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GN

The Good News

"THE
HANDWRITING
IS ON
THE WALL"

Special Update

**THE MINISTRY
AND YOU**

GN

The Good News

Vol. XXV No. 8

August 1976

ARTICLES

-
- 1 **Personal From Herbert W. Armstrong**
-
- 2 **"Dear God — Why Did You Let Tommy Die?"**
-
- 7 **Eternity . . . in Time!**
-
- 20 **Are We Living in the Last Days? Part One:
"The Handwriting Is on the Wall"**
-
- 24 **The Proverbs 31 Superwoman —
Ideal or Impossibility?**
-

FEATURES

-
- 11 **Questions and Answers**
-
- 12 **Update**
-
- 29 **Letters**
-



ABOUT OUR COVER

*"The handwriting is on the wall."
Did you ever wonder where that
enigmatic expression originated?
The answer does not lie in twentieth-
century graffiti but in the pages of
your Bible! (See page 20 of this issue
for the first of a series of articles on
"Are We Living in the Last Days?")*

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PERSONAL FROM **HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG**

Dateline: Capetown, South Africa, June 2, 1976



For about the past year, I have been thinking about the similarity of Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1. Both start with the very beginning of creation — and all things as we know them.

And they have a definite application to God's Church, and His Work, as it is *right now*.

The Old Testament begins with "In the beginning, God CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH." In the original Hebrew language, as Moses originally wrote, the word "heaven" is in the plural — "heavens." Also, the English word "God" is translated from the Hebrew *Elohim* — a uniplural word meaning *one* God, but composed of more than one Person. *It means* GOD IS A FAMILY — one *family* and the FAMILY name is "God."

John's account in the New Testament appears to begin even earlier, before the Creator became *family*. It states: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This, in time sequence, was *before* verse 14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Until the birth of Jesus Christ, He was not God's Son. He was made — *became* the Son of God through His human birth of His human mother, Mary. By that human birth His only Father was God. So God as a family BEGINS WITH CHRIST.

A point to notice here: "The *only* begotten of the Father." Yet we, through Christ, may be begotten children of God. But our original begetting as human beings has been of our human fathers. As a human,

Jesus was the *only* one directly begotten by God.

But John's account shows the existence, before all else, of *two* divine, immortal, all-powerful Personages. *Both* were of *God* rank. But one was the "reveatory thought" — the "Word" — Spokesman. He BECAME Jesus Christ, and in Ephesians 3:9 we find: "... God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." And of Christ: "... He spake and it was done" (Ps. 33:9).

So God creates all things — the *universe* — by Jesus Christ.

But when God — *Elohim* — the two Personages — created the *earth* (Gen. 1:1), *Elohim* included the one called "God" in John 1:1, and also the "Word." But in Job 38:1-7 we find the angels shouting for joy *when* God created the earth. So the angels had been created *before* the creation of the heavens and the earth. "The heavens" here implies THE ENTIRE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE.

Angels are spirit beings. Therefore, God evidently created spirit beings composed of spirit *before* He created matter and the physical universe.

Point one I want to make in this article is what actually took place between "God" and the "Word" who became Father and Son — *prior* to the actual creation.

Do you suppose they designed angelic beings — later the earth, the animals, trees, flowers, plants, fish, birds — finally MAN — *instantaneously* — without preplanning? Look at the leaf of an oak tree — then the leaf of a maple tree. They are beautifully designed. But does God design and create them, and

(Continued on page 19)

"DEAR GOD - WHY DID YOU LET TOMMY DIE?"

The letter was written by a young boy named Peter. He had been taught about God — told God would protect, preserve, heal. But his brother, Tommy, was dead. Why? Why does God allow tragedy? Why do innocent babies suffer? Why the caprice of tornado, hurricane or typhoon? Why, if there is a God, does God allow wars, and crime, and automobile accidents? These questions have perplexed theologians for centuries — yet there are answers.

by Garner Ted Armstrong

When he was hit by the car, my mother prayed to you to let him live, but you wouldn't. My little brother was only two years old," wrote Peter to a newspaper advice counsellor, "and he couldn't have sinned so bad that you had to punish him that way . . . you could have saved my little brother but you let him die. You broke my mother's heart. How can I love you?"

Peter's grief was genuine. So was his perplexity over the goodness of the God of whom he had heard from his parents, and the evil of the terrible accident that took his brother's life.

His young mind simply couldn't accept it. Tommy was dead. But mother had prayed. And God — the God he had heard of who helped people, and who was good and merciful, had let Tommy die.

If He was God, He had the power to stop Tommy from dying, didn't He? And Peter's mother had fervently asked Him to, hadn't she?

Well, then — why had God let Tommy die?

Answer Unavailable? The newspaper columnist had no answers. He simply replied, "Suffering of innocent people is something we

cannot understand." But is there no answer, then?

What about the millions who died in the Nazi torture camps, the tens of thousands in Nigeria and Vietnam, the millions on all sides during World War II? And what about the untold, unknown, unwritten calamities that have befallen human beings since time immemorial?

Are human beings, then, just like animals — subject to the vagaries of weather and nature, to the passions of other humans, and to caprice?

Or is there a God who could prevent human suffering if He so chose?

Many theologians concur the answer is unobtainable.

But why should it be?

If there is a God, and most (certainly not all) theologians profess to believe in God, then would not that God leave a glimpse of His purpose, His plan, to His own creation which He loves? Wouldn't God have revealed the answers to human problems if He truly seeks to relieve such problems?

God Is Blamed. It's a commentary on human nature that we tend to congratulate ourselves for our successes, and blame God for our failures. If we fail, if a loved one is hurt, we wonder why God "allowed" it to happen. When we triumph, we can think of many reasons why we did.

One atheist expressed a rather common attitude: "If I had the power to fashion the universe and 'remake it nearer my heart's desire,' there would be no blind, no deaf, no dumb; there would be no crippled, and each child born would live free of disease and possess a mentality capable of withstanding all the rebuffs of life. There would be no deaths by accident. There would be no earthquakes, cyclones or tornadoes. Unless and until such a condition comes to pass, when we may live free from disease, sorrow and suffering, there is no God in this vast universe worthy of hom-

age." At least, so thought a professed atheist.

And our youth of today? They, too, wonder. Wrote one young teenager: "I am a teenager, a child of the 'age of skepticism' . . . frankly, I am angry at God for choosing this generation for the manifestation of His wrath."

Millions of teens, having seen the blatant hypocrisy of much of professing "Christianity" — the "do as I say, don't do as I do" generation of once-a-week listeners and "never-doers" — have simply rejected the traditional "mainstream" of "Christian thought."

Trouble is, they think that, by rejecting many of the more commonplace religious denominations, they have automatically rejected the Bible, and Christ, and God.

Not so.

But teens wonder, too. Do conditions in this nuclear-armed, overpopulated, polluted, war-sick, disease-ridden, tragedy-filled world indicate any successes whatever for the traditional "Christian" struggle?

Or doesn't it frankly look like Satan wins all the battles?

During World War II, a young German soldier wrote from Stalingrad to his pastor back home: "In Stalingrad, to put the question of God's existence means to *deny* it"

"I have searched for God in every crater, in every destroyed house, on every corner, in every friend, in every foxhole, and in the sky. God did not show Himself, even though my heart cried for Him.

"If there should be a God, He is only with you in the hymnals and the prayers, in the pious sayings of the priests and pastors, in the ringing of the bells and the fragrance of incense, but not in Stalingrad."

And so a youth, caught up in the shock of war, searched through traditional avenues for God, and couldn't find Him.

"The Invisible God." What about the claims of the atheist? Would a world "nearer our hearts' desire" without suffering and death be the only proof of a "God worthy of homage" in this vast universe?

The greatest question in all this is "Does God exist?"

Is there a God?

If so, can you prove it? Is God a personal being, who hears, and answers prayers?

What is His nature, if He exists? Is He a loving, merciful, forgiving God, who is interested in preventing tragedy? Does He protect humans? Does He stop wars?

If you haven't yet proved whether God is, then you need to write immediately for our booklet *Does God Exist?*

Science *proves* there is a God. It is absolutely unshakable — the *only* intelligent answer. A creation demands a Creator. Life demands a Lifegiver. Power, energy, force — all demand a source of power. Design is not through randomness or caprice, but by a Designer. A great Sustainer keeps it all working. Laws require a Lawgiver. And God has not left this world without a witness. He has given His Word.

And the Word of God, the Bible, stands proved.

God's Word is the handbook about human nature, the book that explains about life and the way it should be lived.

While it sounds utterly impossible, the answers to the perplexing questions of youth, the bewilderment of Peter, the frustrated anger of the soldier at Stalingrad, the cynical atheist, are very plainly revealed in God's Word!

God explains why He permits accidents, sickness, murder and wars! He plainly reveals why humans suffer, and shows why He does not prevent it.

What Are the Causes of Human Troubles? But first, what caused little Tommy's death? Why the

problems? Why war? For every effect there is a cause: that's a living principle. There must be causes for effects, action to bring about reaction.

Why was the little boy struck by the automobile? Perhaps the answers are simple, if tragic; perhaps they're very involved. First, what about Tommy's training? Had he been taught never to run into the street? What type of discipline had he received during his young life? What about protective fences? What about speed restrictions in the neighborhood? An automobile was involved. But automobiles are not constructed by men whose whole purpose is the safety of other human beings.

Assembly-line production — with built-in obsolescence, huge engines and flimsy bodies in ever-changing shapes — does not turn out carefully handcrafted machinery that is totally safe. Perhaps the automobile had defective brakes. Perhaps the driver had been drinking or was under the influence of drugs. Even heavy doses of smog can markedly slow down a motorist's reactions in an emergency. So can pain killers, like aspirin. And, strange as it may seem, even an argument at home could have so affected the driver of the auto that he was driving angrily, at unreasonable speed.

So there were many, many unknown factors involved in the accident that killed little Tommy. Let's ask little Peter's question again — and see specific answers.

Peter asked God (or challenged God because his mother had asked) to remove the effect of perhaps many, many voluntary human actions. Were the two boys chasing one another? Had Tommy run into the street to retrieve a ball? Was he actually attempting to see how close he could come to the car? (Very real cases are on record of such pranks; and one, of which I

know personally, resulted in the death of a child.)

The causes could have been myriad.

If you wish to read, with your own eyes, some of the most nearly unbelievable advice you can imagine concerning children's ventures into busy streets, you should write immediately for your free copy of our book *The Plain Truth About Child Rearing*.

Peter's letter didn't list any causes for the accident. Perhaps Peter's mother could have removed the cause. We'll never know for sure. But suppose more diligent training could have literally prevented Tommy from ever running into the street. It's possible, you know.

Suppose Tommy had been told to remain in the backyard, away from a busy street — but that he had never been disciplined when he disobeyed. Suppose his foray into the street was a childlike act of adventurous rebellion.

Human emotions always cloud facts. Bereaved loved ones, seeing only the immediate, terrible consequences of an accident, are stunned with heartsick moroseness. They are filled with feelings of pity and sorrow. They see the effect — the pitiful body of a dead child. But the causes?

Most of us remain blind to them. I must realize, in writing this article, that some human minds will simply remain closed to the logical answers to little Peter's questions — that pity (and perhaps even a measure of self-righteous indignation which helps some to continually upgrade themselves, spiritually), will so cloud the mind that no matter what the causes, God will remain "guilty," in some minds.

But what if the driver was drunk?

God *could* have prevented such drunkenness, couldn't he?

Yes — He *could*.

But *how*?

The Atheist's Better World. The answers are found in the obvious mistakes in the thinking of the cynical atheist, who would "remake" the world nearer his heart's desire.

How would he do this?

He would remove the *effects* of human action — of free moral agency — of free choice.

He would demand there be no blindness, deafness, dumbness; no cripples, no disease, and no deaths by accident. He would insist each mind be mature, normal, stable, able to withstand all the rebuffs of life.

He would, in short, insist man be allowed to continue breaking natural and spiritual laws — continue living the way that causes all these human miseries. Yet he would insist on removing the effects of free human action.

In short, he would advocate the abolishing of the penalty for sin, while leaving the sin itself.

Again, we must ask, "Why blindness, deafness, dumbness? Why crippling accidents, sickness, accidental deaths? Why wars?"

The answer?

Man is a *free moral agent*. He is free to *choose* his own way of living, free to act contrary to the interests of others, free to act contrary to his own *self-interests*.

One common cause of congenital blindness, deafness, and other deformities is venereal disease. The atheist said nothing about the prevention of venereal disease — only that he demands the effects of human sin be removed, that humans be allowed to be as wretchedly disobedient to the laws of God as ever, but that the penalties for these broken laws be removed.

Accidental deaths? He would remove them.

How?

He didn't say. But let's think of the many, many ways in which people die accidentally. Drownings, auto collisions, accidental shootings, falls, airplane crashes, accidental poisonings — these and a host of others take their fearsome toll each year.

But let's be practical. Does the atheist, then, propose that God suspend His laws each time a person

breaks them? Humans can't breathe under water. When people foolishly stand up in boats, or overload boats, or when children play on steep banks of rushing rivers, or when old craft, poorly maintained, flounder — does the atheist expect God to immediately rescue each person caught in such an act — that God remove the penalty for foolish actions?

But *how* would God do this?

Let's wonder together.

The Cigarette Battle. Take cigarette smoking. It's been proved beyond the remotest shadow of a doubt that it is not only continually injurious to your health, but that it could kill you with lung cancer, heart disease, or emphysema.

So a man, driven by his lust for the sensation of nicotine in his bloodstream, reaches for a pack of

What about the claims of the atheist? Would a world "nearer our hearts' desire" without suffering and death be the only proof of a "God worthy of homage" in this vast universe?

cigarettes. Suddenly, he is repelled by an invisible, irresistible force. His hand stops just short of his shirt pocket. He can't believe it. He is trying desperately to reach into his own shirt pocket, and he simply can't! He tries the other hand. Same result. Soaked with perspiration, he struggles with all his power to get that cigarette package out of his pocket. He bends over, and jogs up and down. The shirt is open, and the cigarettes fall out. He tries to reach for them. But he can't. He is stopped by some unseen hand — some invisible force.

After days, and finally weeks, he is on the verge of insanity. He looks furtively about, and surreptitiously attempts every conceivable ruse to obtain a smoke. It takes *months*, and finally, though his whole mind and body has suffered, he no longer has the cigarette habit. He is

now *conquered*, in that one direction.

God has stepped in.

Do you see? You could apply this same example to any of the harmful human actions possible. Unless God Almighty steps in to force humans to do what they ought to do instead of what they wish to do, humans will continue to follow the way of human nature — of greed, vanity, jealousy, lust, strife, competition, racism, hatred and total self-seeking.

