

The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

Which Day Should You Keep?

SABBATH

or

SUNDAY

?

.....
Is there a difference?

If so, how can you

prove it?

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The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

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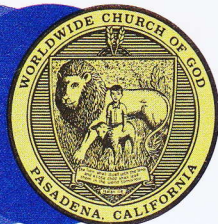
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COVER

In the Old Testament, God commanded his people to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. Did Jesus do away with the Sabbath, or was it changed to Sunday after the resurrection? What does the New Testament say? See page 11.

GOOD NEWS PERSONAL



PEACE ON EARTH

How it will finally come

How will “peace on earth” finally come?

Every rational human being wants peace. In fact, most people want peace badly enough to fight for it. Which is part of the problem. The irony is that if anything at all is worth fighting for, peace certainly is.

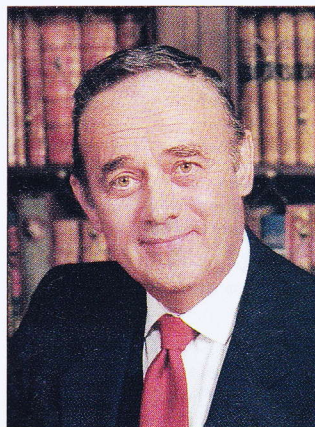
Many believe that it is a great good to go to war to avenge injustice and achieve peace in the name of God. Many go in the confidence that he will deliver them, because they believe they are fighting for God.

Bloody massacres of Protestants by Catholics and of Catholics by Protestants have marred the history of Europe. Jews have been at various times targeted for assault as the “murderers of our Lord.”

But Jesus did not teach that war is the way to peace. (Wars fought in the name of God ought to have been labeled what they were—wars. When, for example, a “Christian nation” goes to war to promote its religious heritage, it has failed to understand what *Jesus* taught.)

The idea that peace is worth fighting for may be a noble one. But it is not the biblical way to bring world peace. Jesus taught his followers how to suffer the indignities of persecution in the hope of a *great future event*—his return in spirit glory as *King of kings*—at which Christians will be vindicated and given their reward.

The Christian way of life, as revealed in the Bible, is the true way of peace. It is a way that does no harm. It does not demand its rights at the expense of others. It projects itself in caring and sharing. Its strength lies in the Christian’s faith in the power of its author and finisher to do all he promised he would do. The true Christian, like his



or her Master, is impervious to ultimate defeat. Love, which the apostle John equates with God, provides power that extends beyond the immediate and into eternity. The Christian victory is absolute. Jesus predicted persecution—even martyrdom for his followers—“If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also”

(John 15:20, New International Version throughout). But he promised them the final *victory* at his return—not before.

Most would agree that peace is worth dying for. Jesus also taught that peace is worth *living* for. He said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9).

True peace cannot come through mere wishing or hoping. Nor can it come through war. It must come from within. It must come through *changed* minds and hearts that turn right attitudes into right actions. Paul admonished, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

Such an attitude is not natural to the human mind, however. Human beings, apart from God, do not naturally know the way to peace. But true peace has its foundation in love. That peace-producing love is evident in those in whom Jesus lives through the Holy Spirit. “All men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

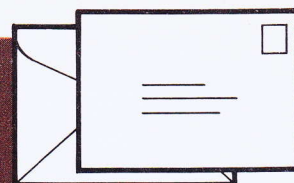
How will peace on earth finally come? Peace is here now, in part, in the lives of true Christians. But worldwide peace is coming! It will begin when the Prince of peace, Jesus Christ, returns to earth to establish the kingdom of God.

World peace is no lost cause. It is as sure as the rising of tomorrow’s sun. And even now its flame burns deep within the heart of every true Christian.

Joseph W. Teach

Pastor General
Worldwide Church of God

LETTERS



Received by accident

By accident a new postman put a neighbor's copy of *The Good News* in my mailbox. So I took advantage of a good thing, read the whole magazine and enjoyed it so very much. I would like for a few friends to read it also. Would you please send them a copy?

Augie Lewis
Chicago, Illinois

"Hope for Homosexuals"

I read your article "Hope for Homosexuals." It was written with inspiration and compassion. I carried a great deal of fear, shame and guilt for a long time, and now I've realized that I've been called out of my homosexual life-style. And yes, I want out, too. It will be a hard process on my part, which I'm looking forward to doing.

Kahului, Hawaii

I've just completed my fourth reading of the May-June article "Hope for Homosexuals" and I'm still in shock. You state, "From all indications so far, the disease [AIDS] is not spread through the air, by sneezes or coughs or through direct contact with the skin." There is plenty of information available (by doctors who have had the guts to expose the facts at the expense of their careers), indicating there is a mass cover-up of the facts.

Richfield, Utah

All the articles are really helpful in the *Good News* magazine, but there is one that made me sit down to tell you that you've taught me another lesson.

I never gave any thought about [homosexuals] being called into the Church. It just never entered my head. Dennis

Luker really woke me up and made me think.

Elma Chestnut
Parkdale, Oregon

In agreement

My *Good News* magazine as well as *The Plain Truth* have both clarified many of the teachings of the Holy Bible which were unclear in my mind. The magazines are beautifully written and concise. After several years of reading both, I have yet to find a grammatical error—something that is prevalent in many magazines and newspapers.

I do not completely agree with all your teachings, but in general I think you are in agreement with the Scriptures.

Linus J. Blanchard
Houma, Louisiana

Helping a troubled world

Thanks for sending my free *Good News*. It has enriched my life.

In years gone by I often listened to Herbert W. Armstrong on radio. Though I am retired and on limited income, I would like to contribute so others may continue receiving *The Good News*. You're really helping this troubled world.

Reva N. McGhee
Alexandria, Virginia

More to it than you think

Your article in the May-June issue, "Water—There's More to It Than You Think!", is great! I never knew my mind could comprehend so much. Since I stopped working on Saturday and started observing it as a Holy Day, I seem to have peace in my life. There is not as much stress as before.

Peggy Bell
Lumberton, North Carolina

Where do I fit?

I am writing to you as a co-worker and, hopefully, a future

member of God's Church. Could you write something for those people who acknowledge the Worldwide Church of God as God's true Church, yet, due to their weaknesses, haven't made the total commitment of baptism?

From what I've learned in the last five and one half years of Bible study, one can only be called a "true Christian" if one has been baptized and received the gift of God's Holy Spirit. The majority of *Good News* articles deal with how to develop, appreciate and work with the gift God has already given.

But what about those of us who don't have this help within us—the co-workers? It seems that I'm on the outside looking in. It is difficult to identify with the term "true Christian" when reading *Good News* articles. It's confusing, disheartening and frightening. Where do co-workers fit in?

Dubois, Pennsylvania

Many nonmember readers become interested in knowing what they personally need to do to continue their growth. For these people, including co-workers, reading about God's truth translates into action. Repentance and baptism into God's Church often follow.

You mention that some people, due to their weaknesses, haven't made the commitment of baptism. This is an often misunderstood concept. God calls sinners, not perfect people, to repentance. The very reason for repentance, baptism and receiving God's Holy Spirit is to help one overcome his or her weaknesses. It is impossible to overcome without God's supernatural help.

God's Church has ordained ministers trained to help people with their personal spiri-

tual growth. They do not pressure anyone into joining an organization. They know that God, not men, calls people to his Church (John 6:44).

Good News readers who would like to counsel with one of God's ministers can write to our address nearest them for more information (see the list below).

The Good News welcomes your comments. Letters for this column should be addressed to "Letters to the Editor." The editor reserves the right to use letters so addressed in whole or in part, and to include your name and edit the letter for clarity or space. Send all communications to our address nearest you:

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God's Church ISN'T What It Used to Be

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). God does not change (Malachi 3:6).

But does this mean God's Church remains the same, frozen in time, still doing things the way they were done hundreds of years ago—or even 10 years ago?

A brief look at history shows that God's Church has had numerous dynamic changes. You need to know *why* change has to take place!

Though God's character remains the same, the way he works through his people changes.

God worked with Abraham and Moses face to face (Genesis 18:1-33, Numbers 12:8). Even though God worked with them in the same way, the work he gave them to do was quite different.

God uses leaders of different personalities and administrative styles. Look at Joshua, Samuel, David, Nathan, Elijah, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah. Throughout the years God used these leaders, the nature of the job—the Work of God—changed dramatically.

Hebrews 1:1 summarizes it: God has spoken “at various times and in different ways.” In New Testament times, God spoke through Jesus in one way; in another manner he spoke through Peter and Paul and John.

Through the centuries God has made major changes in the way he works through his servants.

Moses made some changes

God used Moses to implement a major change in the way God

God's Church has changed throughout the ages. Here's why change must occur!

BY MICHAEL MORRISON

worked with mankind. Through Moses, God called a nation to be his “special treasure... a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5-6).

Moses had been trained in the Egyptian royal family for 40 years. After murdering a man, he became a fugitive and shepherd for 40 years. God then chose Moses to lead his chosen people.

Moses had a difficult job. All day long the people came to him for counsel, asking him to judge controversies (Exodus 18:13). Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, suggested that Moses could be more effective if he delegated this job to others.

Moses took Jethro's advice (verses 14-26), and God blessed this change in civil administration. He gave extra help to the assistants (Numbers 11:16-17).

Jethro belonged to the Midianites, an unsophisticated group of traders and shepherds. It was ironic that he gave administrative advice to Moses, who had been trained in the Egyptian government. Good advice may come from unexpected sources.

Many people wanted Moses to

make even more changes, but they tried to bring the changes about in the wrong way. Korah, Dathan, Abiram and 251 other men tried to force a change (Numbers 16:1-3), and they were punished (verses 31-35).

God isn't against change, but he is against rebellion. Rebellion against God's leaders is the same as rebellion against God (Exodus 16:8). Change has to come in the right way, through the inspiration of God and through suggestion and request, rather than demand.

God changed the timetable

The Israelites went through many changes in the wilderness. In one incident, God himself made a major change in his plan for these people.

The Israelites sent 12 scouts into the land of Canaan to spy out the area they were to conquer (Numbers 13:1-2). Ten scouts brought back a discouraging, faithless report (verses 31-33).

Most of the Israelites believed the evil report and said, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!” (Numbers 14:1-2).

God was displeased with their attitude. He decided to destroy the rebellious Israelites and start over again with Moses (verses 11-12). But Moses convinced God to modify his punishment (verses 13-20).

The Israelites had already been in the wilderness 1½ years; God decided to wait 38½ more years and allow the next generation to conquer Canaan. All those who had murmured, rebelled and re-

jected God would die in the wilderness, just as they had said (verses 20-29). God told them to go away from Canaan (verse 25).

Now here's part of the story many people overlook. God, through Moses, had announced a change in the timetable. But some people thought they could change it back.

"The people mourned greatly. And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, 'Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised, for we have sinned!'" (verses 39-40).

Now the people wanted to enter Canaan immediately. Moses warned them, but they didn't listen. They went up, and they fell by the sword (verses 41-45).

The people's willingness to enter Canaan came a day too late. God had changed the way he was working with them, but the people did not change when God's leader announced the change. They refused to follow God's leadership.

They changed their actions, but their basic attitude—rebellion—had not changed. God had decided on a new way, and it was rebellious for the people to insist on the old way.

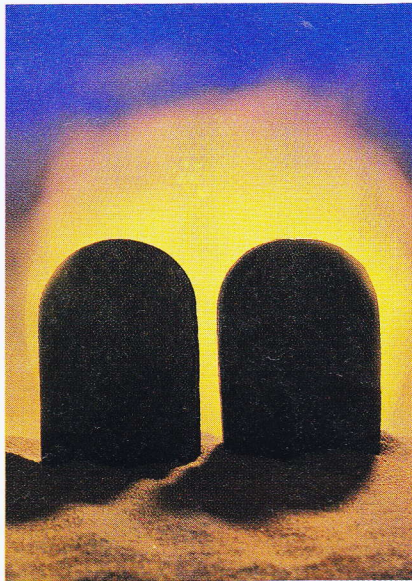
New Testament changes

As he had previously planned, God made sweeping changes in the first century. Jesus Christ's death and resurrection led to a complete transformation in the way people were to worship God.

