away from the destruction that awaits the godless on that great day of sin-annihilation by the fires which will finally destroy all sin and sinners!

# Why not . . .



by Ray L. Straub

**T**his is A.D. 1969. A.D. are the initial letters to the words "anno domini," the year of our Lord. Supposedly, Jesus was born 1969 years ago.

Chronologists have discovered that when it was determined that the years of our calendar should be marked by the birth of the Son of God, an error was made in the calculations pinpointing the year of His birth. More recent attempts to determine the year of Jesus' birth suggest that it may actually have been as much as 1973 to 1979 years ago.

While there may be uncertainty concerning the accepted date of His birth, the fact that we number our years since then is indication of the imposing impression Jesus made upon the world. Who else can claim an existence of such consequence that all the world marks history in relation to the time of his birth?

Nebuchadnezzar began his building of the great Babylonian empire in joint rulership with his father in 606 B.C.—before Christ. Alexander the Great, who was sorrowful upon realizing that his dominance of the whole world left him no more kingdoms to conquer, died before his 32nd birthday, 323 before Christ. Columbus discovered America in the year of our Lord, 1492. No matter how important, the mention of a date recalls the birth of the Stranger of Galilee.

It is not unusual to celebrate the birthdates of great men. February 12, the birthdate of Abraham Lincoln, is a holiday, and many respect it by vacating their places of employment on that date. Ditto George Washington.

For members of our families we prepare a special meal, present gifts, and may invite friends. If anyone deserves special honor on the date of his birth, why not the Saviour?

Obviously, people do celebrate the birth of Jesus with a fervor accorded none other. Christmas decorations have long been up, mail shopping catalogs have flooded the mails, and the Christmas cards are on their way. Carols fill the air, bells are ringing and cash registers are jingling. This is about the only occasion the Western World can come up with that can effect a momentary cease-fire on the battlefield. Jesus' birth is celebrated, all right! Practically everyone joins in, some way or another.

**This festive occasion is so entrenched into the religious sentiment, pious fervor, economic frenzy, and festive spirits, that it would seem nothing short of bold fanaticism to question whether or not the birthday of Jesus should be celebrated on December 25, if at all.**

Even those who have become convinced that there is no Scriptural support for celebrating Christmas often cannot divorce

themselves from the holiday spirit because of their own habits and the intense distaste for such a belief on the part of relatives. Refusal to celebrate Christmas is often tantamount to alienating oneself from family and friends.

Accusations of fanaticism have nothing to do with the issue. Such terms are mere blinders that the intellectually inept wear to keep from seeing what is really going on.

This is no defense for fanaticism. There are many so afflicted, and they are to be pitied. The overly zealous have emotional problems that keep them fenced away from both reality and happiness. Fanaticism is a term that accurately describes a twisted attitude, but it can also be an accusation behind which we hide to keep from having to face real issues.

To find out what God's attitude may be toward Christmas is not difficult. Anyone who wants to can. One need not be much of a historian, nor Bible student. Nor need he involve himself in complicated logic. All he needs is a little curiosity for the truth and a smidgen of ambition.

If the information given here is not sufficient to be convincing, it will serve as a guide to any who wishes to pursue the matter further.

In order for anyone to make intelligent comment about Christmas, and how appropriate a Christian celebration it might be, he needs to know a little about it. Where did it originate? To find this out, one needs only to go to a library, find an encyclopedia, look up the word, "Christmas," and begin reading.

Here are some excerpts of what he will read. From the Encyclopedia Britannica (1960), Volume 5, Pages 642 and 643, he will note that "Christmas customs are an evolution from times that long antedated the Christian period—a descent from seasonal, pagan, religious

and national practices, hedged about with legend and tradition. Their seasonal connections with the pagan feasts of the winter solstice relate them to the beginning of time and their legacy in the birthday of Christ makes them shareholders in the most significant event in the history of the world—an event that gave it a new date, anno Domini.