Prevent Accidents? The atheist said there would be no more accidental deaths. Then the same, strange, invisible force would have to immediately interfere to prevent accidents.

The atheist didn't know what he was asking for. He was requesting a world with a zombie-like populace, shuffling about in mindless obedience to myriad laws that would govern all human behavior.

But if God were to impose such restraints on humans, what then?

Very likely, He would be faced with a continual battle — a constant stream of hatred, invective, curses and screams of anger. He would be faced with a decision: whether to *destroy* His creation, and begin again, or whether to *beat* mankind into submission — with the end product a mindless, dutifully obedient organism without thought, without reason, without intellect, and totally devoid of character.

What Is Man? The Bible narrative reveals that God created Adam — man — in the very image and similitude of God. He imparted to Adam *mind* power, limited ability to think, plan, reason, and to create.

The Genesis account further quotes God as saying: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them [meaning all mankind, and not just Adam] have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26).

Later, it is revealed that God made man a "living soul." The Hebrew word is *nephesh* and is used four times in the first chapter of Genesis for lower life forms before

ever being used to connote man. In Numbers 19:11 and 13, the same word appears in reference to the words "dead body." Yet the English is rendered "soul." Millions have mistakenly embraced the pagan doctrine of the "immortality of the soul" without ever researching some of the simplest truths of the Scriptures. God reveals that "... the Eternal God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the *breath* of life; and man *became a living soul*" (Gen. 2:7).

Notice, man is not said to *possess* a "soul" *within* himself, but to BE a soul. Man *is* a "soul." And "soul" means earthy, temporal, transitory, fleshly and *subject to death*. (If your mind is open on this subject, please write for our free booklet *Do You Have an Immortal Soul?*)

Herein is one of the most vital points of the entire question of "Christian" philosophy.

The major religions can be said to be divided on each side of the concept of WHAT IS MAN.

Many believe man is possessed of some "inner goodness" within himself. That is, that there are some innate "Godlike" qualities within mankind. Most of the Oriental religions assume inner goodness in man.

The basic "Christian" approach is an inner *evil* in man, hence the need for a Savior, a Redeemer, to expiate the evil acts of mankind, and to return him to his former state of "goodness."

And, shocking as it sounds, *both* concepts are in error.

Professing Christians assume Adam *fell*. But Adam didn't "fall" from any perfect state, he merely exercised his God-given right of free choice and made the wrong choice!

Adam was created *human*. He was not immortal, but flesh — "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," said his Creator God (Gen. 3:19).

Prior to being influenced to disobey his Maker, Adam was "neutral" toward God. He did not resent God as yet. There was no hostility evident in the conversations in the garden (Genesis 2nd chapter).

But once Satan had influenced Adam — once Adam had exercised his own free moral agency to make a wrong decision — hostility toward God entered.

Adam could have argued: "God, you knew we would lose our wonderful home (the Garden), and that our lives would be filled with work and sweat (Gen. 3:19), and that our children would eventually record the first murder (Gen. 4:8). You could have removed these consequences of sin; you could have prevented Cain from killing his own brother; you could have made life easy for us, with no bad crops, no bad years, no sickness, no heartaches, no anxieties and worries."

And God could answer: "No, Adam: *you* could have *prevented* all these consequences of sin! Remember, I told you not to bring

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

these things upon yourself. I told you you would surely die, that your mortal, human body would be subject to death (the Bible states that the wages of sin is death — Rom. 6:23) if you disobeyed my commands. I allowed you free choice, but I commanded you to make the right choice. But I wanted you to be the one to make the decision!"

God could answer that His great love for Adam, His desire to see a human being rise higher and higher toward the very God plane through building right character, was the reason why God left the choice to Adam.

Free Choice. Notice what God said to our forefathers. "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil" (Deut. 30:15).

God places before each of us a CHOICE.

We may choose to obey the laws

of good eating, exercise, sleep and clean thinking, and we will be automatically blessed because of the laws which God has set in motion. And we may choose to *break* those laws, ignore their existence, and suffer physical debilities, handicaps, sickness and early death!

Most fat people were not forced.

You "are" what you eat. And God has *laws* involving foods, believe it or not.

You may choose to train your children God's way, according to the loving conditions of Scripture, and according to the examples of God's Word, and they will be greatly blessed — their lives protected and preserved

But then, you are *also* free to choose the current way of "situation ethics" and permissiveness which encourages disobedience in children, and which is a direct cause of much youthful rebellion of this age.

For the most part, men and women have chosen the line of least effort in child rearing, and our enormous problem of juvenile delinquency and disrespect for authority (mere youths of 15, 16 and 17 accounting for much of the major crime categories) are the *direct results of a cause*. The cause? The unwillingness of man to obey His Creator.

God said: "... I *command* thee this day to love the Eternal thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Eternal thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it... I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore **CHOOSE life**, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deut. 30:16-19).

God says **CHOOSE**.

He reveals we are creatures of free choice in relationship to Him, and to His laws, that we are free moral agents.

God commands us to make the *right* choice — but He will *not force* that right choice upon us.

Little Tommy was as yet too young to make serious choices for

himself and should have been protected with the safeguard of loving discipline — first, perhaps a protected place to play, and second, protected with the removal of all those other causes of the accident. Just like that young boy — whose decision to run into the street was only one tiny part of the whole "choosing" situation which resulted in his death — *each person must choose.*

The whole society has chosen.

The fruits, the evidence of that choice are all around you.

Man has always chosen the way of disobedience. The way of vanity, jealousy, lust and greed. He has deliberately chosen the way of competition and strife, believing it the best way.

In momentary triumph, he congratulates himself.

In failure, he blames God.

God Keeps Hands Off. Humans act unreasonably. But then, human nature (actuated by Satan's wavelength; request our free reprint article "Human Nature — Did God Create It?"), with the Satanic influence of this age and this society, is *most* unreasonable.

Humankind wants God to "keep His nose out of our business" and not interfere in our daily lives. To be met with the "invisible spiritual straightjacket" described earlier would absolutely enrage most humans.

Still, even though feeling animosity toward God, and resenting His laws, we want God to suspend the penalty for breaking His laws!

God says: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7.)

Human beings resent God's way — the only way to achieve "goodness." Goodness of character and good things happening all through life.

Human nature wants to "appear" as "good," it wants to think of itself as "good," but it doesn't want to *do* that which is good. It wants to be "good" and to have good results, without living in a way which produces good!

God is not presently interfering in a powerful way with this world.

The horrible consequences of

man, living man's chosen way, are self-evident.

Crime, divorce, horrible disease epidemics, war, pollution, utter immorality, venereal disease — all are effects of man's own choices, his own bullheaded, stiffnecked determination to live contrary to God's laws, and insist God remove the penalties.

But only when man has learned the bitterest of lessons, only when human beings can look back over the entirety of blood-stained human history and say with deep conviction that man's way is utterly evil, will God step in and rescue man from himself.

It is a heartbreaking shame that little children must suffer the consequences of careless, sinning parents, neighbors, and sometimes even grandparents. But God *warned* us it would be this way. He spoke of allowing the consequences for sin to be visited from the fathers "upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Ex. 20:5).

Freedom of Choice. Yes, God *allowed* little Tommy to die. He allowed World War II. He allowed more than 50,000 Americans to be killed in automobile accidents last year.

And He allows people to make decisions for themselves.

He permitted each of the parents, neighbors and friends of Tommy to contribute to his little personality. He permitted whatever sequence of events led to Tommy's trip into the street. He allowed the automobile to continue on the path chosen for it by its driver.

God allows humanity to make serious mistakes for a great overall purpose. (Write for our free booklet *Why Were You Born?* for further understanding of that great purpose.)

Yet God also makes available to humankind the way of life which *causes* happiness, success, rewards, excitement, fun, good health, and eventual eternal life. He commands us to choose to live that way!

But He doesn't force us to make the right choice.

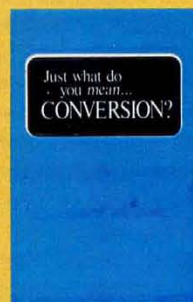
God will allow us to choose life — or He will allow us to choose death.

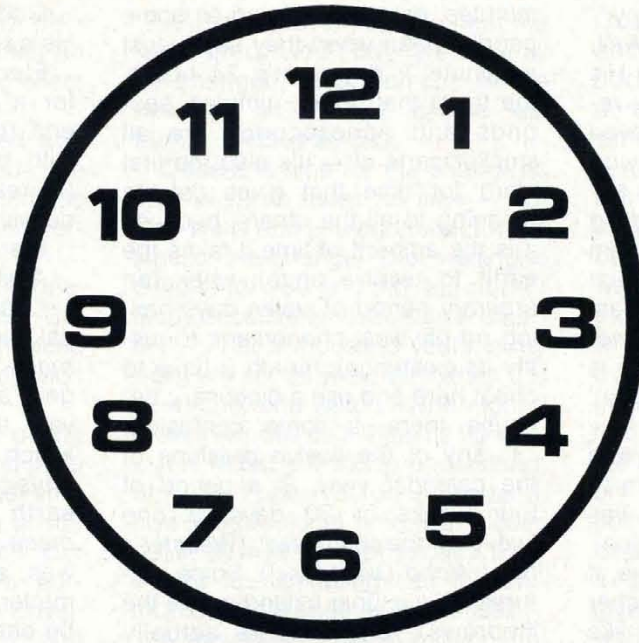
The choice is *ours*. □

REAL CONVERSION

(You can't
win the prize
unless you
start the race)

The apostle Paul likened the Christian life to a race, which must be run for the "prize" of eternal life. A person does not even begin his "race," however, until he has undergone a *genuine* conversion. The New Testament concept of conversion involves much more than a mere intellectual or ritualistic acceptance of a set of beliefs. True conversion can be defined in two parts. The first involves a definite event which occurs when God fulfills His promise to place the Holy Spirit within a person after certain conditions are met. The second part is a process which continues throughout the Christian's life. If you'd like to know more about the Bible's teaching on conversion, request the free booklet *Just What Do You Mean — CONVERSION?* Write to *The Good News* (see addresses on inside front cover).





ETERNITY... IN TIME!

Get your mind in fourth gear and come to understand answers to some questions almost nobody dares ask.

by David Jon Hill

If God has existed forever in the past, and He is going to exist forever in the future — then, how did He ever get to *now*?" asked a bright young student in my sophomore class in Old Testament Survey. At the time, I gave the answer every professor has in reserve for questions he doesn't have the answer for: "Charles, *that* is a very good question! — now, the assignment for next week is . . ."

But of course, once the process gets started, you can't just stop thinking about good questions like that. I'd like to tell Charles *and you* the nearly science-fiction answer the Bible supplies.

Not only does the Bible answer Charles' question, but in the process of answering it, many other mute, mostly unasked questions become answered! Like: If Jesus Christ is the only name under heaven by which men can be saved (Acts 4:12), then what about all those generations *before* Jesus; what about all the generations *since* Christ who have never so

much as heard His name; what about the great majority of mankind today, living, who have either never heard of Jesus or serve some other god? Like: If God is all-powerful, and He is trying to save the world now — how come He's not succeeding?

Or, more to the point of the title, like: What has time got to do with eternity anyway?

And what about the embarrassing questions our children ask us that we never answer satisfactorily? Like: "Mommy, how old is God?" or "Daddy, who made God?" Blessed be little children, for they have more open intellectual curiosity guts than most of us jaded adults!

Get your mind ready, because the answers are overwhelming to these questions organized religion hasn't even asked, much less answered!

In the Beginning. There are two major scriptures most are familiar with that state something about "the beginning." We all know the

Bible starts with the words (in English) "In the beginning God created" And the other favorite text, proving Christ equal to God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (Find that one by yourself.) Hebrews 1:10 confirms this by saying: "And, Thou, Lord [speaking of Jesus], in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands."

Let's think about some of this. And add a couple of puzzling, at first, statements Jesus made. The Bible says there was a beginning — everything has to start sometime, you know. But it also says that in the beginning Jesus, the Word, *already was!* Because He is *without* beginning — or end.

There was an interesting exchange between Jesus and the religionists of His day, captured in essence in the eighth chapter of John. "Look," Jesus said, "Abraham observed what I came down from heaven to do, and when he

saw it, it made him very happy." (Jon's translation of John.) Well, that statement was too much for His audience, so they sarcastically remarked: "Hey man, you're not even fifty. Where do you get off saying you saw Abraham?!" So Jesus answered their remark, befuddling them even more, and getting them mad enough to try to kill Him ("Then took they up stones to cast at him" — verse 59). Jesus' answer was: "Believe it or not, the truth is that before Abraham was, I am!" (Jon's translation again.)

Now, that kind of an answer, to a question they didn't intend Him to answer in the first place, was enough to churn their "endoctrine" glands into a sour mash. Fact is, if my old high-school English teacher ever got hold of a sentence like that, she'd have apoplexy! You can't mix tenses like that! What do you mean, "Before Abraham was, I am"? You can't be AM before WAS! — can you? Maybe it's got something to do with what Jesus said in the Lord's prayer (that's in John 17) when He said: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee *before the world was.*" (King James translation of John.)

Before I ask any *more* questions, before you quit reading, let's start on some *answers*.

What Is Time Anyway? If there were no such thing as the planet earth, would there be *days*? Answer: No.

If earth didn't have a satellite called the moon, would there be *months*? Answer: No.

If both earth and moon didn't have a thing called the sun around which to orbit, would there be *years*? Answer: No.

There are some answers.

That's enough for now. Let's think about what they mean.

Time is made up of segments of something else all neatly arranged in order and with names: nanosecond (that's a billionth of a second, identified and named for the benefit of scientific buffs and computer operators); second (that's 1/60th of a minute, or one billion nanoseconds); minute (that's 60 nanoseconds, or about as long as most of us can hold our breath); hour (that's 60

minutes, or about as long as some people mean when they say, "Just a minute"); day (that's 24 hours, the thing that hours, minutes, seconds and nanoseconds are all smaller parts of — it's also the first word for time that gives definite meaning to all the others, because it is the amount of time it takes the earth to revolve once); week (an arbitrary period of seven days having no physical phenomena to justify its existence); month (I have to cheat here and use a dictionary because there is some confusion: "1. any of the twelve divisions of the calendar year, 2. a period of four weeks or 30 days, 3. one twelfth of the solar year" [Webster's *New World Dictionary*]). Some cultures have a lunar calendar (like the Hebrews), and that is actually where we get the word "month." So, basically a *month* is the time it takes for the moon to circle the earth, which varies unfortunately, hence the confusion: 28-, 29-, 30- and 31-day months!; year: "... 2. the period (365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 46 seconds) of one revolution of the earth around the sun" (*ibid.*).