There was also a radical change in the type of people God would choose to call his own. God would no longer center his work among the Israelites. God established a new group, the Church, and he called some of the gentiles as well as some of the Jews.

Paul explained in Romans 10 that most of the Israelites did not believe Jesus was the Savior and Messiah. The Jews, like their ancestors, failed to change when God's leaders announced the change.

In chapter 11, Paul compared



From tablets...

God's people to an olive tree. Some of the old branches (the Israelites) were broken off because of unbelief, and new branches (the gentiles) were grafted in (verses 17-24). Gentiles were once cut off from God, but they have been made near to God by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:11-13).

Christ's death made it possible for gentiles to be part of God's Church. But it didn't happen right away. The Christian Church was all Jewish for about 15 years. The book of Acts tells us how the doctrinal change to allow gentiles into the Church was implemented.

An angel told a God-fearing gentile named Cornelius to send for the apostle Peter (Acts 10:1-8). As Cornelius' servants were on their way to get Peter, Peter had a vision about all kinds of unclean animals—animals unfit for human food (verses 9-16).

An angel told Peter to go with the men to Cornelius' house. There Peter explained the meaning of his vision: "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. . . . God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (verses 28, 34-35).

Christ died for the ungodly

(Romans 5:6). He died for sinners, paying the penalty of sin (verse 8). His sacrifice applies to gentiles as well as to Jews.

This radical change was not easy for the first-century Jewish Church of God. Some Christians criticized Peter, so Peter explained how God had revealed this truth to him (Acts 11:1-18). This convinced the critics at the time, but another controversy soon arose.

The circumcision controversy

Paul and Barnabas began to travel, preaching the gospel. They went to Antioch in Pisidia and preached in the synagogue (Acts 13:14-41). The Jews rejected Paul's words, so Paul turned to the gentiles (verses 45-46). Many gentiles believed.

Some Jewish Christians claimed the converted gentiles should be circumcised and that the gentiles had to keep all the laws of Moses (Acts 15:1, 5). Many disagreed, saying that rituals such as circumcision were not necessary.

The apostles resolved the controversy at a conference in Jerusalem. There was much dispute, even among the apostles and elders (verses 6-7).

After much discussion, Peter concluded that God had given his Spirit to the gentiles, making no distinction (verses 7-9). James, who seems to have been a leader of the circumcision advocates (Galatians 2:11-12), agreed.

The apostles decided that the gentiles should not be burdened with the ritual laws. The apostles simply told them to avoid four specific evils (Acts 15:19-29).

More gentiles continued to be converted to Christianity, and eventually the Church became primarily non-Jewish. God's Church, which started out 100 percent Jewish, isn't what it used to be.

A misunderstanding about Christ's return

At first the disciples thought that Christ would return soon,

• • • • •
within the lifetime of the apostle John (John 21:20-24). They did not correctly understand God's timetable.

Peter quoted an Old Testament scripture about "the last days" and applied it to his time (Acts 2:14-21). He wrote that Jesus had come "in these last times" (I Peter 1:20).

The apostle Paul's letters indicate that he thought Christ's return was near: "We shall not all sleep" (I Corinthians 15:51).

And "we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:15).

Paul said Jesus spoke "in these last days" (Hebrews 1:1-2). The apostle James said, "The coming of the Lord is at hand" (James 5:8). And John wrote, "It is the last hour" (I John 2:18).

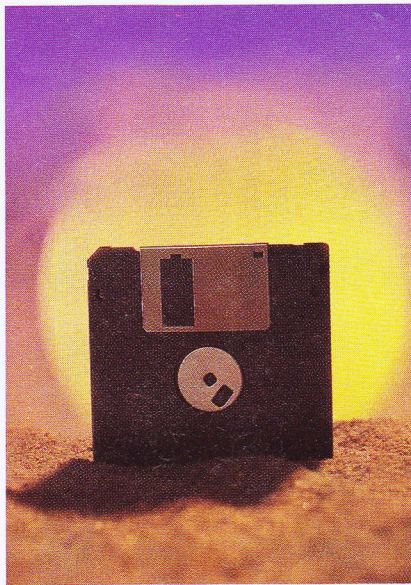
The misunderstanding was corrected not through a formal conference, but through time. Christ did not return as soon as many had expected. The Christians, though still believing that Christ would return, focused their faith on God's way of life, not on his timetable.

Change in preaching

Jesus Christ commissioned his disciples to preach the gospel. Peter and Stephen, preaching to the Jews, referred to the Scriptures (Acts 2 and 7). But that approach would not have been effective for people who didn't know the Scriptures or didn't consider them to be authoritative.

In many cities Paul preached in synagogues. He used the Scriptures as the basis of his teaching (Acts 17:1-2). But in Athens, when Paul preached to the philosophers, he did not use the Scriptures. He referred to Greek literature, and gave a general introduction to who God is and what he wants man to do (verses 22-31).

In Corinth Paul persuaded many Jews and Greeks who attended the synagogue (Acts 18:1-4). He did not use fancy oratory; he simply preached about Christ (I Corinthians 2:1-2). He adapted



... to computer disk.

his message to the audience, whether speaking to those who knew the law or to those who did not know the law (I Corinthians 9:19-23). In his letters, too, he approached topics in different ways.

A history of changes

Throughout the centuries administrative styles of God's Church also changed. The way the gospel was preached changed. The focus changed. A few teachings had to be corrected.

God's Church today changes. That should not surprise anyone who has looked at Church history, for the Church has often changed. This is part of growth, and it will continue until the return of Christ.

The way the gospel is preached has changed. If we wish to reach people who are interested in religion, we can use one approach. But we must use a different approach to reach those who are not yet interested in the teachings of the Bible. We need to consider their perspective and what they're interested in—and their interests change with the times.

The style of the message changes. The methods of printing change. Financial circumstances change. Civil laws change. All these require some administrative

• • • • •
changes. God's Church isn't what it used to be.

Some people are upset when changes are made. But changes should be expected, and understood in perspective. Today's changes are minor in comparison to events of the first century.

In fundamental doctrines and way of life, God's Church remains basically the same. But God's Church must change to be able to teach God's truth to a changing world!

For thousands of years, society's changes have been rather slow. Most people lived about the same life-style as their grandparents did.

But in the late 20th century, society is changing faster than ever. Those who died 100 years ago, if brought back to life, wouldn't know how to function in today's computerized world. The *world* is not what it used to be.

God's Church, in contrast, has had unusual stability in the late 20th century. We, unlike the world, have a solid anchor in the Bible. We have morals and standards that don't have to be re-evaluated as situations change. We emphasize family unity and stability, God's love and mercy and living by the eternal laws God has revealed in the Bible.

A Christian who died 100 years ago, if brought back to life, would recognize God's Church today.

Though some changes have been made, it's the same Church—God's Church. The Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, is the same. The Church does God's Work, teaching his way of life.

God's basic character does not change. His way of life does not change. This gives us stability *if we focus our minds and lives on what God teaches*. This is what is important. The changes are minor in comparison.

God's Church isn't what it used to be—in some respects. But God's Church, in the most important aspects, is still—and always will be—the same! □

IT CAN BE DONE!

BY NEIL EARLE
AND NORMAN L. SHOAF

*Terry Fox pursued an exploit
never before achieved. God,
through Christians, today is
reaching toward a goal that is
infinitely more astounding.*

Terry Fox started out with
the odds against him.

Terry always wanted to
play college basketball. Cancer
shattered his dream: At age 18
he had to have his right leg re-
moved above the knee.

But in March 1977, as he lay
in a British Columbia hospital, a
new idea stirred in his mind.

He wrote to the Canadian
Cancer Society, "Somewhere the
hurting must stop." He proposed
to dramatize the plight of the
disabled and to raise money for
research by running on an arti-
ficial leg across the entire 5,300-
mile span of Canada!

The society was not impressed
and ignored Terry. Even his
close friends scorned his plan.

That left it up to Terry Fox to
show that it could be done.

Never before done

Stop and think: As a Christian,
you are among the first people to
take part in a grand plan God
devised to show that something
never before done *can* be done.

For the first time, God intends
to take frail, carnal humans and
change them into powerful, im-
mortal members of his family!

God knows, as Terry Fox
wrote, that somewhere the hurt-

ing must stop. God proposes,
through his called people, to stop
all the hurting in this world.

A young man's painful quest

Terry made
up his mind to
complete the
trip. But first
he had to re-
invent running:
two hops on
the left leg,
then one pain-
ful skip on his
artificial right
leg. Hop, hop,
skip. Over and
over and over
again.

Terry began
running an ag-
onizing half
mile each day.

Eight months later he could
cover 23 miles a day.

Terry's family raised a little
money from garage sales. A few
local businesses helped.

On April 12, 1980, Terry
dipped his artificial leg in the
harbor in St. John's, Newfound-
land. Vancouver lay 5,300 miles
and five months away. The
Marathon of Hope began.

Terry started with only
\$2,500. He hoped, deliriously, to
raise \$1,000,000.

For weeks his run across
Canada got little notice. He cov-
ered 26 miles a day, with the
stump of his leg bleeding and
blistering. But he didn't see one
big crowd. One police depart-
ment called him a traffic haz-
ard. Little money came in. It was





bleak, depressing, disheartening. Only pure toughness kept him going.

Hop, hop, skip.

What blocks your way?

Every Christian is in a race to do something never before done—turn humans into members of God's own family.

What's in your way? Lethargy? Discouragement? An overpowering temptation?

Paul encourages: "Do you not know that those

who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown" (I Corinthians 9:24-25).

Terry Fox ran a Marathon of Hope. But God has given us a hope that transcends anything in this physical world. We're running a *spiritual* race.

Hebrews 12:1-2 tells us: "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Support begins to build

Finally, somewhere in Quebec, after his daily marathon, a radio station in Seattle, Washington, interviewed Terry on the air.

Momentum began to build.

Slowly but surely, Canadians who watched the nightly news heard more about the solitary

Terry Fox monument in Thunder Bay, where Terry ended his run. This year Terry's parents retraced his steps and ended here September 1. Photos courtesy Terry Fox Run.

runner, silhouetted against the immense wilderness. On he ran into Canada's heartland.

Hop, hop, skip.

Sores and cysts formed on the stump of his leg, and it pounded with pain, but Terry refused to quit.

By the time Terry reached Ontario, crowds began to greet and cheer him on. On July 11, 1980, 10,000 people jammed the streets of Toronto to see Terry run painfully in the stifling heat. They heard his compelling message for charity: "I'm not going to make a cent out of this, now or ever."

That did it. This single-minded figure reached into Canada's consciousness like no one else in recent history. By the time Terry hop, hop, skipped out of Toronto, he was a national folk hero.

People began to contribute. Millions became excited that Terry would finish his run. Everyone watched for him on the news.

We can inspire others

After we win our Christian race, others will see the titanic challenge we took on, and they will know they can win their race, too (James 1:18).

God, in a sense, has left it up to us to show that it can be done. Yes, he's really doing it *through* us. But we have to put forth effort. We have to remain faithful to the end.

As we hop, hop, skip through the trials of this life, God reminds us that he's empowered us to win—to become his own children (John 1:12).

A true hero

Terry Fox's name was a household word by September 1, 1980. That day, he entered a hospital in Thunder Bay, Ontario, for a supposed chest cold.

Then he announced to a stunned nation the awful verdict: The cancer had spread into his lungs. He was a month past the

halfway mark, 3,339 miles from where he'd started. But Terry Fox's marathon was over.

The legend of Terry Fox, however, was just beginning. The national media sponsored a giant telethon. When it was all over, the boy who had hoped to raise \$1,000,000 had almost single-handedly produced \$27 million!

When Terry Fox died on June 28, 1981, flags hung at half-mast across Canada. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau mourned the passing of an unusual 22-year-old whose drive and self-sacrifice propelled him into "the exceedingly thin ranks of the truly heroic."

Terry Fox was gone, but his name would inspire his country for years to come.

You can do it!

As his death approached, Paul wrote: "The time of my departure is at hand. I

have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (II Timothy 4:6-8).