"In the beginning many of the earth's inhabitants were sun worshippers because the course of their lives depended on its yearly round in the heavens, and feasts were held to aid its return from distant wanderings. In the south of Europe, in Egypt and Persia, the sun gods were worshipped with elaborate ceremonies at the season of the winter solstice, as a fitting time to pay tribute to the benign god of plenty, while in Rome the Saturnalia reigned for a week. In northern lands mid-December was a critical time, for the days became shorter and shorter and the sun was weak and far away. Thus these ancient peoples held feasts at the same period that Christmas is now observed; they built great bonfires in order to give the winter sun god strength and to bring him back to life again. When it became apparent that the days were growing longer, there was great rejoicing because of the promise of lengthening days to follow. Thus, the central idea of the winter solstice—the return of light—became the hope of the world in the birth of Christ, the light of the world.

"The exact day and year of Christ's birth have never been satisfactorily settled, but when the fathers of the church in A. D. 440 decided upon a date to celebrate the event, they wisely chose the day of the winter solstice which was firmly fixed in the minds of the people and which was their most important festival. Because of changes in man-made calendars, the time of the solstice and the date of Christmas vary by a few days.

"The transition from paganism to Christianity was gradual but became apparent after the fall of Rome (A. D. 476) when the church was the one organization which had the strength and wisdom to withstand the disorganized centuries of the dark ages. During this time great progress was made by the Christian leaders in extending the new faith.

"When missionaries were sent from Rome to the outlying provinces in 601 their instructions given by Pope Gregory I made clear the policy of the church: 'Let the shrines of idols by no means be destroyed but let the idols which are in them be destroyed. Let water be consecrated and sprinkled in these temples; let altars be erected... so that the people, not seeing their temples destroyed, may displace error, and recognize and adore the true God... And because they were wont to sacrifice oxen to devils, some celebration should be given in exchange for this... they should celebrate a religious feast and worship God by their feasting, so that still keeping outward pleasures, they may more readily receive spiritual joys.' (Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*.)"

If this evidence concerning the origin of Christmas would be solidified by confirmation from another authoritative source, one could check with *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. 6, page 623, where under the heading "Christmas" he would read, "In the 5th Century the Western Church ordered it (the birth of our Saviour) to be celebrated forever on the day of the old Roman feast of the birth of Sol, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed. Among the German and Celtic tribes the winter solstice was considered an important point of the year, and they held their chief festival of Yule to commemorate the return of the burning wheel. The holly, the mistletoe, the Yule log, and the

wassail bowl are relics of pre-Christian times."

None can conscientiously doubt that Christmas finds its roots in paganism. It is a "Christian feast" celebrated at the time when sunworshippers had their most festive commemoration.

What difference does that make?

Quite a bit when one is forced to acknowledge that the birth of Christ cannot be established. No one knows when it took place. Lacking this information one must conclude that the Scriptures are absolutely devoid of any hint or suggestion that the birth of Christ should be celebrated.

This means that the Bible grants no motive whatever to celebrate Jesus' birth. Where obviously, the festive nature of the pagan feast apparently found Christians enviously searching for some excuse which might enable them to join in the festivities without admitting their relish for paganism.

What difference does that make?

The Bible answers. "And they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them" (1 Chronicles 5:25).

The term used in Scripture for any attempt to integrate a devotion to God and worship with idolaters is, in itself, a witness of God's feelings of repulsion toward such practice. The term is "fornication."

Second Chronicles relates some of the evils carried on under King Jehoram. Listed with several atrocities he "... made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah thereto" (2 Chronicles 21:11).

A clarification of what is meant by "high places" is given in 2 Chronicles 28:25, "And in

several cities of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the Lord God of his fathers."

More graphic descriptions of God's sentiments toward the adulteration of allegiances to Him with idolatry can be read in Ezekiel, chapters 16 and 23. Few people will read these and retain a notion that God is permissive about intermingling worship of Him and indulgence in paganism.

A divine criticism of the members of the church in Pergamos was that they would "... eat things sacrificed unto idols, and commit fornication (Revelation 2:14). The same combination appears in the faults registered against the church in Thyatira.

Some may contend that this refers to actual physical fornication. While this opinion may be acceptable, one ought to bear in mind that this term is used here with the mention of a tendency to compromise with idolatry. Further, one could hardly assume that spiritual fornication is less damnable.

So far so good. But what has this to do with the millions who are not worshiping a pagan god but are sincerely celebrating the birthday of their Saviour on December 25? Why accuse them of pagan worship when they are honoring the Saviour they love?