In short, time is divided into various segments of the distance covered by different created physical bodies, i.e., earth, moon, sun. So if there were no different created physical bodies, there would be *no* time.

Time is physical. Time is temporary — look that word up in your dictionary! Time is limited. Time had a beginning. Time will have an end (Heb. 1:11). Time is a part of creation. *And eternity has nothing to do with time!*

Two More Answers. "Mommy, how old is God?" God is as old as creation; as old as the earth, the sun and the stars; as old as time. But "old" is only a physical expression, because time is a physical thing. The "age" of God doesn't change Him one bit. He just doesn't "age." No matter which scientific group you want to favor with the estimate of the age of creation, it doesn't make the slightest bit of difference. The theories range from about four through 24 billion years old! But He hasn't "aged" a day in all that time!

God isn't "old" or "young" — He's *eternal*.

Eternal is a spiritual designation for a Being without beginning or end (both of those words dealing with time), an expression outside the realm of time, having nothing to do with time.

Eternal.

A different plane of existence.

"Daddy, who made God?" Physical things are *made*. And God even *made* some spiritual things — angels, a beautiful throne in heaven, a vast throng of spiritual things of which many are reflected in the physical things we see here on earth (Rom. 1:20). But no one *made* God — He just is, he always was, and He always will be. As a matter of fact, that just happens to be one of His names: "Was-Is-Will-Be," or in Hebrew, *YHVH, Yaveh* (or *Jehovah* as some prefer).

You think the kids won't understand that? Just give them a chance. This generation is used to the unusual. The world of science fiction and its TV series will help.

Super Beings from outer space! Totally different from us, yet they look the same because we are made in their image.

Pure Energy Beings. A race of Beings so fantastic they don't just build houses, cars and cities — they build universes! They stabilize a small portion of their limitless energy into suns, stars and worlds — for a *time!* They make living things like you and me and all the animals, to be sustained in that life, for a time. But they never change, never lessen or weaken or age. They are Pure Energy Beings, called Spirit Beings, called *God!*

Why Time? "If God has existed forever in the past, and He is going to exist forever in the future — then, how did He ever get to now?" "Past" and "future" are *time* words. Past tense and future tense are *time* tenses. You have to think about God in a different way. He's eternal, and that doesn't have anything to do with time.

Eternal is always *now*. There isn't any "past" or "future" to eternal. So God has always been now; He is now and He will always be now. He never had to arrive at now; He just IS NOW!

Eternity surrounds and permeates time. Time has no effect on eternity — and eternity has no effect on time.

God just created, invented and produced time when He made the physical creation. It's an automatic by-product. But it doesn't alter eternity one whit.

You and I are hampered, imprisoned with our sense of time. But that's just because we're physical, stuck in time — and at that for such a short time!

But if we use just a little of the imagination God gave us, and if we tap spiritual sense, above, beyond, apart, outside of the limiting physical senses, we can stretch our minds to understand God's purpose in making the universe physical (as opposed to spiritual) and making us physical and all subject to time — and still not limit eternity with our time sense.

God put spirit in your mind (Job 32:8; Rom. 8:16; I Cor. 2:10-15) and in addition offers His own personal Spirit to join with that spirit in your mind to help you escape the bondage of time sense and comprehend God's purpose: to make you His Son, for you to be God as God is God, for you to be eternal!

Wouldn't you like to escape the limitations of time? Wouldn't you like to live forever? That's what God has in store for you — it's in the Book! Really, the promise of God, His purpose in making mankind is even better than forever — it's eternal! I'm sure it says that somewhere in the Book — would you believe at least 29 times!? But let's just quote one for now: "And this is the record, that God hath given [notice the tense] to us eternal life" (I John 5:11.)

But to make possible that gift of eternal life, God created all this temporary universe, you and me — and gave us time to become eternal!

Change . . . In Time. You and I are physical.

God is Spirit.

If we are to become like God, we have to be changed — a fantastic and mind-boggling change. Changed so time no longer affects us. I'm sure you have read about that change in I Corinthians 15:

"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," but "we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (verses 50-52).

Once it is time for the change to take place, it takes no time — but God waits and you and I wait for the time of the change! That waiting is difficult for you and me, but not for God, because He views time differently. "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night," Moses informs us in Psalms 90:4.

It is rather difficult to understand, or explain once you do understand, how God looks at time. But Moses put it as well as a physically time-limited human being can to communicate it to another like himself.

A thousand years! A millennium! That seems like such a vast reach of time. The United States has celebrated its 200th anniversary, and its beginnings seem like ancient history. No one is alive now that was alive then. Our threescore and ten don't allow us much flexibility to view time God's way. But Moses says, to God, a thousand years is viewed much like we view yesterday after it has passed! Usually yesterday doesn't have much significance, nor does it seem after it's gone to be even as long as it was. Being outside of, through and around time, God can afford to look at it that way. So when the Father and the Son devised the plan of augmenting their family limitlessly, they made the creation — and, of necessity, time.

The plan God had in mind was to take about a week — a week the way God looks at time. All the thousands of years since mankind's creation seem an overwhelming time to us. Because we don't understand how His plan fits into the time God gave us for the perfecting of that plan, it sometimes seems God is never going to do what He promised!

Upset Applecort. Looking at the passing of time and the many generations since Adam, and falsely assuming that God has been all that time trying to convert mankind, it seems God has been a failure for millenniums!

Adam and Eve were the apple of

God's eye, but the devil stepped in and upset the applecort! Within about 1600 years things got so bad on earth that God erased life from it with a global flood, in hopes, some seem to think, of saving mankind. But that effort was all wet, because in a few years Nimrod and his bunch came along and humankind were right back to their old devilish tricks again. The family plan was tried with Abraham and Sarah, eventually producing 12 sons through his grandson Israel. But that seemed to flop also; the whole family degenerated into abject slavery in Egypt within a few generations. The national plan was tried: Israel the nation was created amidst a staggering display of miracles, given laws, territory, a king, etc. But within a few hundred years the nation dissolved, its descendants wandering into anonymity, lost! Then God sent His own Son for another, and perhaps last effort to save mankind. Sadly, and thankfully erroneously, viewed by the bulk of Christianity, this seems to be the summation of God's effort to save mankind!

Obviously, God failed in that last effort, because it's been two thousand years since that Son (usually pathetically portrayed as a babe in a manger or a dead man on a cross — both helpless!) was here on earth with promises of eternal life He has not yet fulfilled! And so, too many give up too soon because they can't see time God's way!

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Peter 3:8), Peter varied Moses' premise. There's one thing we as human beings, limited the way we are with time, must get straight: God's view of time is vastly different from ours! The way God looks at time, He has decided that within seven days, one week, He is going to add billions of members to His eternal family!

Now, that's not a bad week's work!

God is telling us through Peter that it may appear, on the human-view surface, that God is not performing as promised. But that view is entirely in error! "The Lord is not

slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (verse 9). God is patient but we're not. God is right on schedule — but most of us human beings now inhabiting the earth don't even know the schedule, much less whether God is on time or not!

Planned Ignorance. Understanding God's timetable for executing His one-week plan for bringing mankind into His Kingdom answers the agonizing question about all the vast majority of the billions of past and present generations who never even heard of the only name given under the sun whereby men may be saved.

This is *not* the only day of salvation. (Request our free reprint article "Is This the Only Day of Salvation?" and the booklet *After Death — Then What* for proof.) God has *never yet* set His hand to "save the world." God didn't try and fail in half a dozen plans to get humanity saved. He's not willing that *anyone* should perish — but He reserves the right of *when* to intervene in each individual's life to offer him or her that salvation — the chance for the change from human to divine, from mortal to eternal, from physical to spirit.

"What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and *the rest were blinded*. . . . For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that *blindness* in part is happened to Israel, *until* the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so *all Israel SHALL BE saved*. . . . For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might [at some future time] have mercy upon *all*!" (Rom. 11:7, 25, 26, 32.)

So if all those people are dead and in their graves without having had the knowledge of salvation available to them during their lifetime, how is God going to save them all?

By a resurrection! Bring them back alive, physically, again. Give them their one and only, *first* chance. This time offering them His

Spirit, opening their minds, converting them.

When God — on His own schedule — sets His hand to save the world, **IT WILL BE SAVED!** And not only the dead of Israel, but the dead of all other nations in all other generations.

Surely you've heard that song about the "dry bones"! It's a real, prophesied event — read it again in Ezekiel 37.

Bones, sinews, flesh, skin and the breath of life are given to all those "concluded . . . in unbelief" from both houses of Israel. A new *physical* life — not a resurrection to spirit life, because bones, sinews, flesh and skin with the breath of life surely describes a renewed *physical* life. God will *then* give them His Spirit — as He does with a selected few Christians today. He will be their God, and they will know it and be His people.

And not Israel alone, but as Jesus explained to the generation of His day, the generation of Nineveh at the time of Jonah, the generation of the Queen of Sheba's time will rise in a day yet to come and have words of condemnation against the generation that Jesus was addressing! (Matt. 12:41-42.)

Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah coming up to a time of judgment, all the dead of past generations of all nations having their first opportunity to know the truth, to be "saved" along with all the dead generations of Israel, including that generation which heard, but did not heed Jesus of Nazareth two thousand years ago (Matt. 11:20-24).

God's Schedule Right on Time!

The devil is not winning. The vast majority of mankind is not lost forever, condemned to fry forever in some unbelievable hellfire by some jealous god who never even gave them a chance to even know his name. The score is not yet tallied. There is still more time to come.

The offering of the Son of God on the cross, shedding His blood for our sins, was *not* a last-ditch, desperate effort on God's part to figure out some way to save mankind — that sacrifice was planned from the beginning: ". . . The *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world!*"

(Rev. 13:8.) Read it and weep — tears of joy!

God's week of thousand-year days is just about up. His thousand-year, Sabbath day of rest is close. The time for His intervention in all of mankind's lives is at hand. His second coming, with all His power and glory, when He will *set His hand to save all mankind, of all generations*, is near!

God has deliberately left hands off mankind for about six thousand years — except for those few of each generation whom He called. He has let mankind labor away, influenced by Satan in all his governments and religions for those six days.

But God will have the last laugh. Life is in His hand, none other. God gives life and takes it away, but it is His express will that *all* come to repentance. To accomplish this, He and His Father go to the tremendous effort of resurrecting all past generations to offer them the same hope of glory you and I are offered *now*.

Eternity for everyone . . . in time!

Chance of a Lifetime. Will those ignorant generations rising to a truth they never heard also condemn us along with the generation of Christ's day? — because we didn't heed the call when it was offered? Don't let that happen to you. Today — now — may be *your* day of salvation.

Your opportunity to become God, as God is God, His real Son. Will you grasp Eternity in Time? □

DONATION INFORMATION

Many members and co-workers have requested information on how best to make a gift to the Worldwide Church of God, either during their lifetime or upon death, through wills, trusts or other means.

If you desire to receive information regarding such gifts, the Legal Department of the Church is available to advise and serve without cost or obligation. Merely write: Ralph K. Helge, Legal Department, Box 111, Pasadena, Calif., 91123.

The Legal Department regrets that, because of the variance in laws of other countries, such legal information is only applicable to residents of the United States and Canada. However, in such cases the department will be pleased to furnish whatever limited information it may have available.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q **QUESTION:** "In your booklet 'After Death — Then What?' it states that the stories about 'boiling pots' [in hell] or the 'pearly gates' are sheer myth. But the Bible is clear. In Revelation 21:21, it is written: 'The twelve gates were made of pearls, each gate from a single pearl.' Please explain this for me."

**Mady B.,
Ardmore, Oklahoma**

A **ANSWER:** Our statement in the booklet referred to the myth of a "heaven" with pearly gates where good people go when they die. The verse in the book of Revelation is referring to the gates of the city of New Jerusalem, which comes down from heaven to this earth (Rev. 21:2). Further information on this subject is included in the free booklet *What Is the Reward of the Saved?*

Q: "Ancient Israel was commanded to do many things which we dare not do today, such as selling their dead animals. We would be fined and jailed!"

**Mrs. R. M.,
Alberta, Canada**

A: The law regarding selling a dead animal to Gentiles (Deut. 14:21) did not have to do with selling them something putrified or decaying or harmful to their health. It would seem that the question was mainly one of the animal having died with the blood still in it. Israelites were forbidden to eat blood because it symbolized life (see Lev. 17:4, 10-14). Even this, as Leviticus 17:15-16 shows, was not a spiritual sin, but one which brought only a ceremonial defilement.

The Gentiles, however, did not have this as a law and so could eat the fresh, wholesome flesh of such an animal. It was therefore lawful for an Israelite to sell or give such meat to Gentiles.

Q: "I have read your articles concerning the paganism, or non-Christian origin, of Christmas and Easter. This led me into

some private research of my own on these subjects. My research verifies the pre-Christian observances of Christmas and Easter. But I also encountered many other instances in which Christianity has adopted many rites and ceremonies of the ancient mystery religions."

**R.H.,
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania**

A: Yes, it is true that many symbols and even usages of "Christianity" were common in paganism. Much of this can be accounted for on the basis of an original knowledge of God's plan by the descendants of Adam and Noah, to whom God undoubtedly revealed much of this knowledge. The Bible, of course, does not mention everything that was taught to the people of old. The prophets added more to this body of revealed truth from time to time. But it was man who misunderstood, corrupted, perverted and changed this truth into paganism (see Rom. 1:18-23).

Further, we should never overlook the role of Satan in deliberately counterfeiting in advance (with a perverted twist) important aspects of God's truth in order to deceive and destroy mankind.

There can be no doubt that many of the practices and beliefs of modern "Christianity," so-called, are derived from paganism rather than from the Bible. (For more on this subject, request these free booklets: *The Plain Truth About Christmas*; *The Plain Truth About Easter*; and *Pagan Holidays — or God's Holy Days — Which?*)

Q: "According to the Scriptures, Jesus was subject to temptation (Heb. 4:15). James 1:13 and Habakkuk 1:13 say that God cannot be tempted with evil. Therefore, Jesus Christ cannot be God."

**Robert R.,
Teaneck, New Jersey**

A: There is a fallacy in this logic. It does not take into account the fact that God can become man, and likewise man can become God (for more on this startling subject, write

for the free booklet *Why Were You Born?*). Christ was God, but He emptied Himself of His divinity (Phil. 2:6-8) to become the "Son of man." While He was a human being He was "in every respect tempted as we are," but when He was resurrected to immortality, He again became wholly divine. Hebrews 1:3-4 states that the Son "reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs."

Christ as a man could be tempted; as God He cannot be. There is no contradiction or inconsistency here.