Paul was talking about you! Aren't you among those who, at Christ's return, will "have loved his appearing"?

When you beat all the obstacles in your life—when you set yourself once and for all to follow God's way always—when you hop, hop, skip to the end of your race—when you prove that this feat, never before done, *can* be achieved—you, too, will be propelled into "the exceedingly thin ranks of the truly heroic."

Finish this Christian race! Prove that humans, with God's help, can become God! □



Who Was JESUS' FATHER

Millions of people who consider themselves Christians celebrate the birth of Christ.

Most of these same people also believe in the Trinity doctrine. They claim that their beliefs in the birth of Christ and the Trinity are based on the Bible.

Yet, if we believe the biblical account of Christ's birth, we simply cannot accept the Trinity. Let's understand why.

Son of the Holy Spirit?

The story of Jesus' conception is told by two Gospel writers—Matthew and Luke. Those who believe in a Trinity may use Matthew's account to back up their theory. But let's see what it says.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:18).

Later, an angel appeared to Joseph and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (verse 20).

Taken at face value, these verses seem to indicate that the Holy Spirit was a person responsible for Mary's pregnancy. But can that be so?

Get all the facts

The Bible is written so that it takes a little digging to get all the facts about a subject (Isaiah 28:10, 13). Let's see what Luke has to say about the same event.

The angel who came to Mary with the news of her impending conception said, "He [Jesus] will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest" (Luke



Though millions believe the Godhead is a Trinity, the so-called "Christmas story" disproves this!

1:32). Clearly, whoever the "Highest" is, that person will be Jesus' Father. "Highest" implies that there can be no one higher. That, in itself, shows that Jesus was the Son of the greatest being in the universe.

But, lest any should argue the point, Luke throws further light on the subject: "Therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (verse 35).

If the Holy Spirit were an individual and if, as a person, the Holy Spirit caused Mary to conceive, then Jesus would have to be called the Son of the Holy Spirit.

Spirit is power

The truth is—and it would shock millions to know—that the Holy Spirit is not a person. Rather, it is the agency by which God the Father works. In the same verse in Luke this is made plain: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you"—and what is the bib-

lical definition of the Holy Spirit?—"the power of the Highest" (Luke 1:35).

Again the word *Highest* is used. The Holy Spirit is an agency, a force, a power that is used by the Highest—God the Father—to achieve his purpose.

As an analogy, we might say, "The words on this page are of the printing press." The printing press is used as a medium—a power—to transfer words from the writer's mind to the paper you are reading.

No one would assume that the printing press produced the words of its own volition. Yet without the printing process you wouldn't be reading these words.

Similarly, God the Father used the medium of the Holy Spirit to cause the impregnation in Mary's womb. Without that power, the supernatural conception couldn't have taken place.

It follows, therefore, that the biblical account tells us that Jesus was the Son of the Highest—God himself—and that the conception was achieved by the power that emanates from God.

The Holy Spirit, we repeat, is not a person!

What Jesus says about it

Just in case any should have doubts, let's review what Jesus Christ himself said about this matter.

During one of his frequent brushes with the self-righteous religious leaders of his day, Jesus was accused of blasphemy. Why? Because he had referred to himself as the Son of God (John 10:36). The Jews believed there was only one God being.

A short while later Jesus explained the reason why his friend

Lazarus was ill: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (John 11:4).

Notice that the Son of God, not the Son of the Holy Spirit, might be glorified. Jesus called himself God's Son.

If further proof is needed, we can look at some of Jesus' final words as a human on earth. In John 14, Jesus was talking to his disciples, giving them some last encouraging thoughts before his crucifixion.

In verse 26, Jesus promised his disciples that they would receive "the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name." The Holy Spirit and the Father—Jesus' Father—are referred to as two distinct entities.

The Holy Spirit was to be given to the disciples after Jesus had returned to his Father. This

further proves that God was Jesus' Father, not the Holy Spirit. This Helper that Jesus Christ promised his followers is the agency by which God's power is executed. It is the same power that God used to cause Christ's conception.

The Holy Spirit is not a third person in the Godhead.

Trinity biblical?

The concept of a Trinity is nowhere found in the Bible. Like so many religious ideas, it has been formulated by men under the influence of Satan.

One Bible authority points out that the Trinity is not a scriptural doctrine and that it wasn't until the fourth century that the idea found a place in theology.

Yet, even after admitting this truth and recording that there is no scriptural basis for believing the doctrine, this respected au-

thor says the idea of a Trinity must be accepted as fact. Such is the depth of the deception!

Many scriptures clearly show that the Holy Spirit is not a person. But does it matter just what the Holy Spirit is?

Emphatically yes!

For, simply put, it is by the Holy Spirit that God gives you eternal life! It is through his Holy Spirit that God begets you as his child and makes you part of his family.

The Trinity hides from man God's plan of salvation. The Trinity doctrine maintains that the Godhead is a closed unit into which no one else can enter.

You need to learn more about this tremendous truth. Now, while you're thinking about it, request our free publications "Just What Is the Holy Spirit?" and "Why Were You Born?" You'll be amazed! □

Is the Holy Spirit a person, just like God the Father and Jesus Christ, as the doctrine of the Trinity teaches? Let's examine the plain, clear testimony of Scripture to see what God's Holy Spirit is.

First, it is the *power* of God. " 'Not by might nor by power [of humans], but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). "I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of justice and might," declared the prophet Micah (Micah 3:8).

Second, it is the Spirit of *wisdom and understanding*—the Spirit of counsel and might, of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2).

Third, it is a *gift of God*. After baptism, you receive "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). It is poured out. "It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out

of My Spirit on all flesh" (verse 17).

Fourth, to be effective the Holy Spirit must be *stirred* up.

IS THE HOLY SPIRIT A PERSON?

"I remind you to stir up the gift of God," Paul told the young evangelist Timothy (II Timothy 1:6).

Fifth, the Spirit of God can be *quenched* (I Thessalonians 5:19).

Sixth, it is the *begetting* power of God (Matthew 1:18, Romans 8:9).

Seventh, it is God's *guarantee* to us that he will fulfill his

promise to us (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Eighth, it sheds *the love of God* abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5, Authorized Version).

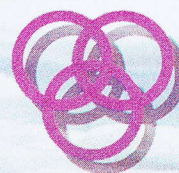
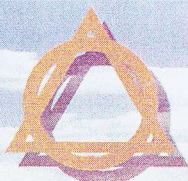
Ninth, it must be renewed (II Corinthians 4:16).

Notice that in all of these scriptures there is not one characteristic even implying the Spirit is a person.

Does a person do any of these things? Is a person "poured," "quenched" or "renewed"?

Consider another important fact. If the Holy Spirit were a person, Jesus Christ prayed to the wrong individual. Throughout the four Gospels, we find Christ speaking to God—not the Holy Spirit—as his Father.

Scripture explodes the Trinity error! If Scripture is our authority, we cannot accept the Trinity doctrine. What will you believe?—*Good News staff* □





S A B B A T H *or* S U N D A Y

Which Day Should You Keep?

Most Christians observe Sunday as the "Lord's day." Some few keep the seventh-day Sabbath. Who is right?

You need to know!

To understand which day Christians are to keep, let's start at the beginning—at creation week.

God rested on the seventh day of creation (Genesis 2:2). Then he "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (verse 3). Right after the creation of man, God created the Sabbath. It was part of his plan for mankind from the beginning.

The seventh day is the day God blessed and set apart. The Bible nowhere says that God removed his blessing from the seventh day or transferred his blessing to another day.

A memorial of creation

Later, God included the Sabbath in the list of 10 fundamental rules his people should live by, commonly known as the Ten Commandments.

The Fourth Commandment states: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work. . . . For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and

BY PETER DITZEL

rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8-11).

This is not a command concerning any one day in seven. The Fourth Commandment orders resting on the *seventh* day of the week. (For proof that the numbering of the days of the week has not changed, send for a free copy of our booklet *Has Time Been Lost?*)

Some think Christians do not need to keep the Ten Commandments. Yet Jesus states in Matthew 5:17: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." The Greek word here translated as *fulfill* means "to bring to full expression" or "show forth in true magnification."

"For assuredly, I say to you," Jesus continues, "till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (verse 18).

A different Greek word is translated as *fulfilled* in this verse. This word means "until all has taken place" or "until everything is past."

Have heaven and earth passed away? Of course not! Then all the commandments remain.

Of course, most professing Christians agree that it is not acceptable to have other gods before God or

to steal or murder. Nevertheless, many would say we no longer need to keep the Fourth Commandment, the Sabbath.

To them, Jesus answers: "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (verse 19).

A Sabbath rest for God's people

Hebrews 4:9 tells us, "There remains therefore a rest"—Greek *sabbatismos*, meaning "Sabbath rest" or "Sabbath observance"—"for the people of God."

Everywhere else in chapters 3 and 4 of Hebrews, the English word *rest* is translated from the Greek word *katapausin*. Only in verse 9 of chapter 4 is *sabbatismos* used.

Hebrews 3 and 4 make these major points: God rested on the seventh day from his works (4:4). There is a promise of entering God's rest (4:1). Entering the land of Canaan was a type or foreshadow of entering God's rest (3:7-11). The true rest has yet to be entered (4:7-8).

Therefore, because it pictures this rest, there remains a keeping of the Sabbath for the people of God (4:9).

Jesus told us more about the Sabbath in response to some criticism. As they walked through the grainfields one Sabbath, Jesus' disciples, being hungry, plucked a few heads of grain to eat (Matthew 12:1-8, Mark 2:23-28).

The Pharisees criticized Jesus, accusing his disciples of breaking the law. Jesus cited the example of David, who also did that "which is not lawful" (Mark 2:25-26) but was guiltless because mercy was more important (Matthew 12:7).

Then Jesus said to them: "The Sabbath was made for man"—not just for Israelites or Jews, but for all humanity—"and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). God made the

Sabbath to ensure our physical and spiritual well-being.

The Pharisees' rules about how the Sabbath should be kept were too strict. The Pharisees did not see that God intended the Sabbath to be a blessing and not a hardship. "Therefore," continued Jesus, "the Son of Man [the term that Jesus commonly used to describe himself] is also Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28).

Jesus declared himself the Lord of the seventh-day Sabbath. Jesus did *not* say that, as Lord of the Sabbath, he was declaring the Sabbath null and void or was changing it to another day. Jesus, as our Lord, is Lord also of the day he created for our benefit.

When was the "Lord's day"?

Was the Sabbath changed to Sunday when Jesus was resurrected? Did Jesus, with his resurrection, institute a day called the "Lord's day" on the day we now call Sunday?

The Bible does not say the Sabbath was changed to another day. But some say the "Lord's day" is a new day of worship in honor of Christ's resurrection.

Jesus was most certainly resurrected, but he was not resurrected on Sunday!

Jesus said the only sign he would give to the unbelievers of his generation that he was the Messiah or Christ was the sign of the prophet Jonah (Matthew 12:38-39).

"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (verse 40).

Jesus was in the grave 72 hours. His body was put into the tomb in the evening (Matthew 27:57-60), and he came out of the tomb 72 hours later, on Saturday evening.

We cannot do justice to this subject in this short article, but

S A B B A T H ?

our free publication *The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday* contains detailed proof.

Jesus did not rise on Sunday nor authorize Sunday as the "Lord's day." Neither did the apostles. Let's examine the scriptures that some say prove the apostles kept the "Lord's day."

The apostle John wrote the book of Revelation. In verse 10 of the first chapter, he states: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet."

The term "Lord's day" is nowhere defined in the Bible as the first day of the week. If John intended it to mean a certain day of the week, then the "Lord's day" would be the day of which Jesus Christ announced he was Lord—the seventh-day Sabbath (Mark 2:28).

The context of Revelation 1:10 shows that John did not intend to specify which day of the week he received the vision. He wanted to express that he was transported in vision to the future event called many times in the Bible "the day of the Lord."

The first day of the week?

In Acts 20:7, we read: "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight."

Some believe the term "breaking bread" in this scripture is a reference to taking the New Testament Passover symbols—what is sometimes called taking the Lord's supper. They conclude this was a Sunday church service.