This nice pious expression is a poor defense.

Suppose that someone declared his opposition to smoking cigarettes but could not contain his craving to indulge. If upon being discouraged he contended that what he was smoking was not a cigarette but a piece of candy which appeared and smelled like tobacco, how convincing would he be? No amount of self-justification or self-deluding would turn that cancer stick into a stick of candy. It is not candy. It is tobacco. No proclamation can change that.

The 25th of December is not the birth of Jesus. That is clear. What is also obvious is that it

is a feast to the sun god. The various rituals with which Christmas is celebrated nearly all antedate the birth of Christ, and so they were not originated to honor Him. No proclamation can change that any more than talk or sentiment can change tobacco to candy.

Attempts to put on Christ and to detour our walk with God into pagan celebration surely will adulterate our devotion. The Bible has made this plain and easy to understand.

Perhaps some feel that they *ought* to celebrate the birth of Jesus, even though it may not be in connection with a pagan holiday. The best way to resolve this matter is to follow the Bible as closely as possible. As soon as one can find the date of Jesus' birth in the Bible coupled with the instruction or suggestion to celebrate it, he may begin to do so with joy and clear conscience. But, let him first find this information in the Bible.

## THE INDESTRUCTIBLE LAW

(Continued from page 7)

make myself a transgressor" (violator of God's law). Peter wrote: "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Peter 2:21).

### Grace Also Means—?

The word "grace" has more than one meaning. It means pardon and it also means "goodness and forbearance and longsuffering." We are living in what is often called the dispensation of grace. The message of salvation has been preached for centuries. God has been good in being so longsuffering toward sinful man. Thousands have rejected His mercy and grace, and because they have refused it they are still in their sins. Remaining in their sins they re-

main condemned. In this condition they are *not* under the saving merits of grace. "The strength of sin is the law," and therefore they are "convinced of (by) the law as transgressors."

Let it be remembered a dead law cannot convince anyone of sin. Neither can it condemn anyone. It has no power or force or strength. So when Paul said, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. 7:22), he was not talking about some dead law, a law that had expired at the cross. The law of types and shadows did come to an end then, but there was no need then or now that the Decalogue should be nullified, or even be changed.

Grace, in its fuller meaning, also teaches us something. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared (has been revealed; hath shown forth), to all men, *teaching* us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11, 12).

The Gospel of grace has presented the message of salvation to millions far and near, but while it is a message of *salvation* it will not save those who reject it. It will not save those who refuse to be taught to deny ungodliness. It will not save those who refuse to "live soberly, righteously, and godly." God is longsuffering (this is one facet of grace) to us-ward, not willing that any should perish," yet we must remember, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation: . . ." (Heb. 2:3)?

### Galatians 5:18 & Romans 8:1

Let us study these two verses together and in so doing notice wherein they are alike. "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." Shall we affirm that whether we are led of the Spirit or not we are simply not under the law? Shall we

say that unbelievers are just as free from the law as those led by the Spirit of God?

Having previously dealt, somewhat, with Romans 8:1, it is well that we compare it with the above verse. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Only those "led of the Spirit" "are in Christ Jesus." Only those in Christ, led by the Spirit, are under grace (saving grace, through the merits of Christ and His atonement); and they are not under the law as one verse says, and are not under condemnation as the other verse states. One verse speaks of those who walk after the Spirit; the other verse of those led of the Spirit. One says there is no condemnation to them; the other that they are not under the law, which in this case means the same thing.

It is also interesting to note further how those led of the Spirit are led. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh (contrary to God's law), but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4).

Now why should Paul talk like this—about "the righteousness of the law," and that such should be fulfilled in us, if the law which he said was holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12), was nailed to the Cross?

Other versions state, "that the ordinances of the law"; "the righteous requirements of the law"; "the decrees of the law"; "might be fully met in our case." And how is this possible? Not by human strength, but rather and only if we are "led of the Spirit."

When we read of the works of the flesh (natural, unregenerated man) we see that they are contrary to the Decalogue. When we learn of how a Christian is to walk, we see that such a life is in harmony with this law, "written with the finger of God."