Q: "I know Jesus created us. So how can He be the Son of man? Wouldn't it be more correct to say Jesus is the Father of man?"

**Ted B.,
Granada Hills, California**

A: Christ is not referred to as God the Father's Son (except prophetically — see Psalms 2:7 and II Samuel 7:14) until His human birth (Heb. 5:5-8; Luke 1:32). And God the Father is not referred to as the Father before this time either. In fact, His existence was not clearly revealed until Christ's coming (Luke 10:22; Matt. 11:27).

Actually, Christ is referred to as the "Everlasting Father" in Isaiah 9:6. But since His human advent, He has also been given the title "Son of man," because He was born of a human being, Mary. Divesting Himself of His divinity in order to become our sacrifice for sin was an integral part of His plan, and was necessary in order for Him to become a fully understanding and compassionate High Priest (Heb. 4:15). So this title designates a very important attribute of Christ. In the Old Testament, Christ had many different titles. Now the title and attribute of "Son of man" is added to them. □

76

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

NEW MATURITY AND NEW BEGINNINGS

On Tuesday, May 18, more than 430 ministers of the World-wide Church of God from around the globe convened for a major three-day ministerial conference in Ambassador Auditorium, Pasadena, California. The more than 18 hours in meetings were characterized by Garner Ted Armstrong as signaling "new beginnings" for the Church.

The meetings began with a surprise announcement: the ordination of two evangelists. The newly ordained men were Dean Wilson, then director of the Canadian Work, and Ronald Kelly, executive vice president of Ambassador College, Big Sandy, Texas. The rest of the morning session was then taken up with addresses by the Armstrongs.

Trunk of the Tree. Herbert W. Armstrong rehearsed the formative years when he came to understand the Bible. "I was astonished to see [when he began his studies] that practically everything I had been taught as a boy in Sunday school was the exact opposite of what the Bible revealed. I had said: 'I know that the Bible says, "Thou shalt keep Sunday," because all of the churches do and they all get their religion out of the Bible — don't they?' What a great awakening it was to learn that they do not get their religion out of the Bible."

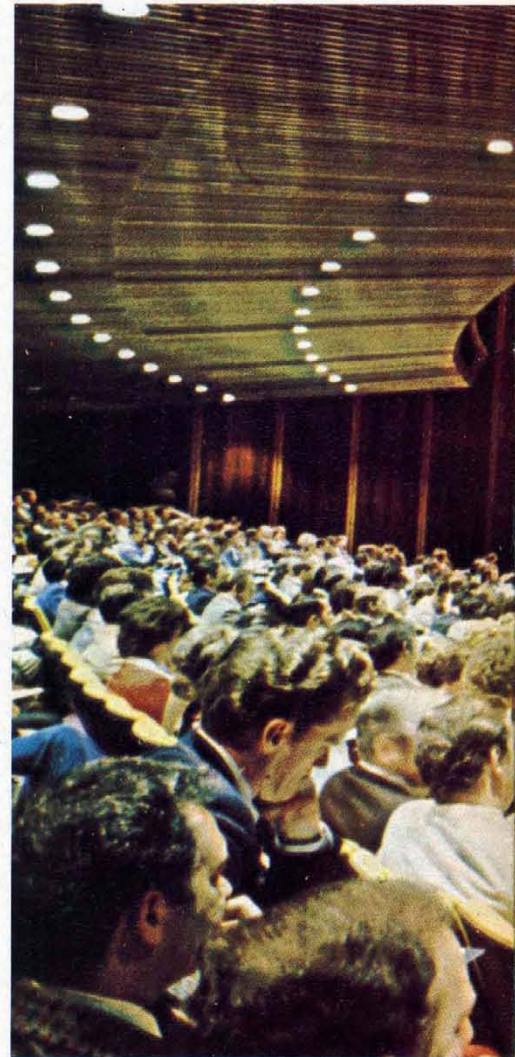
Over a period of several years, Mr. Armstrong step by step increased his knowledge of the Bible,

coming eventually to see that "the Kingdom of God is the trunk of the tree. Christ came to qualify to re-establish the Kingdom, or government, of God on earth. He came to proclaim or announce the coming Kingdom of God. That was the heart and core of His gospel." Mr. Armstrong emphasized the importance of getting that message to the world in this end time.

After reviewing God's plan of salvation and the urgent commission to proclaim the gospel, Mr. Armstrong turned to a discussion of his visits with world leaders — a development that is fulfilling that commission.

Opening Doors. "We had to start at the grass roots. But we found in recent years that when it comes to getting into larger nations outside the United States, the doors were often closed." Mr. Armstrong went on to explain how government control of the media and such factors as high illiteracy rates were obstacles in the path to proclaiming the gospel in other countries.

Then he continued: "About seven or so years ago, God began to gradually open doors to kings, presidents and prime ministers. . . . At first we didn't know why these visits were coming our way, but now it's quite clear. I'm not necessarily trying to get the message over to the head of state, or get him 'converted.' Really, these visits are a means of getting into that coun-

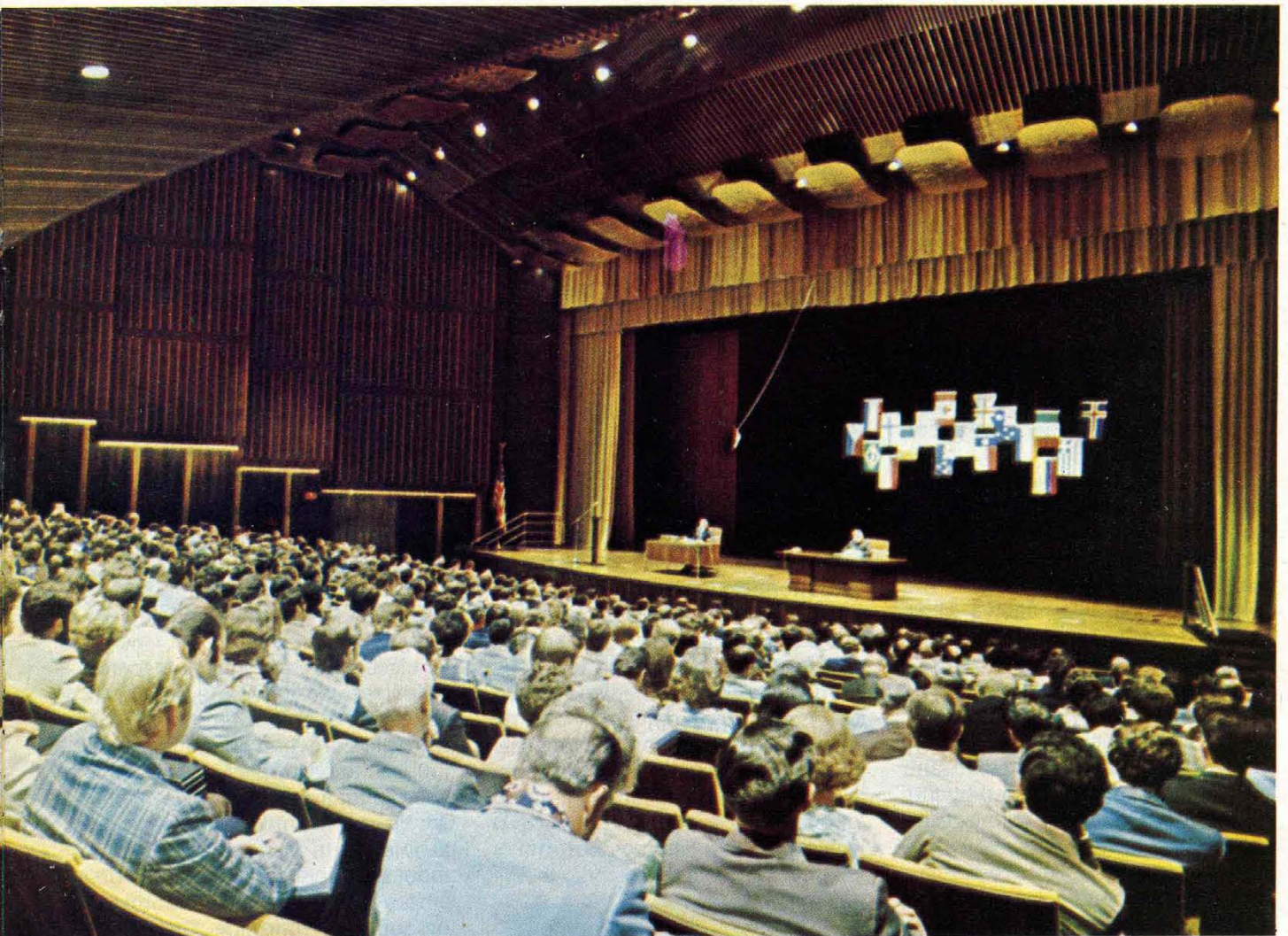


try. Other doors open through contacts with people in the governments of these leaders.

"In a sense, I'm pioneering. I'm opening the doors and others can follow through and get the message to these countries.

"God has given me such grace and favor in the eyes of heads of state that it's hard to understand — unless it is a miracle. . . . I have never taken any credit for the fruit borne. God built this Work — I didn't."

After some remarks by Stanley Rader (vice president for Financial Affairs and Planning) about Mr. Armstrong's travels and the projects of the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation, Gar-



Warren Watson — GN

ner Ted Armstrong reviewed activities in the Work for the past year. Picking up a theme emphasized by his father, he reiterated that everyone — minister and lay member, employee and co-worker — has a part in doing the work.

New Beginnings. He went on to state that "the keynote of this conference ought to be new beginnings, a new start." He gave as examples of this new thrust forward the expansion of the number of radio and TV stations carrying the program, a new format change for the TV show with even greater biblical emphasis, and reorganization at headquarters and in the field ministry for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Herbert Armstrong, having to depart that afternoon for another meeting in the Middle East, closed out the morning session with a farewell address. He pointed out that "We're not trying to go out and see how many we can get converted. I have tried to get the message out as a witness. And I know that when we do that, God will automatically cause a lot of people to respond and get converted. But God has to do that."

Helpers of Their Joy. In the Tuesday afternoon session, the conference got down to nuts-and-bolts matters relating to the ministry. Garner Ted Armstrong spoke for half an hour on guidelines for certain doctrinal matters. Then Ronald

MINISTERS listen to "state of the Work" addresses in Ambassador Auditorium during the first session of ministerial conference.

Dart, vice president for pastoral administration, spent an hour outlining the proposed plan for ministerial development.

Ted Armstrong conducted the remainder of the session. First he discussed the role and effectiveness of the ministers, stressing the fact that they are to be "helpers of their joy — not policemen of their faith" (see II Cor. 1:24). He encouraged ministers to ask themselves: What kind of minister am I? What kind of counselor am I? Am I a good listener? Am I a compassionate person, con-

cerned with others? He stressed that ministers should *help* people — whether within or outside the Church — whenever they see a need, a problem, or an affliction. The afternoon meeting ended with a 40-minute session of questions from the floor.

The Wednesday morning session, May 19, was devoted to a discussion of several papers on doctrinal matters. These included healing, marriage, faith and financial responsibility, race and ethnic relations, and Sabbath observance. The afternoon was devoted to progress reports on various aspects of the Church.

On Thursday morning, several presentations were made relating to the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation and its ancillary activities. Then came several reports from the International Division, and, finally, a report and video presentation by the Television Production Department.

A New Maturity. The final session, chaired by Garner Ted Armstrong, was predominantly devoted to answering questions submitted by the ministers on doctrinal and miscellaneous questions.

Mr. Armstrong closed the conference by expounding on several scriptures relating to the ministry. He read Ephesians 4:1-16, where the apostle Paul exhorts the Church to unity and spiritual maturity. Commenting upon verse 13 in particular, he said: "I've seen in this conference, in this Church in the last few years, a new maturity in the way we deal with problems, with doctrinal questions, and the way we treat people under our care. I believe we are growing up unto 'a perfect [or mature] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'"

He exhorted ministers to be living examples of James 1:27: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. . . ."

Mr. Armstrong closed the meet-

ing with an expression of his appreciation to the ministry and concluded with: "I love you all very deeply. Thanks for being here, and God bless you."

THE MINISTRY, THE CHURCH AND YOU

A candid interview with Ronald Dart, vice president for pastoral administration, about the ministry and church services of the Worldwide Church of God.

Question: How would you describe the role and work of the ministry?

Mr. Dart: Actually the word "minister" might not always be the best word to use. I think the word "pastor" is more appropriate. The term "pastor," as used by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:11, comes from a Greek word which means a "shepherd." A shepherd is always with his flocks; he stays out in the field with them, protects them,



looks after them and sees to it that they're fed properly. The images that are drawn in the Bible of a

shepherd are those of gentleness, kindness, love and concern.

So I would say that the role of the minister is to "feed the flock" (to use the biblical expression adopted by Peter in I Peter 5:2), which basically means to preach, to visit, to answer questions, to help them understand the Bible better, to proclaim the holy days of God (which outline God's plan and keep the people fully in mind of it) in their seasons. It is to keep the Work of God before their eyes at all times and help them to realize the purpose of their calling. It is to help them to make progress toward the Kingdom of God, to keep them mindful of the fact that not only are they called to do a Work, but they are called to become sons of God. Week by week, day by day, sermon by sermon, visit by visit the pastor tries to help people along toward that goal.

This is not to say that he is to live their lives for them. He is not to make their decisions for them. He is there to provide guidance and counsel, to be a friend, a confidant, a comforter in time of trouble.

Q: Every month, hundreds of people write us with questions about the Bible and personal problems. We let them know that ministers of the Worldwide Church of God are available to help. Some have thought that we were exclusivist, while others have feared they would be pressured to join. Would you comment about these misconceptions of the ministry and the Church?

Mr. Dart: We walk a very delicate tightrope between not "pushing our religion" on people, while at the same time being available to help them with their questions and problems. Our counsel, of course, inevitably reflects to one degree or another the teachings of the Church. What had been interpreted in the past by some as a "stand-offish" or exclusivist approach to religion, was really not. It was rather a pulling back from the appearance of proselyting.

We were saying, "All we're doing is preaching the gospel; we're not trying to get you into our church." And it was therefore interpreted by



a few that we wouldn't want anybody to come into our church. That, of course, is not true. It finally came home to us that some people were getting the impression that we didn't want them to come. We immediately set about to change that impression. Right now I think the pastors are doing a good job of letting people know that we're here to help, but without any pressure to join — and at the same time, conveying the message that "If you are interested, you are more than welcome."

Q: Which brings us to church services of the Worldwide Church of God. Are our readers welcome to attend?

Mr. Dart: They most certainly are!