Notice, however, what Bible scholar E.W. Bullinger says of the origin of the expression "breaking bread":

"'To break bread'... is the literal rendering of the Hebrew idiom... (*paras lechem*), and it means *to partake of food*, and is used of eating as in a meal... We have the same Hebrew idiom in the Greek words of the New Testament, and the readers could have had no other idea or mean-

ing in their minds" (*Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, pages 839-840).

This was not a church service. The events here are much more in keeping with a special dinner and evening with an honored guest (the apostle Paul).

Some have thought I Corinthians 16:1-2 refers to a collection taken up during a Sunday church service. But this is merely an assumption. The Bible states the collection occurred on the first day of the week, but it nowhere says a church service was involved.

This was not an offering for the normal expenses of the church. It was a special collection for the needy saints in Jerusalem (verse 1).

Samuele Bacchiocchi notes that the language of verse 2 stresses the laying aside was to take place privately.

The Greek verb translated as storing up or treasuring up, states Bacchiocchi, clearly implies that the offering "was to be treasured up in each individual's house until the Apostle [Paul] came for it. At that time the collection of what had been stored up could be quickly arranged" (*From Sabbath to Sunday*, page 93).

To say this collection took place during a church service is to read a personal interpretation into the Bible.

The Sabbath condemned?

Now let's examine the scriptures that some believe condemn keeping the Sabbath or cite to say it makes no difference which day we observe.

Colossians 2: This chapter is too long to quote here, but you can read it in your Bible. Paul was combating a heresy that had sprung up in Colossae. Certain Jewish Christians had fallen prey to early Gnostic teachings. They contended that Jesus Christ was not the center of God's plan of salvation. They dishonored Christ by seeking to approach God another way.

Some say verse 14 means the Ten Commandments—including the Sabbath—were done away at the crucifixion, that it was nailed to the cross. Is this so?

What was nailed to the cross? Co-

lossians 2:14 says the "handwriting of requirements" was nailed to the cross. "Handwriting" is translated from the Greek *cheirographon*, meaning "certificate of indebtedness"—the spiritual IOU for our sins that Jesus blotted out with his sacrifice.

Paul is not condemning the law, but is emphasizing the role of Christ by pointing out that when Jesus was sacrificed, the record of our sins was nailed to the cross.

In verses 16-17 we read: "Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

The heresy involved an attempt to approach God using self-abasement—asceticism (verse 23). This included strict regulations in matters of eating and drinking, as well as burdensome dos and don'ts in observing Holy Days, new moons and Sabbath days (verses 16, 20-22).

These regulations diverted those who followed them from the focal point of Christianity—they had lost sight of the central role of Jesus Christ in the plan of salvation.

Paul is not saying there is no value to obeying God's laws, including keeping the Sabbath. He is saying that any act—circumcision, keeping new moons, Sabbaths—cannot replace or transcend Christ.

Esteeming and observing days?

Romans 14:5: "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind."

Once again, Paul is writing about asceticism. Some in the church at Rome believed Christians should eat only vegetables. Paul calls these people "weak in the faith" (verses 1-2).

The stronger in faith knew

they could also eat meat. Nothing in God's law prescribes vegetarianism. The stronger in faith knew they were free from nonbiblical asceticism.

A part of the controversy that had sprung up between these weak and strong Christians was esteeming days. The weaker in faith believed that some days were better than others for fasting or eating or abstaining from certain foods.

Such beliefs have no basis in God's laws, but Paul did not condemn them as long as they did not replace the Christian's focus on Christ (verse 6). Whether to keep the Sabbath was not in question.

Galatians 4:10: "You observe days and months and seasons and years."

Once again, human-devised regulations had found their way into the Church. But Paul did not preach tolerance to the Galatians. In Galatia, Christ's central role was being replaced.

Those preaching a false gospel (*Galatians 1:6-7*) were teaching justification through man-made regulations, saying that salvation depends on human achievement.

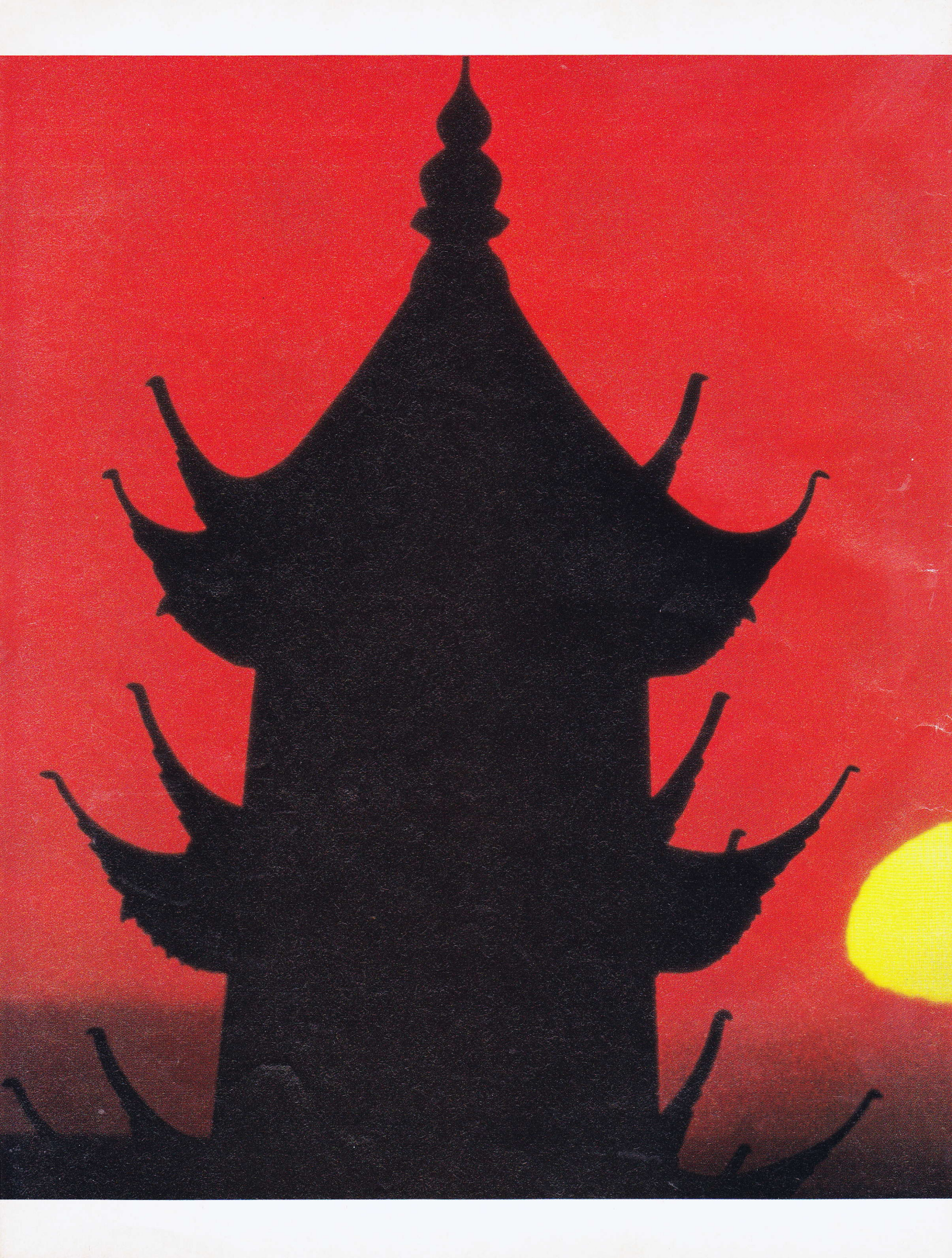
Notice that Paul charged the Galatians, who were converted from paganism, with returning to their former subjection to "weak and beggarly elements" (*Galatians 4:8-9*). The Galatians were observing days, not according to God's law, but superstitiously.

As in Romans and Colossians, Paul's letter to the Galatians does not call God's law, including the Sabbath, into question. Paul stresses that no act can replace the importance of Christ.

By examining these scriptures, we see that the seventh-day Sabbath has not been done away and that neither the Father nor Jesus Christ nor his disciples instituted the keeping of Sunday. The seventh-day Sabbath of the Old Testament is also the Sabbath of the New Testament, the Sabbath that you and I are to keep today.

For more information on this topic, send today for our free booklet *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?* □

SUNDAY?



**Here is disclosed
one of the most
astounding
episodes of
modern history. It
is like reliving
the experiences
of the judges and
prophets of old!**

THE
DRAMATIC STORY OF
CHINESE
SABBATH KEEPERS

BY HERMAN L. HOEH

Our dramatic account commences with the year 1813. It begins in a small village some little distance from Canton, China.

Here the chief character in the drama, Hong Xiuquan, was born. For ease of pronunciation, I shall call him Hong.

Hong came from a royal family. His father and mother, as well as many other relatives, had fled to South China because of the Manchu invasion.

By the time Hong was 16 he had become proficient in the usual course of Chinese education. At 18 years of age he was appointed schoolmaster of his native village by unanimous acclamation of the townspeople.

Five years later he was given a set of books. Translated into English, the title of these books was *Good Words for Exhorting the Age*. At the time, the books appeared of little value to Hong.

The next year, 1837, Hong lost an advancement in his scholastic rank because his Manchu superiors were jealous of his ability and fearful of his ancestral background. This loss so upset him that he became quite ill.

During the period of recuperation, Hong had an extraordinary vision. A record of the vision is preserved in Theodore Hamberg's booklet, "The Visions of Hung-siu-tshuen."

Mr. Hamberg was a missionary of the Basel

Evangelical Society to China (a Swiss institution).

In the vision Hong was seemingly transported to the presence of a great sovereign ruler. There he was confronted by an old woman—women at that time were regarded lower than animals—who said to him, "Thou dirty man, why hast thou kept company with yonder people and defiled thyself? I must now wash thee clean."

Hong was then, in vision, taken to a river and washed in the water. After this he was conducted into a large building where his heart and other inward parts were removed and replaced by new ones! Then he was given a sword, a seal and, to eat, fruit that he found sweet to his palate.

Upon awakening, he was astounded at the vision, but could not determine the meaning. When Hong fully regained his health, he began to reform his conduct as best he knew.

Hong Xiuquan continued as a village schoolmaster for several years more, giving the vision no further thought.

Then, one day, his cousin Le searched through Hong's bookcase and noted the unusual contents of the volumes *Good Words for Exhorting the Age*.

In them were a number of whole chapters of the Bible (according to the translation of Robert Morrison), many sermons



texts and other statements founded on Scripture.

Le told his cousin Hong what he had found. Hong then began to look through the books that had lain untouched on the bookshelves for seven long years. He was amazed to find that in the quoted chapters from the Bible there was a partial explanation of the vision he had received six years before.

Discovering the Bible

In those parts of the Scripture he possessed, Hong found the heavenly Father described—the great sovereign ruler revealed in his vision years before. Then he read of Jesus, the “elder brother of many brethren.” In our versions it is rendered “the first-born among many brethren” (Romans 8:29).

He learned that Jesus was sent as Savior and as messenger. He read that one needs to repent and be baptized to obtain the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). From these verses he understood the meaning of being washed in water and of having his heart and inward parts renewed.

Hong and his cousin Le then baptized one another. They prayed to God, promised not to worship evil spirits and cast away their idols.

After destroying his idols in the little school in which he taught, Hong and his few friends were forced to flee into the interior of China. He preached what little he knew as he journeyed into the south-central provinces of China. Again he became a schoolteacher (between 1845 and 1846).

Visits a missionary

At the close of 1846 Hong journeyed to Canton after hearing that a Christian missionary

from the West resided there. He studied there under Issachar Roberts, the missionary, for almost a month, and read new portions of the Bible.

Young missionaries from abroad, also studying under Mr. Roberts, were jealous of Hong’s talents and earnestness. They brought about his removal! Hong left the city somewhat saddened.

Returning to south-central China, Hong found that the number of villagers who listened to him and were baptized soon numbered almost 2,000. They had to form congregations among themselves, and became known as “the congregations of the worshipers of God.” For short, they were dubbed “God-worshippers.”