In the past we were a bit hesitant to strongly encourage a new person to attend. One reason was, as I said before, we didn't want to seem as though we were trying to win converts away from other churches. But another factor was that the ministers were working hard to build fledgling congregations with what the Bible speaks of as "strong meat" in their sermons. They feared that a brand new person might not understand the background of a

given sermon, and without a proper foundation *could* be offended.

But now I think we've come to realize that isn't necessarily true. Probably few, if any, would be offended. We also realized that those who might be offended by a sermon might well be offended by almost anything. We just have no way of knowing.

We take care not to offend, but we must preach the Word of God, which is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Therefore, the individual himself has a responsibility to be objective and not to be offended. We feel that it is best to let each person decide for himself whether he comes to church. The responsibility is his. We have found that many people, our *Good News* readers for example, who are interested in the teachings of the Worldwide Church of God, are, generally speaking, ready for any sermon. They have already been exposed to "strong meat" and our basic doctrines in the magazine and there is no need for concern that people might be offended by a sermon. [To contact a minister of the Worldwide Church of God, please see page 29.]

Q: Of course, there are other opportunities for our readers to hear what pastors have to say.

Mr. Dart: Yes, we are continuing the public Bible lecture series [see next feature]. Any time we have one in a Church area, we send a letter to the entire mailing list, both *Plain Truth* and *Good News*, inviting them to come. The local pastor may conduct the Bible lectures. Or a visiting speaker may come in to give special sermons, not just Bible lectures, where the goal is not necessarily aimed at the public per se, but also to revitalize the churches. But the public certainly is welcome. It's an ideal opportunity for them to come and hear a very fine speaker

and to learn a little bit more about the Church. They would be more than welcome.

PUBLIC BIBLE LECTURES

In addition to regular church services, the Worldwide Church of God sponsors public Bible lectures in scores of communities across the United States and the world.

Many hundreds write us each year asking about our views of today's prophesied crises as well as answers to biblical questions. These lectures are designed to answer those questions. The lectures are small in size to allow more direct participation by those who are interested. Question-and-answer sessions follow each lecture to enable those with specific questions the opportunity to receive greater help.

Each lecture is conducted by an ordained minister of the Worldwide Church of God. Attendance at the lectures does not bring an individual under obligation in any way. We simply want to share with you our knowledge of what the Bible says about today's world conditions and how it affects your personal future.

And as one minister put it: "The lectures show people we are interested in them and that we are available locally. Several [who attended a lecture he gave] were surprised that a minister of the Church lived in Connecticut. I think they expected us all to be based in California!" Not so, of course. As the map on the following pages shows, we have churches throughout the United States — indeed we are a *worldwide* church.

If at any time you wish more personal counsel or information concerning the Worldwide Church of God, see the "If You'd Like to Know More" box on page 29 for addresses and phone numbers.

THE CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

In 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, the apostle Paul describes the living Church, the body of Christ, in these words: "For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which, many as they are, together make up one body. . . . A body is not one single organ, but many" (*The New English Bible*).

So it is with the Worldwide Church of God. It is a multifaceted organization united in effort by a common goal: the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Of great importance — the "spear point" of the Work — are the activities of Herbert W. and Garner Ted Armstrong: the visits with world leaders, the evangelistic campaigns, the radio and TV programs, ministering to the Churches of God worldwide, the articles and letters. In past issues of *The Good News*, we have also featured stories on the frontline support functions — the headquarters administration team, the mail and data processing departments, the editorial staff which produces the magazines and booklets, the TV and radio production crew.

In this issue we feature a supporting cast that may not be conspicuously in the limelight, but nonetheless is the bulwark of the Work's strength and progress — local congregations and members of the Worldwide Church of God. In the United States we have over 300 local congregations meeting every Sabbath. They are served by 572 elders, pastors and evangelists. Weekly attendance averages over 74,000.

In addition to supporting the main thrust of the Work, our ministers and members are quietly making positive contributions, large and small, to their neighborhoods and towns. (So quietly, in fact, that we had a hard time tracking down sto-



ries for this issue!) What follows is a sampling of ways members are involved in their communities, putting in practice their Christian credo.

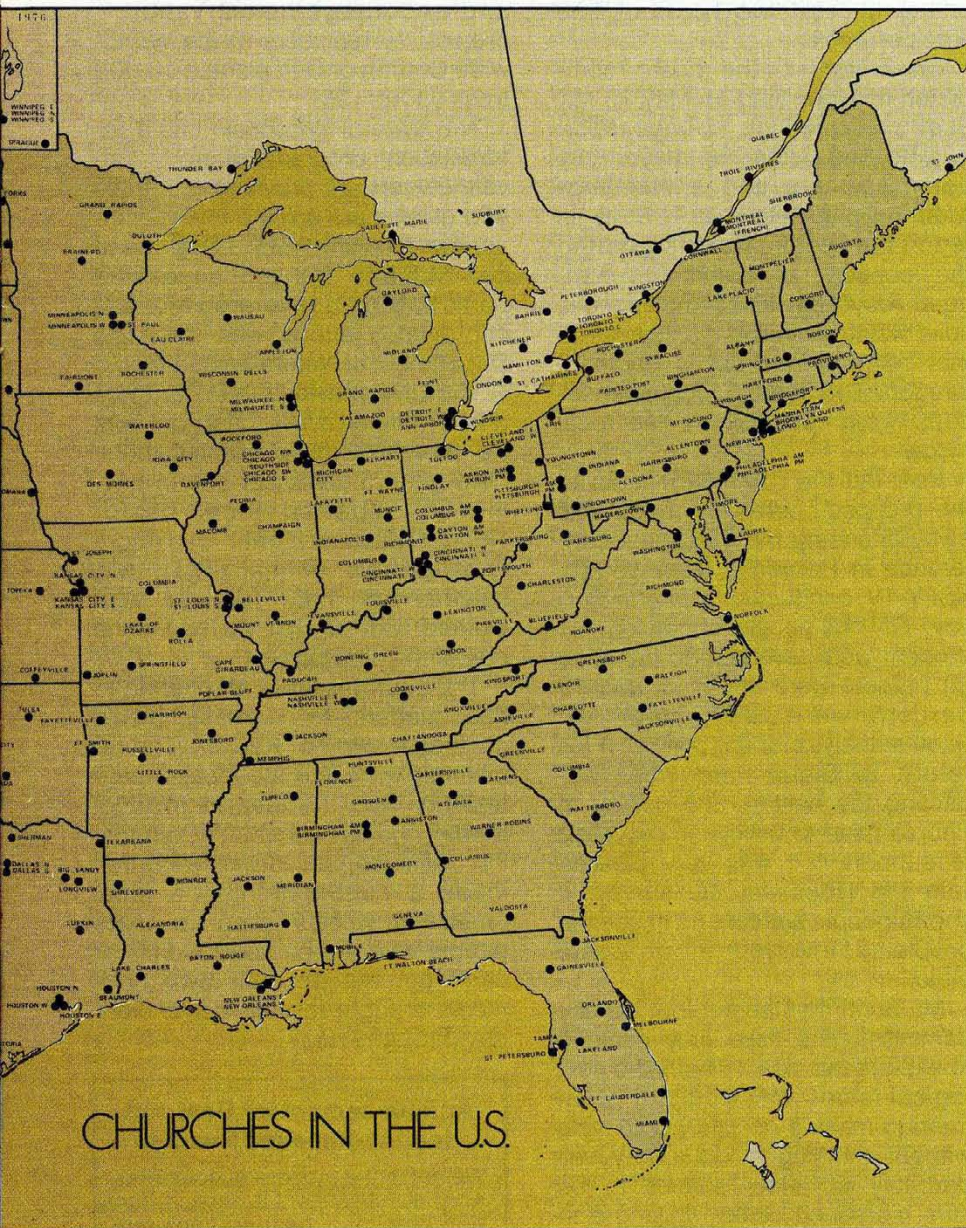
Relief Help Abroad and at Home. At 3:02 p.m., February 2, 1976, the ground began to shake in Guatemala. In 30 seconds an earthquake measuring 7.5 on the Richter scale devastated the country, leaving 23,000 dead, at least 77,000 injured and an estimated one million people homeless.

Relief operations sprang up

around the world to aid the victims. Participating in the effort were congregations of the Worldwide Church of God.

An example of the response by local congregations was the material and money donated by the local congregations in North and West Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Eau Claire, in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

An announcement was made to the churches on February 21 asking for donations of much needed clothing, food and building materi-



Map by John Anderson

CHURCHES IN THE U.S.

als. A list of needed items was distributed to Church members. According to Robert Hoops, pastor in Minneapolis, members responded by deluging the accumulations areas with some two tons of goods — flour, dry food, steel barrels, lumber, tools. In addition, many cash contributions were made. All donations were turned over to the central relief operation being conducted in the Twin Cities area.

A similar relief effort was con-

ducted close to home a month later when a tornado struck Cabot, Arkansas (about a half-hour drive north of Little Rock). An appeal was made in the Little Rock church for help to relieve the victims, and the response, according to Mr. Ray Wooten, local pastor, was very gratifying:

"The people really responded. People volunteered trucks and the time to drive them, as well as money and merchandise. As a result, in just a week we were able to

fill two pickup trucks — and I mean filled to nearly overflowing — with goods. If you had to buy it new or put a price tag on it, the total would have run into the thousands of dollars."

In addition, cash donations were raised and given to the central relief organization in Cabot, to disburse as they saw fit.

Fourth and Fifth Stepping with Alcoholics. Every Wednesday, Wayne Luginbill, senior pastor stationed in Fargo, North Dakota, drives over to the Veterans Hospital to counsel people suffering from the world's most widespread drug problem — alcoholism. "It's one of the toughest problems to work with," he confesses. "I had no idea of the emotional depression and personal problems involved in alcoholism until I got into it."

Mr. Luginbill became interested in alcoholism after attending a conference on alcoholism and chemical dependence. He went over to the Veterans Hospital in Fargo and found a desperate need for volunteer help with the alcoholism program, so he offered his services.

The hospital basically uses the program developed by Alcoholics Anonymous. There are 20 beds assigned for alcoholic treatment "and they're usually full," said Mr. Luginbill. Initially, he helped in group counseling. After attending a week-long seminar at Moorehead State University on dealing with the problem, he began to counsel one on one.

Mr. Luginbill described his participation as "fourth and fifth" stepping with alcoholics. The core of the Alcoholics Anonymous program for personal recovery is the "Twelve Steps." They are based on the trial-and-error experience of early members of A.A. The steps describe the attitude and activities that these early members believed were important in helping them to achieve sobriety. Acceptance of the "Twelve Steps" is not mandatory, but those who earnestly strive to apply them seem to make better

progress than those who do not.

According to literature put out by A.A., the fourth step is "making a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves." The fifth is "admitting to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs." Mr. Luginbill described this phase of the recovery as "a little like confessional. They open up and tell all the problems in their lives, all the bad. They unload on you — you're their personal confidant." It's a difficult step to take — but it can be very therapeutic.

Mr. Luginbill admitted that he is getting as much or more out of the program as he is able to put into it. "I can see that in counseling with these people, I get very good insight into dealing with other personal problems people have that are not related to alcoholism."

Minister Heads Local Environmental Protection Board. What does a city of 80,000 do when it is running out of space to dump the 1600 cubic yards of garbage it generates every day?

That is the problem facing the citizens of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Helping them to find a solution is Charles F. Scott, pastor of the Worldwide Church of God.

"I have had a personal interest in anything thrifty and resourceful," said Mr. Scott in a recent interview, "probably because of my Scottish nature. One day last summer [1975] I was talking with a city commissioner about my interest in recycling. He informed me that the city had just formed an Environmental Protection Board and asked if I wanted to sit on the board because of my interest."

The board had been constituted several months before Mr. Scott's fortuitous conversation with the commissioner. But work was proceeding slowly. That was soon to change when Mr. Scott said "yes!" to the invitation and began to participate in the project.

His enthusiasm and willingness to serve was a catalyst in reestablishing momentum. When they finally got down to selecting a chairman, "My name was in the hat," he said. "I let it be known that I was available if the other members

wanted it." They did — he was elected by a unanimous vote.

And so in December the board got down to work in earnest. The study required each member to volunteer at least two hours of free time per week.

On March 1, the board completed its work. And on May 10 Mr. Scott presented the 15-page report in a hearing before the mayor, city commissioners and a standing-room-only audience of 125. In its report the board gave its support to the concept of community-managed recycling. It recommended a solid waste recycling plan similar to that being carried out in Portland, Oregon. The board's recommendations were reported by the local media.

How did the community react to the proposal? While Mr. Scott was away attending the ministerial conference in Pasadena (May 18-20), KSFY-TV conducted a phone survey. Of 118 people contacted, 61 percent were favorable to the idea, 20 percent were opposed, and 19 percent were undecided. Mr. Scott's analysis of the poll upon his return to Sioux Falls was "expecting the best — and getting it. People have to believe in recycling to support it. I was very pleased with the results of the survey. It shows people are coming to see the problems involved in a 'waste ethic.'"

Mr. Scott pointed out that the city commissioners have only decided to explore the idea. "That's the next logical step. We wouldn't want them to make a decision to recycle without thinking it out. They will probably do other studies to be sure it's sound before making a final decision."

What do studies of garbage collecting have to do with preaching the gospel — the task one normally associates with a minister? "The prophets wrote about the millennial cities and what they are going to be like," Mr. Scott pointed out. "Garbage collection isn't glamorous, but it is one aspect of environmental city planning which will be an important concept in the millennium. Eventually, in other areas besides recycling, the board will be making proposals on environmental plan-

ning, and we hope to be able to make a contribution that is worthwhile."

Church "Sinks Roots" — 10,000 of Them. In a "how-to-raise-funds-and-encourage-conservation" project, 75 members of the Worldwide Church of God planted 10,000 trees on April 25.

The state of Wisconsin has a reforestation program whereby private owners are provided with trees and groups are given a financial incentive to plant them. Local member Maurice Benson suggested participation in the program and coordinated efforts with the state Department of Natural Resources.

The DNR provided trees for three different land owners, and on April 25 church members planted them. "We got 4.5 cents per tree in payment," reported local pastor George Kackos. "That was more than groups normally get. Mr. Hovde, the state forester who worked with us, felt we had done one of the best jobs."

The church sent in an offering to headquarters to increase media coverage, said Mr. Kackos. The remainder went into the local church treasury with the idea in mind of funding local community efforts. For instance, recently the church made a contribution to a local "meals on wheels" program where people who are on special diets or can't get out on their own have meals brought to their home Monday through Friday. □

Announcement for Deaf and Hearing-Impaired Readers

We are in the process of compiling a list of subscribers to services for our deaf and hearing-impaired readers. Available will be transcripts of our radio and TV programs by alphabetical subject listing.

If you have a need for this service, please send your name and address (or the mailing label from this magazine or *The Plain Truth*) to: Educational Services for the Handicapped, Box 111, Pasadena, CA 91123. If you use one of our preaddressed envelopes, please mark it: "Attention: Handicapped Department" in the lower left-hand corner. In order to serve you effectively, your immediate response would be appreciated.

PERSONAL

(Continued from page 1)

all the other trees and leaves, all flowers — body mechanisms of all animals — even all the creation we find here on earth — without pre-thought and planning?

Examples: We humans are made in God's image — form and shape. We have MINDS like God's, only incomplete as yet. About 1960 it was in my heart to build an auditorium for God — IF *it was* GOD'S WILL. I never did ask God to let me build it. But I asked Him to show me whether *He wanted it*, and if He did to provide the money to complete it — not merely start it. We began making plans for it in 1960. God did not give me His answer until January 1972. I had to be PATIENT and wait on God. But it took most of that twelve years to complete the plans! Then the incredible thing happened — 100 percent financing provided (most of it by long-term insurance company loans still to be paid off) — and I broke ground to *begin* the actual construction. It had taken some twelve years of *planning, designing*, until every single square inch of that whole super-fine edifice was designed in complete detail, on paper. It took two years and about two-and-one-half months to build.

Since I have had not only that experience, but also with several other buildings on the Ambassador College campus, and God made us to become like He is, I feel it gives me some insight into how God Himself does things.

And so I come to the conclusion that GOD and the WORD must have taken a *long time* in thinking, planning and designing before they actually created the first angels.

And then, how LONG, do you suppose they took to plan and design matter, and all its properties, before they created, and brought into existence matter in all its forms and shapes composing the physical universe? That includes our Sun, and its planets, like Jupiter, Saturn, this Earth, Mars, etc. — all of which is only one small part of the galaxy, our Milky Way — and countless other galaxies all through endless space.

How long do you suppose God

allowed Himself to think out, plan and design the human mind and human body — with all its various systems — such as the digestive system, the circulatory system, the nervous system, the respiratory system, the eliminative system, and the reproductive system? And all of these systems, marvelously inter-related and connected, had to function *together!*

To contemplate all of this makes me stand in abject wonder and AWE of the MIGHTY God.

But now He is working out a PURPOSE here below on this earth, in our time. Some 43 years ago, He committed His great commission to me — to carry His message of the Kingdom of God to all the world. For an ordinary human that was a staggering responsibility. But, of course, I would not do it all alone. God supplied me with the help of others.

Even before He committed that commission to me, He brought about my conversion through the wife He had given me earlier. Then, apart from my desire or planning, He caused our son Garner Ted to be born. God planned to use his voice to carry His message to *millions*. But Ted was unable to talk until he was well past two years old. An apparent speech impediment seemed to prevent it. God put in my mind to pray for the healing of his voice when I was anointing him for pneumonia. The very next day he was talking in whole sentences — and he's been talking ever since — now to *millions!*

We have reached the very generation when the KINGDOM OF GOD will be set up, and the GOVERNMENT OF GOD restored to earth. God wants that fact announced to all the world. He has raised up my son Garner Ted to stand with me in that staggering commission — and He has raised up others — brethren in His Church, co-workers and friends — to stand back of us to make the fulfilling of this commission possible. This is GOD'S WORK for this time on this earth.

Could it be one more EVIDENCE that this truly is the Work of the living God, that, as He and Christ — divine FATHER AND SON — are directing the whole UNIVERSE, He has

raised up and He is using a *human* father and son for directing His Work this time ON EARTH?

And, as a divine FATHER AND SON are of ONE MIND so are the human father and son — but *not* our separate individual minds, but as we are commanded in Philippians 2:5: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

At all times since my son's conversion, that same mind has been in him as the mind God put in me — never any deviations from the TRUTH. As nearly as humanly possible, we have tried to have only that mind of Christ.

This is the human LEADERSHIP which God put in His Church.

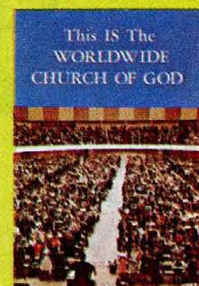
God's Church, doing the WORK of God, follows the pattern He set and put within His Church. For truly this is His Church. □

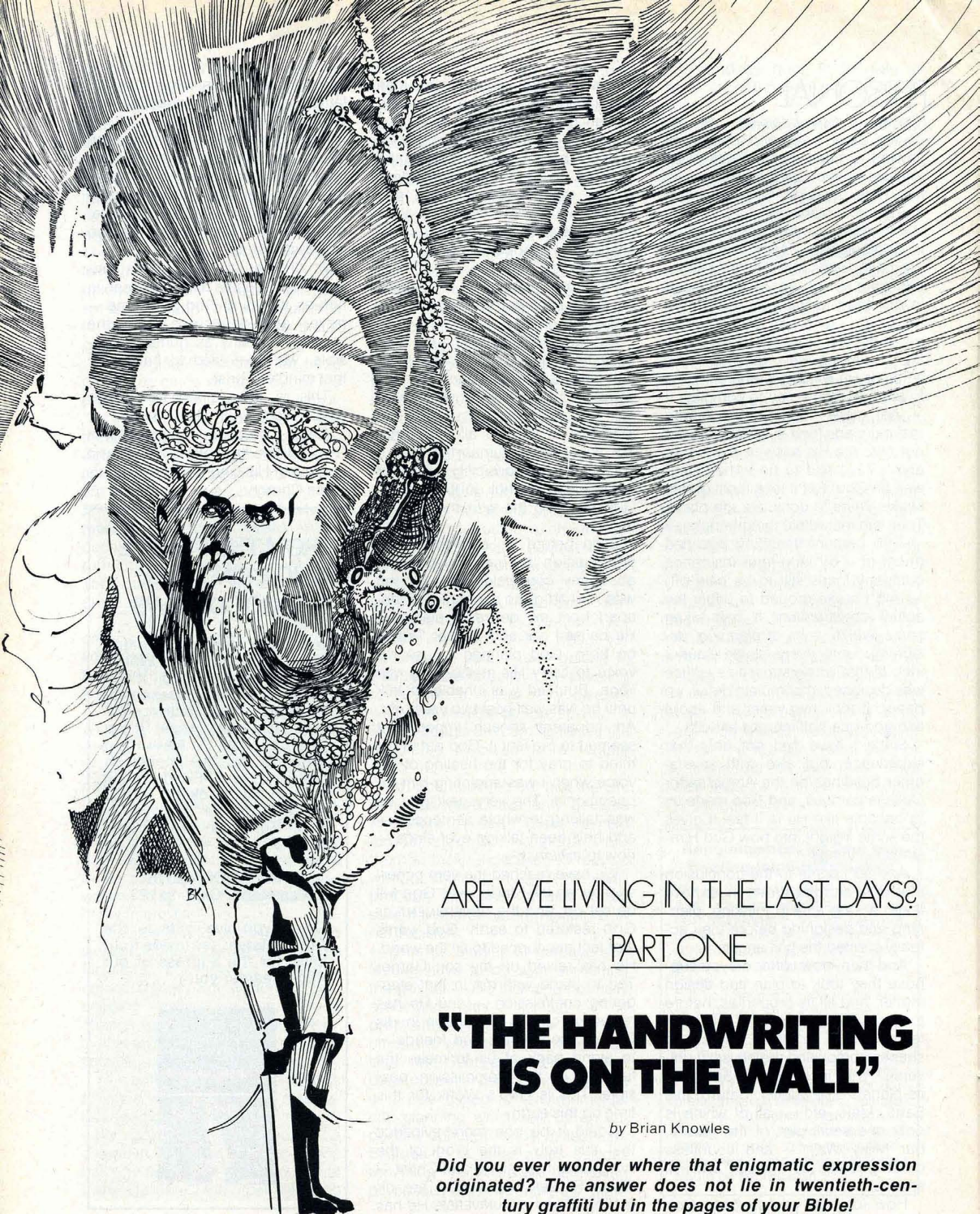
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ARE WE LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS?

PART ONE

“THE HANDWRITING IS ON THE WALL”

by Brian Knowles

Did you ever wonder where that enigmatic expression originated? The answer does not lie in twentieth-century graffiti but in the pages of your Bible!

Over two millennia ago, during the twilight of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, a series of strange events changed the course of history. King Belshazzar held a mammoth banquet and invited all of his subordinate rulers to attend (Dan. 5:1). During the festivities, Belshazzar used the gold and silver vessels originally taken from Solomon's Temple by Nebuchadnezzar (II Chron. 36:7; Dan. 5:2). The king, the rulers, wives and concubines then drank from the vessels and praised the pagan gods of Babylon.

This unfortunate act showed contempt and disdain for the religion of Israel and constituted an open affront to God Himself. At the very height of this pagan orgy of self-indulgence, God determined to act.

A Strange Phenomenon. King Belshazzar was suddenly frozen with fear as a bizarre phenomenon took place before his very eyes. The color drained from his flushed face as he watched a dismembered hand begin to write some mysterious symbols on the wall near where he stood. The king was unable to decipher the enigmatic writing.

Trembling with fear, he called for his wise men and wizards. He promised the position of "third ruler in the kingdom" to anyone who could determine the meaning of the handwriting that was on the palace wall. None could provide the answer.

The king and his staff were perplexed. No one could be found who could determine the meaning of the writing. Finally the queen suggested that Daniel the Jew be brought in.

Enter Daniel. To make a long story short, Daniel, by God's inspiration, was able to give the king the meaning of the words. They read: "Mene, mene, tekem, and parsin" (Dan. 5:25).

Each word indicated a weight. *Mene* was a "mina." *Tekem* represented a "shekel." And *parsin* was two "half-minas." These words could also be read as verbs: "to number," "to weigh," and "to divide." Thus the interpretation by Daniel: "... God has *numbered* the days of your kingdom and brought

it to an end... you have been *weighed* in the balances and found wanting... your kingdom is *divided* and given to the Medes and the Persians" (verses 26-28).

Belshazzar had made the fatal mistake of publicly dishonoring the very God who gave him the breath of life (verse 23). He had openly and flagrantly insulted God by using the sacred vessels from God's Temple (which building Jesus later called "my Father's house") in an orgy of pagan worship. In addition, the king had figuratively thumbed his nose at the divinely originated religion of Israel and at the "holy nation" itself.

As a result, the "Neo-Babylonian" empire disappeared into the sands of history and a new empire — the Medo-Persian — emerged in its place.

The handwriting that had been on the palace wall had signaled the end of a kingdom and the dawning of a new age.

Another Kingdom. Today, it would seem, the handwriting is once again on the wall. Another kingdom is about to fall and a new age will dawn.

The kingdom that is about to fall is not a human kingdom, though human beings are among the subjects of that kingdom.

The wicked kingdom that is soon to fall is the kingdom of the devil. And the handwriting has been "on the wall" for centuries — in the pages of your Bible. Before we look into the specific prophecies concerning the fall of that kingdom, let's look into the nature of it.

Paul wrote of "the god of this world." He said: "... The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (II Cor. 4:4). Who is it who has blinded and deceived this world? The apostle John answers: "And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the *deceiver of the whole world*..." (Rev. 12:9).

It is Satan who has blinded this world to the truth of the gospel. It is he who is the "prince of this world" (John 12:31, KJV). This "present evil world" is not of God's making

— it is Satan's system! He is its god. He is its ruler and deceiver. In the well-known temptation incident in the wilderness, we find the devil offering Christ "all of the kingdoms of the world" if He would only fall down and worship him (Matt. 4:8, 9).

Jesus did not argue with the devil's right to offer those earthly kingdoms — He simply refused the offer! This present society and all human societies since the Garden of Eden owe their state of spiritual darkness to the devil and his angelic followers. He is the great Deceiver. He is a perpetrator of human pain and suffering. He is, in the ultimate sense, a source of conflict and war within human society. He is Apollyon — *the Destroyer* (Rev. 9:11).

The First Rebellion. Satan and his high-ranking demonic assistants wield influence and power in this present society. Originally, they were faithful servants of God. But they were not content with the domain over which God had placed them. They rebelled against their Creator. They now exist in a state of spiritual darkness awaiting the final judgment of God. Jude wrote of them in verse 6 of his brief letter: "And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day."

Satan and his angels, now known as *demons*, are "in chains." That is, they are restrained from wielding their full powers.

Notice also II Peter 2:4: "... God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of nether gloom to be kept until the judgment."

The Greek word translated "hell" here is *tartarus*. It indicates a state or condition of restraint. (This is the only place in the Bible where the word is used.) Satan and his demonic followers can do no more than God allows. If Satan had his way, he would *immediately* destroy God's human creation — but God has held him in check. The devil and his fallen angels can *only* do what God allows. This important

point is fully explained in our free reprint article "Why Must Men Suffer?" God's angels, led by Michael and Gabriel, are revealed in Scripture to be far more powerful than Satan and his demons. This is largely because they have the direct backing of God Himself. God limits the powers of Satan and his kingdom, as is revealed in the book of Job (Job 1, 2).

Daniel's Vision. The book of Daniel contains an interesting and valuable revelation concerning angelic activities in the realm of human kingdoms.

The scene opens in the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia (Dan. 10:1). Daniel had been given a vision. He desperately wanted to know the meaning of the vision. He fasted and prayed for a period of three weeks (verses 2, 3). God heard his prayer and sent a high-ranking angel — probably Gabriel, who has often been used as God's message bringer (Luke 1:19-38) — to reveal the meaning of the vision to Daniel. In the course of the angel's explanation, an interesting insight into the goings-on of the spiritual world is provided: "Then he said to me, 'Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, so I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia and came to make you understand what is to befall your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come'" (Dan. 10:12-14).

Who is this mysterious prince of Persia? Who is Michael? Michael is called "one of the chief princes." He is obviously one of God's representatives — not a follower of Satan. Elsewhere in the Bible we find that Michael is revealed to be one of the "covering cherubs" — one of the angelic beings who covered the throne of God with his wings (Ezek. 28:16). Apparently, there were originally three such cherubs — Lucifer, Michael (Israel's "prince" — Dan. 12:1), and Gabriel. These three were the "chief

princes" among God's angels. Lucifer, Gabriel and Michael may have each ruled over one third of the angels. When Lucifer rebelled, and became known as "Satan" (the adversary), he took one third of the angels with him (Rev. 12:4). Indications are that the remaining two thirds of the angelic host remained loyal to God and to Michael and Gabriel. It is possible that Satan himself was the enigmatic "prince of Persia" referred to in Daniel 10. Satan is the "god of this world" and Persia was the dominant world kingdom at the time.