JOE COSTANTINO

Continuous study of the Bible convinced Hong that his people should not smoke tobacco or opium—which the British were selling to the Chinese—that they should refrain from intoxicating drinks

except under special circumstances and that the *Sabbath* should be observed on the *seventh* day.

The missionaries were quite displeased about the fact that “the Sabbath is observed not upon the same day as in Europe, theirs being the Saturday of our reckoning.”

Hong further noticed that Jesus didn’t rise on Sunday morning, but “three days after his death”!

Think, for a moment, of the earnestness of these gentile folk who lacked large portions of God’s revelations. How thankful we ought to be to have the entire Word of God whenever we need to use it.

And remember, most of those whom Hong baptized could not

even read Chinese! They had to be taught orally each Sabbath—and that mainly from the Old Testament.

The marriage ceremony

The number of new converts steadily grew. Marriage ceremonies had to be performed. Hong examined the Bible and found the answer! Here is a description of their ceremony:

“When the bridal party are all met together, they proceed to the church . . . and after many prayers and a severe examination of the bride and bridegroom’s theological tenets, the minister joins their right hands together, and when each have accepted the other, pronounces a concluding benediction. . . . Divorce is not only not permitted, but actually unknown or thought of” (from Lin-Le’s book, *Ti-Ping Tien-Kwoh*, page 317).

How like the marriage ceremonies God has ordained in his Church today!

Does not this demonstrate the guidance of God?

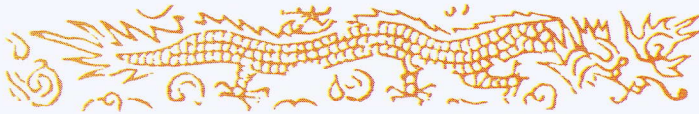
Besides these changes, the Chinese converts of Hong ceased to practice the binding of women’s feet, began to lay aside the custom of polygamy, ceased to deal in the slave trade and became obedient to the laws of God as revealed to Israel through Moses.

In order to be converted, they taught as follows:

“They”—the converts—“must kneel down in God’s presence, and ask Him to forgive their sins.” Following baptism, the form of which Hong did not understand perfectly, “they must continue daily to supplicate Divine favour, and the Holy Spirit’s assistance to renew their hearts, saying grace at every meal, keeping holy the Sabbath day, and obeying all God’s commandments, especially avoiding idolatry. They may then be accounted the children of God” (from Lin-Le’s book, page 315).

The next great step

To begin with, Hong and his converts were



not fully acquainted with the instructions found in the New Testament. They had to be guided mainly by Moses' instruction found in the law. But notice what they did:

When the prosperity of the God-worshippers was noised about the countryside, many in distress sought the protection of these Sabbathkeepers. Whole families of afflicted and destitute came to them, as well as outlaws who fled from the power of the oppressive Manchu dynasty.

Again Hong looked into the Bible. He saw the example of David: "And everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him [David]. So he became captain over them" (I Samuel 22:2).

Hong therefore became a captain over his fellows. He instructed them according to Moses' law and punished offenders accordingly. The malcontents, like those of David, were not converts, but merely willing to do as Hong instructed because they disliked the Manchu overlords.

Next, Hong remembered the sword that he had seen in the vision. He read in the Bible of "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon" (Judges 7:20). He felt responsible for his people as did the judges in Israel of old.

"Their government is a theocracy, the development apparently of what is believed by them to be a new dispensation. As in the case of the Israelites under Moses, they regard themselves as directed by one who has been raised up by the Almighty to be the executor of His will on earth" (page 211 of Lin-Le's work).

By 1851 the malcontents had increased by tens of thousands. They proclaimed Hong Xiuquan the ruler of a new dynasty administering a heavenly or Celestial Kingdom.

The new dynasty was entitled the "Taiping," meaning the kingdom of "our Sovereign," the One who created heaven and earth.

The malcontents, to

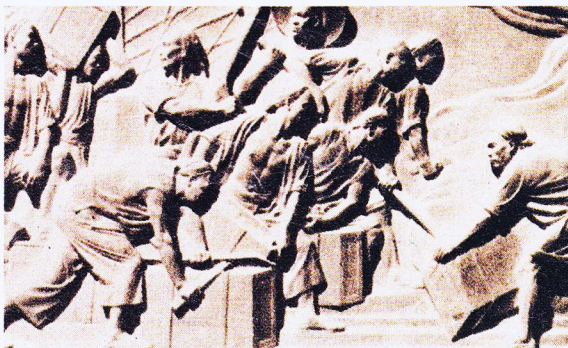
protect their domain, were at first conscripted for defense. Then Hong read in the law what Moses said: "When you go out to battle against your enemies"—the enemies of the Taipings already persecuted them for religious and political reasons—"the officers shall speak to the people, saying: 'What man is there who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house. . . . What man is there who is fearful and faint-hearted? Let him go and return to his house'" (Deuteronomy 20:1, 5, 8).

Hong therefore made army service a voluntary matter!

The hand of foreigners

Vast areas were freed from the Manchu oppressors. By 1860 the movement attracted international recognition. Several thousand became obedient, and upward of 50 million Chinese lived in prosperity and at peace under the Tai-

Photo at left: Bust of Hong at Taiping Museum in Nanking. Below: Relief at Tian An Men Square of Chinese burning opium. At bottom of pages 16 and 17: Sections of the border of Hong Xiuquan's seal (page 15).



FROM AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF CHINA

ping administration of God's laws.

In abolishing idols, the Taipings naturally destroyed the images of Mary and the saints, as well as those of the Buddhists. The ire of the Jesuits was aroused. They persuaded the French forces in China to support

the ruling Manchu dynasty with whom they had been quarreling.

Next, the British and American missionaries—who had obtained barely 1,500 converts through years of work—were jealous that so many people were looking into the Bible without their missionary activity.

The missionaries began a deliberate campaign against the Taipings. They accused them of rejecting the Bible, of denying Jesus Christ, of wanton slaughter of innocent victims. The true reports of honest missionaries were squelched!

British commercial agents, interested in selling opium to the Chinese, became concerned by the loss of revenue.

Remember, this was the era of the Opium Wars—when foreigners, particularly the British, sought to dominate the Chinese by forcing them to buy opium.

The British and other foreign elements forced the Manchus to sign treaties legalizing the opium trade. This placed the armies of the Taipings in a serious predicament.

The British assured the Chinese revolutionists that they would remain neutral and only protect British property from destruction. In reality the British sent arms to the Manchus, and the Manchus imported arms in ships flying the American flag! (Within months of this action the Civil War—1861-65—began in America.)

During all this time those who followed Hong were publishing the Bible as best they could. Time and again they implored their Christians across the sea to send them missionaries to instruct them better. Most missionaries refused to go.

A plea refused

The Taipings also sought to trade with the British. They sent an army to Shanghai to open negotiations. Said the leader



of the Taiping regiments to the British, Americans, Portuguese and other foreigners in Shanghai:

"I came to Shanghai to make a treaty in order to see us connected together by trade and commerce; I did not come for the purpose of fighting with you. Had I at once commenced to attack the city and kill the people, that would have been the same as the members of one family fighting among themselves" (page 283 of Lin-Le's work).

Remember that these Chinese did not know the kind of Christianity professed by the Western world!

The extract quoted from a longer letter was sent to the foreign authorities in Shanghai for the following reason: When the Taipings, who assumed the British were neutral, came to Shanghai, they were fired upon by the British.

According to a correspondent of the *North China Herald*, "They [the Taipings] waved the hand, begged our officers not to fire, and stood there motionless, wishing to open communications and explain their object!"

Retreating for safety, the Taipings encountered a missionary, Mr. Milne. In order not to have him injured in any battle, they sent guards with him to the city of Shanghai. After delivering Mr. Milne safely, the guards were shot down by British soldiers!

A great mistake

Hong could not understand the action of the Christian nations from across the sea. In sorrow he withdrew from all contact with foreigners, but continued to study the Bible with the faithful. He permitted his commanders to disperse their armies throughout the walled cities of his domain. The Manchus had been badly defeated and no attack was expected. This—plus a miscalculation of the British and French intentions—proved disastrous to the Taipings.

Although the official government statements from abroad implied that

England would remain neutral, the actual deeds perpetrated against the Chinese demonstrated the opposite. The British encouraged the Manchus against the Taipings and gradually brought about their retreat and downfall.

This article cannot contain all the information competent historians have amassed. But as Gladstone, a British prime minister, once said, this action will go down as a black mark in history against Britain.

Because of foreign intrigue, the Manchu army and religious persecution, most of these Chinese Sabbath keepers, including Hong, perished.

Long after the death of those Chinese to whom God revealed a measure of his truth, the malcontents who had associated with them arose again in rebellion against the Manchus. They called themselves "The Righteous Fists of Harmony"—or "Boxers." Their rebellion—the Boxer rebellion—was aimed at the foreigners and especially missionaries.

But the Sabbath and God's laws had been forgotten by them.

Why communism engulfs China today

We are reaping the reward of our sins in China today. To the Chinese the European nations seemed unprincipled, devoid of every virtue recognized by men.

From that time on the spread of the Word of God among the Chinese met with little success. By 1949 communism engulfed the country.

When thinking of the fate of those Sabbath-keeping Chinese and their ignorant comrades who sought their protection, I am reminded of Paul's exhortation in Hebrews:

"And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the

prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness... became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of aliens... Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword... of whom the world was not worthy" (Hebrews 11:32-38).

How unworthy the world truly is may be understood by the deliberate falsity of recorded history in describing the Taiping rebellion.

Missionaries and politicians alike have accused them of committing acts of which the enemies of the Taipings were guilty. The Taipings were maligned just as David and his followers were.

A most important summary of this drama of human experience—the book that is the basis for this little-known record—was written by a white man who used a Chinese name, Lin-Le. The work is titled *Ti-Ping Tien-Kwoh, the History of the Ti-Ping Revolution*. It was published in 1866 in London.

Here is a lesson we must never forget.

We ought to appreciate what we know of God's Word and realize this drama was occurring in far-off China when God's people in America were just beginning a new era in publishing the gospel.

The Chinese, for 200 years in bondage to the Manchus, looked to the Word of God as best they knew. "Their laws were framed and already constituted when the New Testament"—in its fullness—"came into their hands" (page 125 of Lin-Le's work).

Perhaps we can now realize the full weight of our responsibility in carrying the gospel of the kingdom of God to *all* nations. God has chosen us—his faithful few in an Israel filled with sin—to carry the light to those who abide in darkness. □



—THE—

TAIPING LEGACY

BY JOHN HALFORD

Not so long ago, China was cut off from most of the world. It was not a member of the United Nations, nor did it have diplomatic relations with the United States. After fighting together as allies in the Second World War, the world's most populous nation and the world's most influential and powerful Christian nation became strangers.

Then, beginning in 1972, China cautiously began to open doors to the West. U.S. President Richard Nixon visited China, and diplomatic contacts were reestablished. Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China began a series of liberalizing reforms.

The events of the summer of 1989, culminating in the crushing of prodemocracy demonstrations in Tian An Men Square, caused a temporary cooling of relationships. But China officially wants to continue an open-door policy, largely for economic reasons.

Christian missionary organizations have been eager to go through that open door. They are enthusiastic about the opportunity to reach the nearly one fourth of mankind heretofore cut off from the message of the Bible.

Christianity's reputation in China

Herman L. Hoeh and I visited Nanking in 1984. This city, capital of the Taipings, is still the center for what remained of Chinese Christianity. We met the bishop of Nanking and the faculty and students of what was then China's only functioning seminary.

We found these people optimistic and grateful that contact with Western churches was again allowed. But they were realistic about the prospects of a large-scale resurgence of Christianity in their country.

Sincere and well-meaning organizations often overlook the reputation that Christianity has in Asia. Dedicated missionaries have often been followed by unscrupulous merchants, and, tragically, the preach-

ing of the gospel has come to be seen as the leading edge of a wedge of greed and exploitation.

The Chinese government today considers the Taipings as the forerunners of the peasant revolution that overthrew the Manchus, and thus part of a chain of events that resulted in the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949. They have not forgotten that Christian nations chose to support the Manchus rather than the struggling Taipings.