These two remaining cherub-rank angels may have been symbolized by the two pure-gold cherubim that covered the mercy seat in the tabernacle in the wilderness (Ex. 25:17-22). Lucifer was dropped from his office as a "covering cherub" following his pre-Adamic rebellion. (Write for the booklet *Did God Create a Devil?* It will explain the origin of Satan and his original rebellion.)

If this explanation of Daniel 10 is correct, then we see that there are high-ranking angels who follow Lucifer and often influence the activities of the rulers of the kingdoms of this world! Is it any wonder that God calls Satan the "prince of this world"? Michael, on the other hand, is Israel's "prince" (Dan. 12:1). He takes care of God's interests in terms of Israel.

As God works out His purposes in the human realm, Satan, the temporary god of this world, along with his angels, opposes Him. God is infinitely more powerful than Satan and, in the final analysis, there is no contest. *God always triumphs!*

Satan's Ministers. Yet today Satan has his representatives at every stratum of human society. He broadcasts his insidious message into the hearts and minds of millions. Even the world of religion is filled with the ministers of Satan. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "... Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his servants [ministers, KJV] also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness" (II Cor. 11:14-15).

Satan's ministers often appear righteous. They will most often ap-

propriate God's name to impart authority to their ministry. But in reality they are the servants of Satan.

Such ministers have even, on occasion, performed actual miracles! But the power to perform these deceptive miracles has not originated with God but with the devil. Down through the ages superstitious believers have been deceived by "lying wonders" and deceptive miracles. Bleeding madonnas and visions of so-called "saints" along with other bizarre "miracles" have duped a gullible populace since the beginnings of human history. But God has not been involved in these pointless manifestations of the spirit world. They have been of the devil and his followers and ministers.

Upsurge in Spiritism. Today, interest in the metaphysical world is at an all-time high for this period in history. Astrology and horoscopes, seances, ESP, poltergeists, and other phenomena fascinate modern man. And curiosity may soon kill the cat! (For more information on these spiritist activities, write for our free booklet *The Occult Explosion — What Does It Mean?*)

God reveals that there will be an increase in occult activities in the end time. The stage may even now be set for a dazzling display of Satanic, "miracle-working" power that will stagger the imagination!

Just prior to the return of Jesus Christ, "unclean spirits" (demons) will be again used by Satan. They will influence powerful military and political leaders to do battle against the returning Christ. John saw the whole thing in a mind-shattering vision recorded in the book of Revelation: "Then I saw coming from the mouth of the dragon [Satan], the mouth of the beast [end-time political/military leader], and the mouth of the false prophet [end-time supreme religious leader], three foul spirits like frogs. *These spirits were devils [demons], with power to work miracles.* They were sent out to muster all the kings of the world for the great day of battle of God the sovereign Lord" (Rev. 16:13-15, *The New English Bible*).

Those who are alive then will see one of the greatest manifestations of Satan's power in the human

realm! The devil will actually be able, with the aid of other fallen spirits, to mobilize the kings of this earth and their armies against the returning Jesus Christ! This shows clearly just *how much* influence he has in the human realm as the god of this world!

Leading up to these climactic end-time events will be signs and wonders that will dazzle the hearts and minds of the superstitious millions. Satan, like the pied piper of Hamelin, will mesmerize millions with his incredible power. Human leaders will be given miraculous power by the devil — for the advancement of his own diabolical purposes! One great religious leader, also called a "beast," will emerge. He will perform the most dazzling feats imaginable: "Then I saw another beast [a religious leader] . . . It worked great miracles, even making fire come down from heaven to earth before men's eyes. By the miracles it was allowed to perform in the presence of the beast [military leader] it deluded the inhabitants of the earth . . ." (Rev. 13:11-14, *The New English Bible*).

People will be deceived by these metaphysical manifestations and "lying wonders." They will believe that the "great power of God" (Acts 8:10) is at work in these individuals.

In the latter days of *Satan's kingdom* there will be a dramatic upsurge in apparent miracles. There will be a marked increase in spiritism of all types.

A New Dark Age. The earth's populace will descend into a new Dark Age of fear and superstition. Religious activity will reach an unprecedented high as ecclesiastical leaders perform dazzling miracles by the power of Satan. Fear religion will once again permeate the earth. The "mark of the beast" will be left on all who allow themselves to come under the influence of these powerful end-time leaders. Only those who submit will be permitted to buy or sell; those who refuse to become a part of this Satanic system — "Babylon the Great" — will be allowed to starve (Rev. 13:11-17). The true people of God will be persecuted and, in thousands of instances, martyred. The Spanish Inquisition, the bloody Crusades and

the Reformation persecutions will be paled into insignificance as the blood of modern martyrs flows through the streets of the world. Thousands will die in bloody and ruthless purges (Rev. 13:7; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; etc.).

Figuratively speaking, those who have been murdered in the name of religion will cry out to God: "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood . . .?" (Rev. 6:10.) The reply is: ". . . rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been." Throughout the ages, those who have remained true to God, to Christ, and to the way of truth have been mercilessly martyred by those who have believed they were rendering God a service in so doing (John 16:2). And history has not yet seen the end of such terrible martyrdoms! God will have yet more elect to avenge. And vengeance will come!

End of Satan's Kingdom. The Bible speaks about "the days of vengeance" (Luke 21:22). This is a time of prophetic fulfillment "to fulfil all that is written." That time is nearer than you might have believed. Prophecy marches on! The end of Satan's kingdom and the manifestation of the Kingdom of God are near at hand.

Jesus spoke of a time when "the ruler of this world [will] be cast out" (John 12:31). Yet today, Satan is still very much in power. God's saints know their true identity and affiliation, but those who have been deceived by Satan — the vast majority in this world — don't realize who they are serving.

"We know that we are of God, and *the whole world is in the power of the evil one*" (1 John 5:19).

The time is coming when the devil's power will be dissolved. The handwriting is now on the wall for Satan's kingdom — and, consequently, for the kingdoms of this world which he controls. Daniel wrote of the establishment of God's Kingdom on this earth. He said: ". . . The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed . . . It shall break in pieces

all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44).

The Kingdom of God will come in *power*. It will usurp all earthly kingdoms and will establish a universal theocracy.

Satan will have no part in that kingdom. He, and his followers — human and angelic alike — will be banished from all influence and activity during the period called "the millennium."

At the beginning of Christ's rule on earth, Satan will be forcibly removed from office. "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended. After that he must be loosed for a little while" (Rev. 20:1-3).

The handwriting is now on the wall for Satan's kingdom. He and his followers have been weighed in the balances and found wanting. His kingdom will be taken from him and given to Him who alone rules with justice and equity — Jesus Christ. Peace will break out everywhere!

But before that peaceful Kingdom is established on this earth, the world must endure a time of trouble unprecedented in human experience.

The next installment in this series of articles will discuss the warnings which are even now being given by the "secular prophets." Be sure to read it! □

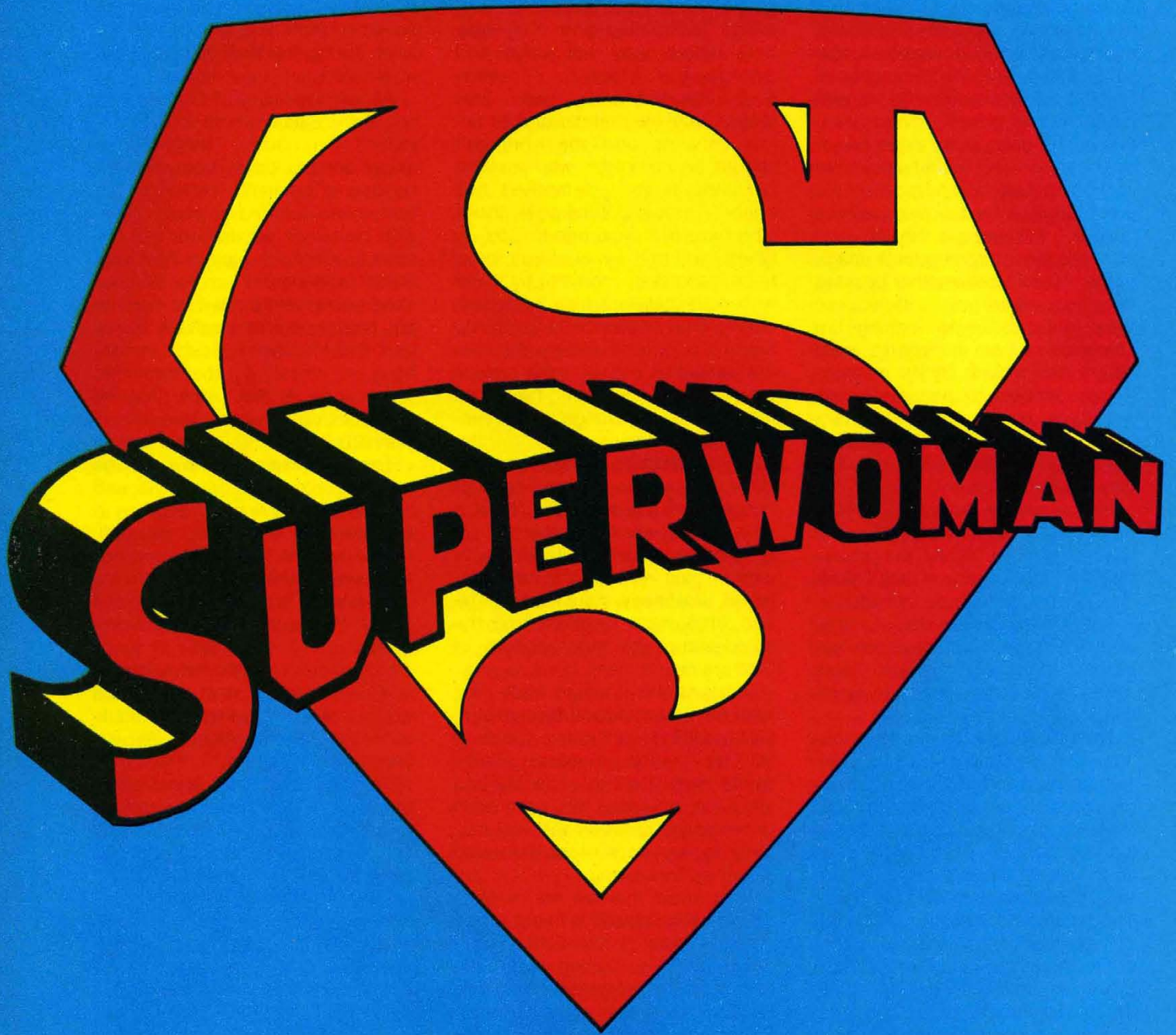
(To be continued)

RECOMMENDED READING

The following literature will afford the reader a better background for understanding this series of articles. The titles are: *Did God Create a Devil? The Occult Explosion — What Does It Mean? Just What Do You Mean — the Kingdom of God? and Why Must Men Suffer?*

Write for these pamphlets. All are free of charge. See the staff box on the inside front cover for the address of our office nearest you.

THE PROVERBS 31



IDEAL OR IMPOSSIBILITY?

Proverbs 31 has been quoted over and over again as a description of the perfect woman. It has been used to show the wide range of activities such a paragon might engage in — how industrious and virtuous a good wife could be. But is Proverbs 31 still a viable model for ideal womanhood — can it really be used in the twentieth century as a practical guide to living?

by Carole Ritter



The Christian woman today is caught in a quandary. She's beset on every side by a crowd of "experts" giving all kinds of advice on how she should live her life. But who to listen to? Those rabid feminists who view all males as chauvinist pigs and want to be more equal than the "enemy"? Those of the quasi-religious anti-lib backlash who promise fur coats and adoration from husbands manipulated through principles of submission and sex supposedly derived from the Bible? Or the assorted givers of advice anywhere on the spectrum in between?

A woman of more fundamentalist persuasion will try to live by "every word of God," using the Bible to guide her through the maze of advice and rhetoric. But even she may find herself puzzled. After which scriptural model should she pattern her life? The wife Sarah, who stayed in the back of the tent while her husband and his visitors talked "men talk"? Or the prophetess Deborah, who judged an entire nation and helped lead its troops into battle? Or should she try to live up to the standards set forth in that oft-quoted passage on the epitome of Old Testament womanhood — Proverbs 31?

The Ideal Bible Family? Before making any snap decisions about what the Bible does or does not say about women and their place in the family and the world, some background material needs to be taken into account and carefully considered.

Throughout biblical history, families who have lived up to the divine ideal have been the exception rather than the rule. In fact, one is hard pressed to find such an example — Mary and Joseph perhaps? We can look back on approximately six thousand years of recorded history and see that not one society — mini or maxi — has ever lived up to God's standards in the area of human relationships. Even the theocracy of ancient Israel had to compromise with human frailty by enacting legislation covering polygamy, divorce and slavery.

The Bible gives us very little by

way of inspiration for balanced family living if we try to use the lives of the righteous men of old as models. For example, it is doubtful that many of us would want to emulate the examples of family life as practiced by Abraham, Jacob, David, or Hosea.

The men of the Old Testament (and their wives and/or concubines) developed lifestyles in accordance with the customs and practices of the societies in which they lived. In New Testament times, Paul and John stayed single in order to cope with the desperate hardships (and the threat of martyrdom) they knew they would be forced to undergo. All of them tried to do the best they could in the circumstances in which they found themselves.

But just as God did not put His heavenly stamp of approval on any past human society or government (with the exception of Israel at its inception), so He didn't by divine fiat declare that the lifestyle of David or Abraham or Paul was a pattern for all humanity throughout the ages. But — and notice this — He didn't condemn any of them for their particular family structure (or lack of it) either. David got into trouble, not for polygamy, but for murdering a man in order to acquire a wife that wasn't rightly his. Moses was chastened for losing his temper, not for marrying an Ethiopian woman. And God Himself, for a unique and special purpose, commanded Hosea to marry a woman who was a prostitute.

This Present Evil World. Any Christian, male or female, should be aware of the fact that this is not God's world. For at least the past half-dozen millennia it has been ruled by Satan the devil. II Corinthians 4:4 states that he is the "god of this world" (see also Luke 4:6; Eph. 2:2; Rev. 12:9). And God is going to continue to allow Satan to rule until Christ comes a second time to set up His world-ruling government.

In the meantime, all of us find ourselves in some sort of less-than-optimum situation. As the author of the book of Ecclesiastes lamented: "It is an unhappy business that God has given to the sons of men to be

PROVERBS' IDEAL WOMAN

*"A good wife who can find?
She is far more precious than jewels.
The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.
She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.
She seeks wool and flax,
and works with willing hands.
She is like the ships of the merchant,
she brings her food from afar.
She rises while it is yet night
and provides food for her household*

*and tasks for her maidens.
She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she plants
a vineyard.
She girds her loins with strength and
makes her arms strong.
She perceives that her merchandise is
profitable.
Her lamp does not go out at night.
She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her hands hold the spindle.
She opens her hand to the poor,
and reaches out her hands to the
needy.
She is not afraid of snow for her
household,*

busy with. I have seen everything that is done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered" (Eccl. 1:13-15).

The life we are given to live is filled with problems and contradictions, which are nearly all the result of living in a Satan-governed society. Nothing we can do as individuals — no amount of keeping God's laws — is going to change the world order. Christ alone can do that. Perhaps, as some have said, the Bible has the solution to every problem, at least in principle. But it is beyond our puny human powers to implement those solutions alone, right now, today. God hands us an imperfect life and expects us to do the best we can with what we have been given in our own situation.

And Our Private Corner of It. With all this as background, we can look at our present family configuration in the Western world and realize that it, also, is not God's ideal. Although God instituted marriage, He did not necessarily invent or approve every detail of all the many forms marriage has taken down through the centuries. So we should not assume that even the American "Bible-Belt" model of

marriage and family life is exactly what God had in mind, either. Remember, this is *all* Satan's world — even our own comfortable corner of it.

The "ideal" nuclear family today is not without its problems and stresses. Our present setup puts tremendous pressure on individual family members to provide emotional solace and sanctuary from a difficult world. Usually absent are the members of the extended nuclear family — uncles, aunts, grandparents — who formerly shouldered some of the emotional burden. Expecting too much of one another, family members today may often feel smothered or harassed by each other's constant demands. They may seek comfort outside the home with their respective peer groups. The home may then become an empty shell, a place to sleep when there's nothing else scheduled.

The Home As Motel. Our society is structured so that the home is no longer the center of life's activities. Fifty or sixty years ago it ceased to be the hub of cottage industry and agricultural activity in the Western world. It is now basically a bedroom and sometimes a feeding station for independently functioning family members.

This separation of the home from

the mainstream of life has drastically changed women's role, making it nearly impossible for them to play the important part they once did in a more home-centered society. Virginia Satir, writing in *Conjoint Family Therapy*, described the impact of this development on women a few decades ago: "Women, living in cities in 'boxes in air' or tucked away in suburbs, felt separated from the bustle and 'real purpose' of the modern-day world. They had been educated for tasks other than housekeeping and child rearing, and taught to be aware of scientific and cultural events going on outside the family world. They now found themselves losing work experience, seniority, self-confidence, as they focused solely on the wife and mother roles. . . . Some women went outside the home to work, placing their children in nurseries, with neighbors, or with a succession of babysitters. Some stayed home and fretted, parenting in a listless, half-hearted, absent-minded way. Some stayed home and turned child rearing into an over-intense occupation to compensate for a feeling of uselessness and a feeling that life was passing them by" (pp. 24-25).

But what is all this leading up to? What has it got to do with ideal

*for all her household are clothed in
scarlet.
She makes herself coverings;
her clothing is fine linen and purple.
Her husband is known in the gates,
when he sits among the elders of the
land.
She makes linen garments and sells
them;
she delivers girdles to the merchant.
Strength and dignity are her clothing,
and she laughs at the time to come.
She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on
her tongue.
She looks well to the ways of her*

*household,
and does not eat the bread of
idleness.
Her children rise up and call her
blessed;
her husband also, and he praises
her:
'Many women have done excellently,
but you surpass them all.'
Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the Lord is to
be praised.
Give her of the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the
gates.'*

Proverbs 31:10-31

womanhood from a Bible standpoint, or Proverbs 31 in particular?

Just this: Proverbs 31 describes a righteous woman who is energetically utilizing all the options available to her in a much more idyllic, agrarian society where the home provided a base of operations for her multitude of creative endeavors. The kind of home she lived in was the center of life, industry and agricultural activity. She was not cut off from the world and its opportunities, because the world revolved around her home.

Proverbs 31 Updated. Proverbs 31 was written in poetic style and is not an actual account of a particular historical woman. It is the author's idealized vision of a "good wife." This Wonder Woman of the past was *not* the typical average Jewish wife and mother of her day. She was married to a man of means who had succeeded in politics on a local level (verse 23). While perhaps not an Eleanor Roosevelt, she was at least a wealthy upper-middle-class matron. She had at her command a bevy of "maidens" or servants (verse 15), and it is also implied that she had at her disposal field hands to help her plant vineyards (verse 16). She had enough money under her control to speculate in real estate (verse 16), to provide capital

for her own small business (verse 13), to "reach out her hands to the needy" (verse 20), and to clothe her family in fine garments (verses 21-22). She had been well educated and was able to absorb the wisdom and teaching of God's Scriptures (verses 26, 30).

What would happen if such a talented and exceptional woman were bodily removed from her ancient setting and plunked down in the middle of twentieth-century America? How would she react?

First of all, once she had gotten over the culture shock, she might find herself utterly unfulfilled in a role as the stereotyped upper-middle-class housewife. Once her children were old enough to be out of the home, at school for the largest part of the day, she would find herself with nothing to do. Her one-women linen-garment business would be anachronistic, not to mention unprofitable. Competition from machine-made clothing would render her endeavors futile and a bit ridiculous. It would also no longer be profitable for her to buy small fields and plant vineyards — agribusiness has taken over that facet of her former life. Besides, she would now have no field hands to help her. Her servants would have dwindled from the former staff of

several dozen to a maid that comes in twice a week and an after-school babysitter. There wouldn't be any needy people in her part of town, either, so regular contributions to her favorite charity would take the place of her own personal gifts to individuals. She would have plenty of money to buy her family's clothes ready-made, better and cheaper than she herself could weave and sew. In fact, she would find that her entire former lifestyle was now impossible — none of it would fit or be practical any more.

As an urban or suburban housewife, she might be able to bargain hunt, to shop wisely, to plant a small backyard garden, or to sew some items of her family's wardrobe. But she could not practically carry out her former activities unless she lived on a farm, where life still revolves around the home to a certain extent.

So what would she do to regain the sense of fulfillment and self-respect she used to have? Her only recourse would probably be to specialize. She did have an interest in real estate. Perhaps she might take a course or two, get her license and make herself a career in that field. Or she might go back to school and go on to become a successful clothing designer. Or she might opt

for some different career entirely. But there's no way she could go back to being the Jill-of-all-trades, mistress-of-the-house-on-the-hill that she used to be.

Keepers at Home? But wait a minute, you might be saying. This is supposed to be a *righteous* woman! Where does she get off leaving home and going out to work in the mainstream of society? Doesn't the New Testament command women to be "keepers at home"?

This is the impression that many Christians have — that our model of the family — a woman isolated at home with several small children, far away from the world of work — is God's ideal. Actually, this separation of the husband's world from the family and the wife are *part of Satan's system*. Sociologists are aware of the obvious problems it presents, and how badly it affects wives and children. Virginia Satir again describes the results: "Men's family lives became so separated from their work lives that they lived almost in two separate worlds. . . . They often wished the family would be geared more to their needs. They were tired and discouraged and rattled from the day's exploits and decisions. They could do with a family turned rest home or quiet sanitarium" (*op. cit.*).

And, incidentally, the remark made by the apostle Paul about women being "keepers at home" (Titus 2:5, KJV) does not mean that women should be "*kept* at home," or confined to that environment. It does imply that the domestic duties of a wife and mother should receive top priority.

In other words, women are not being admonished to stay put in one location, as long as their household is well cared for.

And the "home" about which the apostle Paul spoke *does not exist* in most parts of the Western world in our day and age. Rare exceptions are home-based, family-centered businesses, and small farms or homesteads where every family member's contribution is necessary. It is obvious when read in the light of the rest of the Bible that God *does not universally limit women's role* in such an arbitrary fashion. There is danger in trying to

take a biblical statement out of its historical and social setting and forcing it to apply in the same way to an entirely different society two millennia removed from the milieu of which it was descriptive.

Limited Alternatives. If we are to be living by every word of God (Luke 4:4), extracting from the Bible *all* the principles that apply to our present situation, there are several other factors we must take into consideration. First of all, God wants and commands every one of us to develop the talents He has given us to the fullest extent possible (see Luke 19 and Matthew 25). Living in this "present evil world" (Gal. 1:4), it is difficult for even men to do this properly. But it is much more difficult for women. Women today are presented with a limited set of alternatives that leave a lot to be desired — in fact, *none* of them parallel the life God would ideally want them to lead.

For instance, today if a woman with children chooses to work outside the home, once those children are old enough to be left in some sort of day-care arrangement (which, remember, is not a sin, though sometimes not the best — the Proverbs 31 woman had servants which could and probably did fill the same function), she faces many problems. She runs head on into the same frustrations that already beset men in our society, plus she may have to contend with sexist prejudices on the job. She may also have to deal with her own long-ingrained feelings of guilt about not being in her "proper" place. But she will receive the benefits of human dignity and self-respect that go along with earning a salary, and her children may actually benefit from her bettered personality. Then again, there may be days when she just doesn't have enough energy to do real justice to her several pursuits. But working is one way of coping, and some women may be able to handle this situation well, or even flourish in it.

But a woman who chooses to stay at home and occupy herself with full-time duties as a housewife also doesn't live in a bed of roses. Unless she is one of the rare farmers' wives who can actually literally

practice the activities of the Proverbs 31 woman, she has to put up with the feeling of being cut off from the "real" world of influence and accomplishment (by our society's admittedly twisted standards). She may also have to cope with an ebbing sense of self-respect and self-worth. She may have to suffer intense loneliness, especially while her children are young and she has no really stimulating adult companionship except, in some cases, a tired, uncommunicative husband at the end of the day.

Or a woman may avoid all these family-related problems by choosing to remain single. This in itself is an honorable way to live (see I Cor. 7:25-28), but it comes with its own set of trials and tribulations. Lack of sexual fulfillment, loneliness, functioning in a couple-oriented society — all have to be dealt with.

Find Fulfillment. So the options are there, for most of us they are less than perfect, and God allows us to choose the "least worst" of them for our own particular situation. The Bible does not give strict guidelines as to exactly how a Christian woman should structure her lifestyle in this society today. But she is guided in principle to try to find fulfillment and develop her talents in the best way she can. Until Christ returns to set up an ideal utopia free from Satan's influence, all any of us can do is make the best of a bad situation.

What God really wants is for each of us — men and women alike — to self-actualize — to develop all of our talents to the full in service to ourselves, our families, and the rest of mankind. This is one of the principles we can derive from the example in Proverbs 31 — this woman was using her abilities to the full. How we try to emulate her example in the context of our own particular position in life is up to us. There is no pat answer or set formula that is right for everybody.

Proverbs 31 is an ode to a woman that might have been. Her era has long ago vanished — but the spirit of achievement and excellence she stood for should give every woman today the inspiration to achieve a similar success in her own life. □

IF YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW MORE

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

The answer is yes, we do.

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

So if you have spiritual matters to discuss or questions to ask about biblical topics such as repentance, baptism, etc., please feel free to write us and request a private appointment. Worldwide mailing addresses are as follows:

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

I would like to comment on the answer to the statement by Mr. Norman D. in the "Questions & Answers" section of the May GN. He said that "living forever does not interest me."

The reply he was given tried to encourage him by listing some of the things he will be able to do — things he can look forward to.

This is all fine, but I feel the answer is incomplete. I can sympathize with Mr. D's bewilderment because the same question bothered me at one time in the past. All right, I thought — so we're destined to become super-beings — so what? Couldn't even that become boring after an eternity or two? Why prove Ecclesiastes all over again?

But the answer to Ecclesiastes is I Corinthians 13. Living forever for others is the key. To use the gifts God intends to give us to enrich *others'* lives — *this* to me is a future worth thinking about!

I can offer an analogy: I've been a member of God's Church for a number of years, and during that time I've received more physical blessings than I really need. But the greatest happiness for me has not come from counting what I've gained, but from *sharing* what I've been given with the wonderful friends I've come to know and love. Perhaps Mr. D isn't too interested in what he can gain for himself, but I'll bet his being or not being in God's Kingdom is going to mean a lot to somebody else.

Steven F.,
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Why Alice Doesn't

Thank you so much for the article in the April GN about women. So many questions I had asked God in prayer were answered in the article. I really wondered if God did view men and women as equal. After reading and studying your article, I feel closer to God and glad to be a woman.

Judy M.,
East Aurora, New York

The Apocalypse Generation

Having just read the article by Jeff Calkins ("An Open Letter to the Apocalypse Generation"), I felt that I had to write to express my gratitude to *The Good News* for publishing such a good article. I am about the same age as the author and have thought along the same lines as his article, wondering about the answers. It clears up a lot of questions that I had as a teenager.

Richard H.,
Yell, Shetland Islands

Appreciative Co-Worker

As I send my contribution this month to the Work, I feel that I must add a few words of praise and appreciation for *The Good News* magazine. From Garner Ted's brilliant lead article to the Letters, it is — as someone has said — *dyn-o-mite!* Thank you for making this magazine available to us co-workers. Somehow it seems to get better each month, and nearly every article seems to answer the questions that are most heavy on my heart. I thank God that I can be a part of making this available, not only to myself, but to others also. Please — keep it coming!

Leslie P.,
Kannapolis, North Carolina

Read the Book

When I decided to read the Bible, I went out and bought a Revised Standard Version, mostly because I couldn't understand my King James version that well. After eight months I'm much more informed and impressed. Also I understand my King James Bible much better — just slower reading, that's all. Just wanted you to know that I finished what I set out to do.

Tom M.,
Oceanside, New York

• *If any of our readers need encouragement to follow in Mr. M's footsteps, send for our free booklet Read the Book — it shows how exciting and interesting the pages of the Bible can be.*

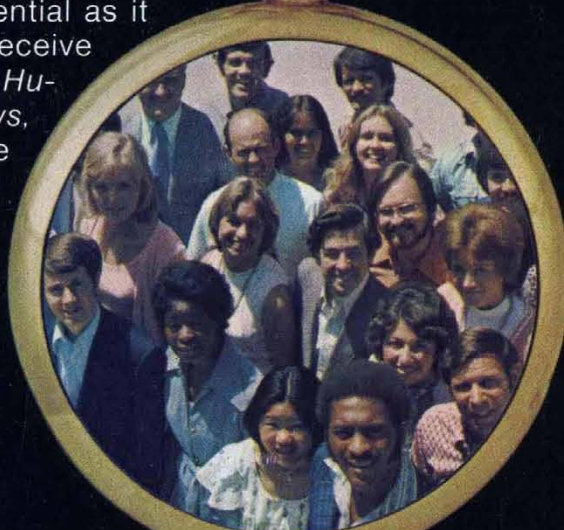
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