A current guide to Nanking points out that "the failure of the Taipings to obtain the support of the Christian world would play a decisive role in their eventual ruin" (*In Search of Old Nanking*, page 176).

The guide continues: "The Taiping Movement was a form of orthodox Christianity, so it is puzzling why the foreign Christian nations and missionaries spurned them and sided with the brutal idol-worshipping and anti-foreign Manchus. The foreign nations sided with the Manchus obviously because of the financial gains they could get from them; the foreign missionaries probably did not support the Taipings because they were afraid of this new form of Chinese Christianity and would not compromise with it but would insist that Christianity be introduced into China the only way—their way!" (page 178).

The Chinese have long memories, and they are steeped in tradition. Those who want to reach into the hearts of the Chinese people must understand this. The pragmatic Chinese are not hostile to foreign ideas when they see they are truly better. As Deng Xiaoping has said, "It doesn't matter what color the cat is as long as it catches mice."

Christianity sounds good, but, un-

fortunately, those who espouse it often fail to live up to its ideals.

A new chance to preach the gospel?

In the last century Lord Elgin wrote to the merchants of Shanghai: "Christian civilisation will have to win its way among a sceptical and ingenious people, by making it manifest that a faith which reaches to heaven furnishes better guarantees for public and private morality than one which does not rise above the earth" (*Chinese Characteristics*, page 15).

Arthur Smith was a missionary who worked in China in the decades following the Taipings. In his penetrating book *Chinese Characteristics*, published in 1894, he wrote:

"China is not a country, and the

**As communism
collapses around
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Chinese not a people, to be taken by storm by anything whatsoever. The only way to secure the solid and permanent respect of the Chinese race . . . is by convincing object lessons, showing that Christian civilisation . . . accomplishes results which cannot be matched by the civilisation which China already possesses" (pages 105-106).

As communism collapses around the world, it seems the next decades will offer great opportunities for the Christian faith. Global communications networks can carry the gospel—both the true and the counterfeit—across frontiers and into the uttermost parts of the earth.

But in the final analysis, it is the conduct of Christian people that provides the most convincing testimony.

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another," said Jesus (John 13:35).

Unless so-called Christian nations live by this standard, should we expect other peoples to take the Christian faith seriously? □



THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF GOD

ings of the apostolic Fathers. . . . The first Christians continued to observe the Jewish festivals, though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which those festivals had foreshadowed. Thus the Passover, with a new conception added to it of Christ as the true Paschal lamb and the first fruits from the dead, continued to be observed. . . .

“Generally speaking, the

the fourteenth day, were named *Quartodecimani*, and the dispute itself is known as the *Quartodeciman* controversy” (article “Easter,” pages 828-829).

Historian Karl Baus writes in his work *From the Apostolic Community to Constantine*:

“The Quartodeciman minority remained faithful to their previous practice The Council of Nicea [A.D. 325] expelled the Quartodecimans from the ecclesiastical community. Thereafter, their numbers continually declined, though even into the fifth century the great Church had to deal with them on occasion” (pages 271-272).

The fourth century turned out to be a time of monumental change in the Christian world. The church at Rome far overshadowed the smaller groups in the East who strove to remain faithful to the doctrines of the first apostles.

Government persecution continues

But whether Eastern or Western, for nearly 250 years those who were called Christians had to persevere through trial and tribulation. As the fourth century began there seemed to be no change in sight—persecution continued.

Beginning with Nero’s persecutions in A.D. 64, Christians by the year 303 had weathered nine major persecutions from the Roman government.

The terror that began in 303 was no different. That 10th persecution lasted 10 years. The Roman emperor was Diocletian.

Yet, in spite of every effort to stamp out Christians, God’s Church was able to endure.

And in spite of the persecution, the Western church, with its principal bishop at Rome, gained ever increasing influence.

Early in the fourth century, as Roman persecution raged, a momentous change came. Constantine, a leading Roman general and the man proclaimed Caesar by the Roman armies, commanded his troops in the battle of Mulvian Bridge. Rome was about to become his.

Prior to the battle, Constan-

A LITTLE FLOCK IN THE WILDERNESS

BY RONALD D. KELLY

The third century found the Western churches, and specifically the bishop at Rome, gaining authority.

The doctrinal debate over whether to observe the memorial of the death of Jesus on the Passover or, instead, to celebrate his resurrection, supposed to have occurred on Easter Sunday, was such an issue that it even received its own label—the *Quartodeciman* controversy. The name comes from the Latin word meaning “fourteenth.”

The Quartodeciman controversy

The 11th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* discusses the problem:

“There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament, or in the writ-

Western churches kept Easter on the first day of the week, while the Eastern churches followed the Jewish rule, and kept Easter [Passover] on the fourteenth day.

“St. Polycarp, the disciple of St. John the Evangelist and bishop of Smyrna, visited Rome in 159 to confer with Anicetus, the bishop of that see, on the subject; and urged the tradition, which he had received from the apostle, of observing the fourteenth day. . . . About forty years later (197) the question was discussed in a very different spirit between Victor, bishop of Rome, and Polycrates, metropolitan of proconsular Asia. . . . Victor demanded that all should adopt the usage prevailing at Rome. . . .

“The few who afterwards separated themselves from the unity of the church and continued to keep

tine, a worshiper of the sun, allegedly experienced an amazing vision: He saw a flaming sign of the initial letters of the name of Christ and heard a voice say, "By this sign you will conquer."

Taking it as an omen, Constantine had his soldiers paint those letters, *chi* and *rho*, on their shields.

His armies were victorious, and the Roman relationship to the Christian church was at that moment forever changed.

At Milan, Constantine issued a proclamation that came to be called the Edict of Toleration, or the Edict of Milan. It accepted Christianity as an official religion in the Empire with legal equality to other religions.

It was A.D. 313.

Constantine and the church

But the Christianity that Constantine acknowledged was primarily that of the church in the West. Constantine found that churches in the East and even in other parts of the vast Roman Empire differed significantly in doctrine and practice.

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* has this to say about what was happening:

"Captivated by Christianity, Constantine wanted to give it the protection of the state; for, in line with the old Roman idea, he regarded himself as Pontifex Maximus of Christianity. . . . As such, he thought it his task to settle a controversy, that was upsetting the politico-religious unity of his Christian empire. . . . When another synod in Antioch late in 324 failed to effect the desired unity, the Emperor decided to settle the controversy by a general synod of the more important bishops of the world" (volume 10, page 432).

Thus the first great ecumenical council was called in the Asia Minor city of Nicea in A.D. 325.

It was a major turning point.

The emperor had already decreed that the day of the sun (called by many Christians the first day) should be kept as a weekly day of rest.

Now, the Council of Nicea would determine the course of ac-

tion for the future of the Church. In a letter to the churches after the council, Constantine announced the outcome: that all churches were to observe Easter Sunday.

So the Church centered at Rome could exercise great power. Christians in the East were at a crossroads.

A prophesied time to flee

Interestingly enough, more than 200 years before the council of Nicea, Christ had revealed an amazing prophecy to the apostle John. Here is that prophecy from Revelation 12:6: "Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days."

In Bible prophecy, a day can symbolize a year in fulfillment. Applying that interpretation to these verses, God's Church, symbolized as a woman, would flee persecution and hide in the wilderness for 1,260 years.

If that flight to the wilderness begins in about A.D. 325, we would expect to see significant events some 1,260 years later—in the late 16th century.

And that's exactly what happened. The 16th century, or the 1500s, also proved to be a vital turning point in world history.

By then the work of Johannes Gutenberg made printing practical. His first great printed works were Bibles.

Then, in the early 16th century, Martin Luther swept the world into a different age, as the Protestant Reformation began on the European continent. In the same century, Henry VIII broke England away from the Roman Catholic Church. By the time of Elizabeth I the Church of England was firmly established.

We'll see in a future installment how God's Church in the wilderness could begin a new chapter of Church history. But that's getting ahead of our story.

Called Paulicians

After the Nicean council, faithful followers of the apostolic

Church and doctrine had to flee the major cities and territories.

Their place in the wilderness was at first in what we now call Armenia. These faithful Christians came to be known as Paulicians. Scholars differ on the origin of that name. Some feel it was because of their devotion to the apostle Paul of the early New Testament Church. Others think the name is derived from a third-century bishop.

Perhaps the origin of the name is not so important, but who they were and what they believed is of great import.

Although these Christians existed in hiding from the early fourth century, they would not become known to the world till the seventh century.

Historian A.H. Newman described the Paulician hiding place in Armenia: "It was the huge recess or circular dam formed by the Taurus mountain range that furnished a comparatively secure abiding place for this ancient form of Christianity" (*A Manual of Church History*, volume 1, page 381).

An amazing discovery

Perhaps the biggest handicap in studying Church history is the lack of original writings from those about whom we desire to know the most.

In fact, a majority of the material available about any non-mainstream Christians is from those who persecuted them. Such sources can hardly be considered the most reliable.

But in the case of the Paulicians a remarkable literary discovery was made in the late 19th century. British scholar and theologian Fred C. Conybeare discovered seventh- or eighth-century Paulician manuscripts that had been stored in an Armenian monastery.

This amazing find was called *The Key of Truth*. In that collection we can read about many Paulician customs and beliefs.

George Fisher says of this discovery: "In the manuscript called *The Key of Truth* we find many of their [the Paulicians'] beliefs. Conybeare says he had at last 'Un-

derstood who these Paulicians really were. All who had written about them had been misled by their Calumnies (slander). I now realized (he said) that I had stumbled on the monument of a phase of the Christian Church so old and so outworn, that the very memory of it was lost.’”

Constantine of Mananeli

One of the most colorful personalities of the Paulician period was a man called Constantine of Mananeli. The time was probably in the early to mid 600s.

You can read his story in chapter 54 of Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. For the sake of space, we'll paraphrase that exciting story.

In the town of Mananeli, Constantine received a returning resident who had been held captive in Syria. This man had obtained a manuscript of the New Testament. Together they studied the Scriptures. Constantine took a particular affinity to the writings of the apostle Paul (leading some scholars to conclude the origin of the name, Paulicians).

As more and more people in the area studied and became believers, they took biblical names—Timothy, Sylvanus, Titus, etc. They strove to live by the teachings of the New Testament as they came to understand it.

Their numbers grew rapidly.

To stamp out the movement, the Byzantine emperor dispatched a man named Simeon.

He gathered some of Constantine's followers and, under penalty of death if they did not cooperate, ordered them to stone Constantine to death.

Unfortunately, in a group of believers, some may weaken. In this case at least one did—and he stoned his former leader.

But then developed a story stranger than fiction. Simeon was so moved by the faith of Constantine and his Paulician followers

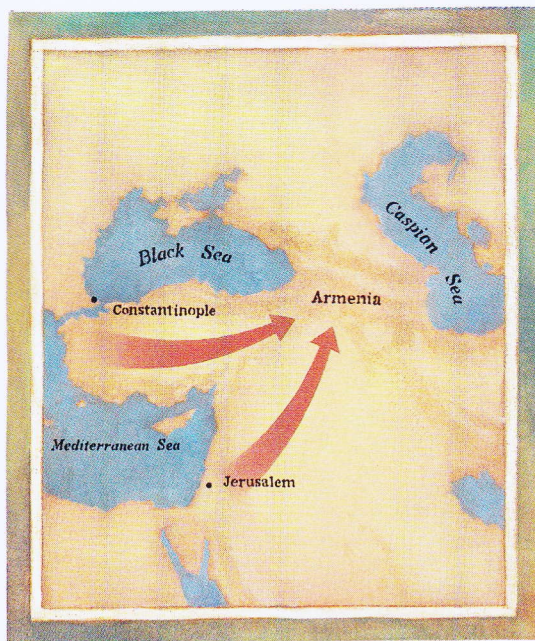
that after the death of this brave man, Simeon himself became a believer.

Much like the apostle Paul of the New Testament, Simeon embraced the doctrine he was sent to stamp out.

Simeon renounced his former life, his honors and his wealth. He soon became a leader and minister among the persecuted Paulicians.

Simeon also gave his life as a martyr for the Christian cause he embraced.

As Edward Gibbon wrote of these times: “From the blood and ashes of the first victims a succession of teachers and congrega-



After the Western churches began to dominate the Roman Empire, faithful followers of the apostolic Church and doctrine moved out of the Empire—into Armenia.

tions repeatedly arose” (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*).

What an impact these Paulicians made!

Huddled in the wilderness of Armenia for several centuries, God's people had more than occasional impact on the world.

By the mid ninth century, the Empress Theodora severely persecuted Paulician Christians. By some estimates as many as 100,000 were martyred between A.D. 840 and 860.

Yet the Church's years in the

wilderness were not over. The Church would have to move. Many had already migrated toward southeastern Europe. Times would again change. We'll pick up the story in the next chapter, as the persecuted Church of God flees to Europe.

But we conclude this chapter with a summary of the doctrines and beliefs of the Paulicians from a variety of sources including Conybeare's *Key of Truth* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition.

Summary of Paulician beliefs

1) They baptized only adults, citing Christ's example that he was 30 years old when he was baptized.

2) They did not baptize in a font, but by immersion.

3) They believed Christ, although he was crucified for man, did not command adoration of the cross.

4) They did not believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary, the mother of Jesus, nor did they consider that she was a mediatrix.

5) They rejected the Catholic mass, communion and confession.

6) They believed that true repentance was a prerequisite for baptism.

7) They believed the Church was not a building, but a body of people.

8) They were characterized by their obedience to the Ten Commandments and believed a Christian was one who knows Christ and keeps his commandments.

In summary, Fred Conybeare says of the Paulicians:

“The Sabbath was perhaps kept, and there were no special Sunday observances. . . . Wednesday and Friday were not kept as fast-days. Of the modern Christmas and of the Annunciation, and of the other feasts connected with the life of Jesus prior to his thirtieth year, this phase of the Church knew nothing. The general impression which the study of it leaves on us is that in it we have before us a form of Church not very remote from the primitive Jewish Christianity of Palestine” (page 193). □

‘Many Are Called, But Few Are Chosen’

*Why would God call many to salvation, and then choose only a few?
Are you one of the few chosen? Here’s how you can know!*

Christ concluded the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22 with the perplexing statement, “Many are called, but few are chosen” (verse 14).

How do we explain this? Why would God call many to salvation, and then choose only a few? You might also ask, “If Christ has called me, how can I know if he has also chosen me?”

How God calls

When Christ walked this earth, he personally called his disciples. After preaching the gospel in Galilee, he called Peter and Andrew to discipleship as they were fishing: “Come after Me, and I will make you become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17).

Later that same day he saw James and John, “and immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him” (verse 20).

When Jesus ate at Matthew’s house, he mentioned why he called people. The self-righteous Pharisees scorned him for spending time with sinners. So Jesus said: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Mark 2:17).

Christ called disciples through his preaching. But Christ doesn’t walk the earth today. How does he call you and me? Paul told the

BY DAVID FRASER

Thessalonians that God “called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Thessalonians 2:14).

God calls us today through the preaching of the gospel. “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14).

The Father draws

Christ told the Jews, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. . . . No one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father” (John 6:44, 65). While Christ was calling disciples through his preaching, God the Father was also “drawing” these disciples to Christ.

How?

The human mind, by itself, cannot naturally understand spiritual truth. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. . . . The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Corinthians 2:9, 14).

God has allowed Satan to

blindfold this world spiritually. “If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age [Satan] has blinded” (II Corinthians 4:3-4).

In Revelation we read of “that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9).

Since God allows it, he takes responsibility for it. “God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear” (Romans 11:8).

When the Father draws us to Christ, he removes this blindness—this spiritual inability to understand.

When the Old Testament Scriptures were read in the synagogue, the Jews could not understand, Paul says, because “their minds were hardened. . . . Even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart” (II Corinthians 3:14-15).

So when does God take away the veil? “When one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away” (verse 16).

There’s the key. We must turn to God. We must respond to his calling.

Then he will begin to remove the spiritual blindfold. The more we respond by changing our lives, the more truth he reveals. “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being trans-

formed into the same image” (verse 18).

The wedding feast

Now we can understand the parable of the wedding feast and Christ’s enigmatic statement, “Many are called, but few are chosen.”

Many are invited to the wedding feast to be held at Christ’s return (Revelation 19:9). But we must be appropriately dressed (spiritually). Notice, in Christ’s parable, the king “saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment” (Matthew 22:11).

At the wedding feast at Christ’s return, Christians will be in the role of the bride (II Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:23-32). How should we be dressed?

Revelation tells us those who come to the marriage supper of the Lamb are clothed in fine linen, for “fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Revelation 19:8).

“Righteous acts”—that is, a changed way of thinking leading to a changed way of living. God expects us to start changing our lives after we begin hearing his call. To be chosen for the wedding, we must respond to God’s calling by living in a way that pleases him. We decide whether we’re chosen.

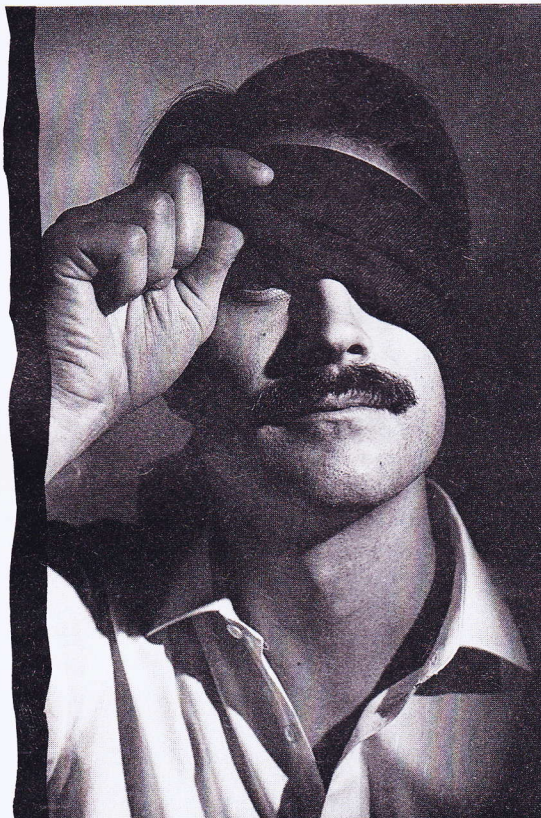
Not chosen, but not rejected

What happens to those who were called but not chosen—those who don’t respond to the preaching of the gospel? Are they lost forever? Paul answers this in his letter to the Romans.

“To Israel he [Isaiah, speaking for God] says: ‘All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.’ I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not!... What then? Israel has

not obtained what it seeks; but the elect [the few who responded to the preaching of the gospel] have obtained it, and the rest were hardened” (Romans 10:21, 11:1, 7).

Is this hardening—this blindness—forever? Paul explains: “Hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He



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will turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Romans 11:25-26).

Here we have a prophecy of Christ’s return to earth. After setting up the kingdom of God on earth, God will remove the blindness of all peoples.

God will ultimately save most of mankind *after* Christ’s return—not now. Most are not responding to the preaching of the gospel. Only the few who do respond are being chosen now.

Called, chosen and faithful

If you are reading and understanding this, God is calling you. Will he choose you now? That

depends on what you do. If you act on the knowledge God is revealing to you, he will communicate more understanding. The more we act, the more he reveals. Christianity is not just about learning. It’s about living—putting into practice what we learn.

James writes, “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only... He who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:22, 25).

And what if we have already become doers of God’s Word? Then God is choosing us, and we must remain faithful to our calling. Peter exhorts us to “be even more diligent to make your

If you understand, God is calling you. Will he choose you now? That depends on what you do.

calling and election [or “choosing”] sure” (II Peter 1:10). Christ tells us, “He who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13). God has chosen us and delivered us from “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4), but our salvation is not yet completed. That will occur at Christ’s return—if we remain faithful to our calling.

To rule with Christ in his kingdom, we must *hear* God’s calling, *respond* to the calling with a changed life and *be faithful* to that calling until the end of life.

When Christ returns, “those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:14).

The choice is yours! □

ROCK Solid

The barnacle is a small salt-water shellfish that fastens itself to objects underwater. Barnacles are found on rocks, wharf piles and ship bottoms.

Mariners spend much time and money removing and trying to prevent barnacles from attaching themselves to ships and wharves. These shellfish are so tough that mechanical equipment sometimes must be used to remove them.

Have you ever tried to remove a barnacle from a rock with your bare hands? Even with a knife it is not easy. The little barnacle will not be moved. It cleaves to the rock.

Buffeted by the stormy sea, but never giving way, the barnacle has some simple lessons for us. A simple but dramatic analogy can be drawn between the tough little barnacle and the tenacity Christians should show.

On the rock

The first lesson we can learn is that we, like the barnacle, must build our

BY ROGER G. LIPPROSS

house on the "Rock" that is Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 10:4) and his rules of conduct, summarized in the Ten Commandments. Everything in our lives should be based on this rock.

The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome, "Cling to what is good" (Romans 12:9). He says we should be kind and loving to one another. He says to be fervent and serve the Lord. He explains that we are to rejoice, be patient and constantly pray. We are to be hospitable and content in life. He says to live peaceably with all men and not avenge ourselves (verses 10-21).

This is the "good" we should cling to—not to the shifting sands of Satan's world. Satan teaches that the rules of conduct God gave for all time are not valid for us today. But Jesus says in John 14:15, "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

Some people believe that "all that matters is to love one another—the rules are unimportant—just show love." This foundation is not solid. Without the "rock" God gave us in his law, we cannot know *how* to show love.

Jesus said the house not built on a rock will fall. The house built solidly on a

rock will stand (Matthew 7:24-27).

Our life-saving shield

The barnacle has another lesson for us. It is covered with an impenetrable shell, a shield.

Paul tells us about a spiritual counterpart in his letter to the Ephesians. He was in prison bound with chains when he wrote the letter. He did not waste words—time was running out for him. In Ephesians 6:11-15 he explains how to become a spiritual barnacle by putting on the whole armor of God.

In verse 16, Paul says, "Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one."

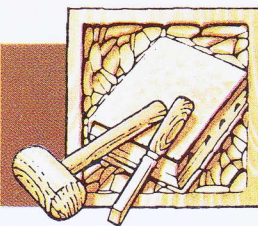
The shield of faith is the most important element here. Paul is saying that even if we put on all the other pieces of the armor of God—such as having our loins girded about with truth, wearing the breastplate of righteousness, having our feet shod with the gospel of peace—without the shield of faith we can be hurt.

Like the barnacle, we need to protect ourselves from all unwanted elements. Paul says that with the shield of faith, we'll be able to stop all the temptations Satan sends our direction.

Learn from the barnacle: Build your house on a rock. With Christ as your foundation and faith as your shield, nothing can move you. You will be strong and impenetrable, and you will cling to what is good! □

BIBLICAL WORKSHOP

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING



NO MORE NOEL

You've decided. This year, for the first time, you won't celebrate Christmas.

Last year you were just beginning to learn that the origins of Christmas are not Christian, so you went to the celebrations, but your heart wasn't in them.

This year, you've decided you can't involve yourself even partially in the festivities, and you'll have to explain that to family members, friends and co-workers.

You may find yourself wanting to try to convince your friends and relatives that they shouldn't be involved either. Don't. This understanding is clear to you, but if God is not calling your friends and family (John 6:44), you are likely only to offend.

To whom it is necessary, explain briefly that you won't be taking part in the activities because of your religious beliefs. Be careful that your words don't take on a judgmental or

accusative tone. People often fear what they do not know or understand, and they can become defensive when faced with new ideas that would demand dramatic changes in their lives.

You need not be apologetic or embarrassed. The knowledge of God's truth should give you a sense of confidence, not of shame.

If someone is genuinely interested in hearing more about why you have made this decision, add more detail.

Conveying a sense of embarrassment or secrecy about your beliefs may leave you open to criticism and persecution. Giving direct answers to questions asked should help avoid that problem.

A word of caution: Be sure questions stem from interest. Sometimes people will ask questions only to try to provoke an argument, which is almost always counterproductive.

Some may find your new beliefs unusual. But by expressing them confidently and with kindness you can avoid breaches in relationships that are important to you.

—Kerri Dowd ■



YES! YOU CAN SAY NO

Most teens have a harder time saying no to the beckoning of their peer group than to anyone else.

Sharon Scott, author of *How To Say No and Keep Your Friends*, suggests 10 ways a teen can say no to trouble and still save face with peers:

1) *Say no with confidence.* Say it firmly but not arrogantly. Teens respect other teens who have confidence.

2) *Leave.* Sometimes it's just easiest to leave conversations and groups that are heading for trouble.

3) *Change the subject.* Teens can show positive leadership by directing conversation toward different and exciting topics.

4) *Return the challenge.* Peer pressure can be a way of getting approval for wrong behavior. Especially in a one-to-one situation, a teen can say something like, "Are you afraid to do this by yourself?"

5) *Offer a better idea.* There are plenty of things

in life that are more fun and constructive than abusing drugs and taking part in other harmful activities.

6) *Joke your way out.* Teens with a good sense of humor might be able to laugh their way out of tight spots and still remain steadfast. This is also a way of relieving stressful situations.

7) *Show it if you're shocked.* A bit of melodrama can underline the potential dangers of a situation and subtly chide those who suggest such things.

8) *Ignore the suggestion.* Teens can convey they're too busy to get into trouble and just ignore suggestions that lead them to it.

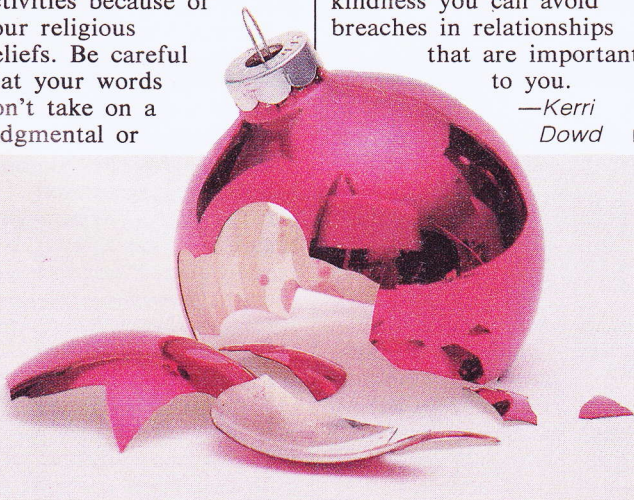


HAL FINCH

9) *Show your disappointment.* Teens can tell troublemakers: "I always thought you were smart. You're really too intelligent for a bonehead maneuver like this."

10) *Give an excuse.* Deceit need never be used. There are plenty of good reasons a teen can use to avoid trouble. Homework, lack of money or fatigue are all effective excuses.

—Michael Warren ■



FOOTNOTES —OR FAKES?

How important are archaeological finds and “religious relics”? Should we doubt what the Bible says if the remains of past civilizations don’t directly prove the biblical text?

Certain discoveries can add to and improve our understanding of the Bible. However, in a world increasingly filled with false values and lies, we must be careful that we don’t base our faith on physical things.

The Bible contains

examples of people who placed more weight on the physical than on the spiritual—with disastrous consequences.

In I Samuel 4, we find the Israelites relying on the ark of the covenant, rather than God’s power, to save them from the Philistines. They lost the battle *and* the ark.

Later, the Jews refused to believe that God would allow the temple to be destroyed. Jeremiah 7 reveals God’s judgment on the unrepentant.

The Samaritan woman was more concerned with *where* to worship than *how* to worship (John 4:19-24).

God will provide us with what we need for salvation. Jesus Christ, as author and finisher of our faith, has paid the penalty for our

sins. He has also, as Paul said, left us instructions that will make us complete: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Timothy 3:16-17).

We don’t need to worry about the authenticity of religious relics or the interpretation of archaeological finds that seem to contradict the biblical record. Any truly authentic find will uphold the biblical record and, in any case, should be treated as no more than an interesting footnote to history.

—Kathy Johnson ■



KEN TUNELL

BABY'S TEARS

Even babies have trials. As they learn to walk, they fall down and hurt themselves. As they grow, they get teething pains and they cry out. Even the baby Jesus must have felt such pains as he learned to walk and as his teeth grew.

But these trials and pains of infancy, no matter how severe they might seem at the time, are soon forgotten.

Spiritually, we are infants. We have growing pains. Sometimes we fall as we learn to walk this new way of life. Sometimes we cry.

In the resurrection many of the trials and pains of this life may be forgotten. That knowledge doesn’t make trials any less real, but it sometimes helps to put them in better perspective.

—Michael Morrison ■

NEEDED: PEACE AND QUIET!

Most would agree that life in this world is not peaceful. Every day we must deal with various stressors.

Our brains react to stress by preparing our bodies to flee or fight. Blood and oxygen are directed to our muscles and away from our brains. And deprived of needed oxygen and blood, the

brain’s ability to think and learn is impeded.

The opposite of this stress response is the relaxation response. In this response there is an increase in oxygen and blood flowing to the brain. The brain produces slow, powerful alpha and theta waves that create a peaceful, meditative state, according to neuroscientists.

When the mind is in this relaxed state, the ability to think, learn, recall and create greatly increases.

And it is precisely this state of mind that God wants us to have. He wants us to have a mind free from anxieties that impede our ability to grow.

God wants us to have a state of mind that will be conducive for his Holy Spirit to work in us: “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (II Timothy 1:7).

The Bible shows Jesus Christ often left the crowds and went to the mountains to pray or to teach his disciples (Matthew 14:23, 15:29,

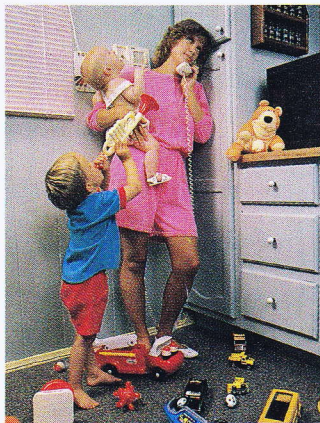
28:16, John 6:3, 15). Jesus created a peaceful environment to put his mind and his disciples’ minds in a peaceful state to talk to God and to learn.

We can learn from these examples. Try to create a peaceful environment in which you can relax and then pray, meditate or study effectively.

Find a peaceful spot in nature. If that’s not possible, create a pleasant place at home away from distractions.

Why do we need peace and quiet? We need it to grow.

—Lana Walker-Helmuth ■



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YOU DON'T HAVE TO HIDE

Some might have said Timothy didn’t have a chance. Born to a Jewish mother and a Greek father, he wasn’t accepted by either culture. In

Timothy’s day Jews and gentiles normally did not associate with one another. Many Jews considered gentiles “dogs.” They were regarded to be a low human class. Many gentiles thought Jews were self-righteous, beset by ridiculous rules and traditions.

Imagine how it would feel to grow up torn between two cultures.

When a Jew married a

gentile, other Jews wouldn't accept the marriage. The Jew was considered dead. In some cases, a funeral was actually carried out. Children of these marriages also suffered.

Yet Timothy was a young man of character. His mother and grandmother were well-known in the Christian Church (II Timothy 1:5), and Timothy learned from them. Rather than fighting or hiding, he decided to make the best of his life and serve God.

Timothy became quite an asset to the New Testament Church and a sterling example for us today.

He became one of the apostle Paul's trusted messengers (I Corinthians 4:17, I Thessalonians 3:2-6). He remained with Paul, ready to serve him even when Paul was in prison (Philippians 1:1, 2:19, Colossians 1:1, Philemon 1).

Paul wrote to the Philippians that there was no one besides Timothy whose mind was as much at one with his own (Philippians 2:19-20).

Timothy didn't let the trials of his life, his background or his upbringing beat him. He went out and made the best of what he could be. He knew God's way was right and he was determined to practice it.

Have you faced problems because of your background, whatever it may be?

Have you felt, sometimes, like you just want to hide?

Remember the example of Timothy. You, too, with God's help, can rise above every one of your problems, actual or perceived. Whatever your background, your environment or your upbringing, God wants to—is able to—work with you.

—Rick L. Shallenberger ■

CHEER HIM!

Angry billows of smoke poured out of the building and silhouetted a lone fireman scaling a narrow ladder. Not many rungs separated him from a girl trapped inside by intense flames. But even from where he was, the heat seemed unbearable.

The risk seemed so great. He hesitated.

Below the fireman a crowd had gathered. Sensing that something was wrong, one of the people cried out, "Cheer him!" As their voices rang out in support, the fireman regained his courage. Moments later he entered the building and carried the child to safety.

The power of encouragement!

As Christians, we can help erase the effects of this negative world by developing a spirit of encouragement.

To give someone encouragement, you need to know what the other person needs. Make an effort to get to know

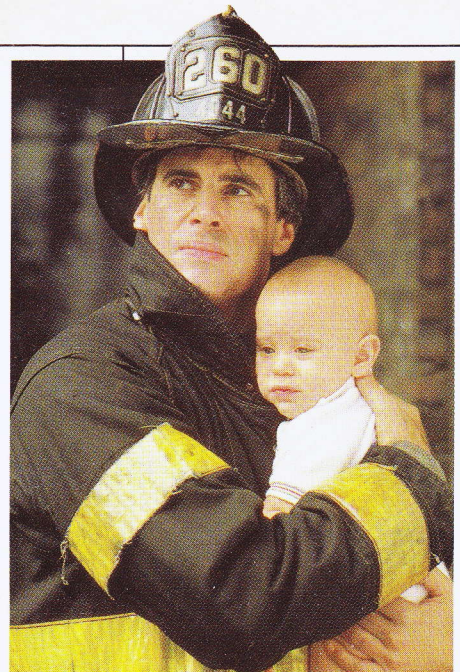
people beyond your close circle of friends. Observe. Talk. You'll get to know their aspirations, fears, problems and accomplishments.

Here are some ways you can encourage others:

- *Words.* Your words can have a positive effect on people. Using them is a skill God can give you if you ask: "The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary" (Isaiah 50:4).

- *Example.* Your good example can encourage others to endure, to try harder or to forge ahead toward success. You can lead others to live better lives (Matthew 5:16).

- *Charity.* You can encourage people by giving them your time or other resources. Invite people to dinner, or give a bouquet of flowers. Help with household repairs. You can



COMSTOCK

give in many ways!

- *Embracing.* Embracing is a way to communicate concern. Whether and how you hug someone, of course, depends on the nature of your relationship.

Finding opportunities to encourage is easy. Just get to know people and respond to their needs. You can inspire them with hope, infuse them with courage and help them enjoy their accomplishments!

—George Kackos ■

SOMETHING JESUS DIDN'T KNOW

Some assume that Jesus knew everything. After all, before he became flesh, he was the Word, who had been with God from the beginning (John 1:1-2, 14).

Jesus, for example, knew he existed before Abraham (John 8:56-58). He knew he had seen Satan fall from heaven (Luke 10:18). He often knew precisely what people were thinking

(Matthew 9:4, 12:25).

But we cannot assume he knew everything.

It seems unlikely that Jesus, as an infant, knew every fact and the words of every language. Jesus, as a credible example for us, grew in grace and knowledge (II Peter 3:18, Luke 2:52). Sometimes he seemed mildly surprised (Matthew 16:15-17, 8:10).

Jesus did not know when he would return (Matthew 24:36). He didn't know the Father's will perfectly.

Shortly before his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus prayed to escape the trial: "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39, 42). Jesus knew the

scriptures that predicted his crucifixion, yet he thought that an escape was worth asking about.

Jesus, because of the Holy Spirit that filled him, knew God's will perfectly in terms of how to live, how to keep God's law and what kind of character to have. But he didn't know every detail of God's will for the future.

The Bible tells us how to live and what kind of character to have. We know God's will in these, but we don't always know God's will in details of our future.

We, like Jesus, don't have to know everything. Sometimes we simply have to wait and see.

—Michael Morrison ■

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