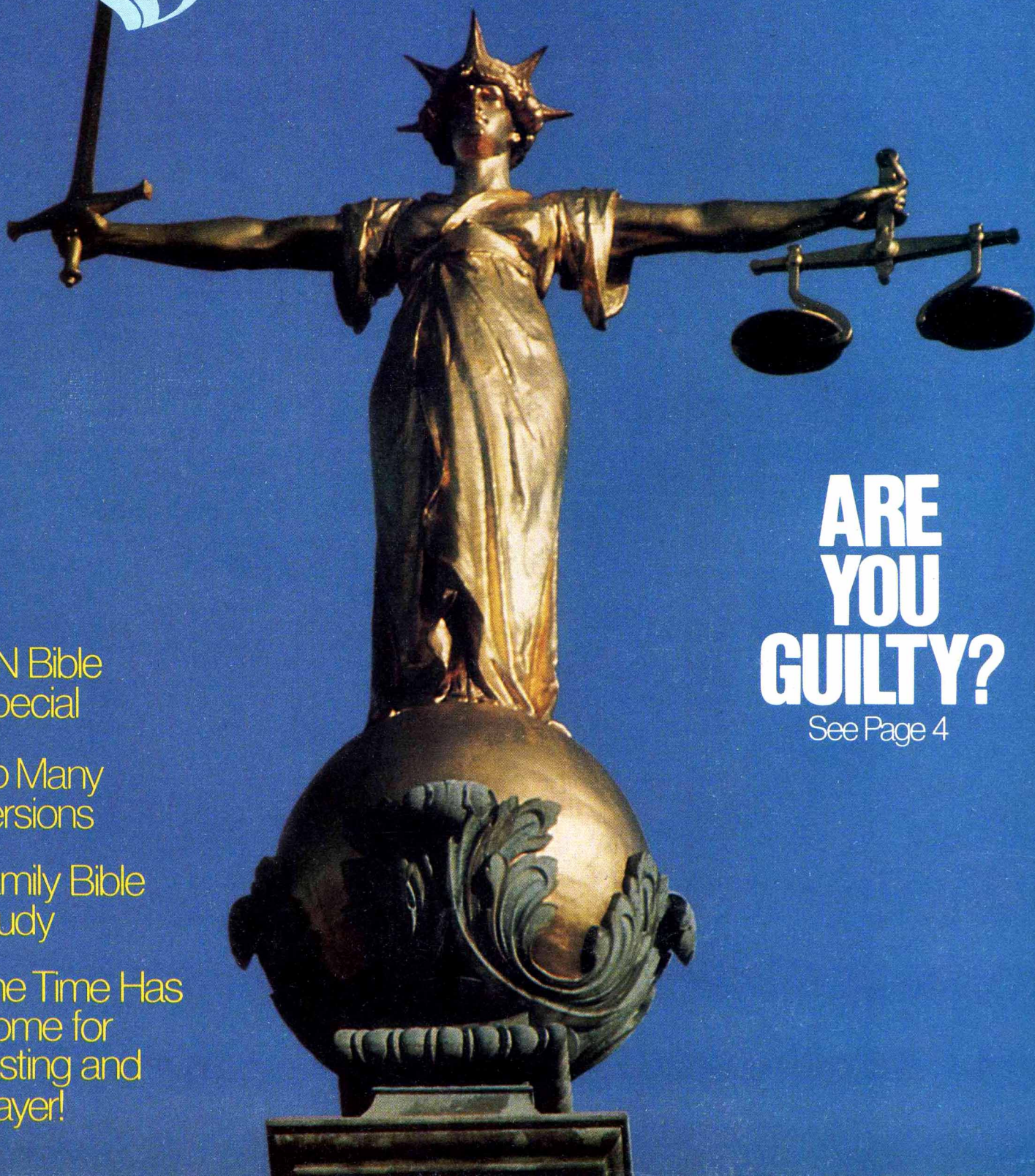


The Good News



GN Bible
Special

So Many
Versions

Family Bible
Study

The Time Has
Come for
Fasting and
Prayer!

**ARE
YOU
GUILTY?**

See Page 4

The Good News

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COVER: The scales of justice, weighing innocence and guilt. Would you be found guilty if you were tried on the charge of being a Christian? See article beginning on page 4. Photo by Fox Photos, London.

Letters

Thought-provoking article

I wanted to write and thank you [Colin Adair] for your timely article, "Does God Ever Forsake Us?"

Too many times Satan tries to make us feel and take on his own thoughts and future. Your article brought my awareness of this fact boldly to the surface.

Gary R. Bastie
Gainesville, Fla.

Certainly the article in the October-November issue of *The Good News*, "Does God Ever Forsake Us," is an inspiration to all.

W. O. Miller
Kansas City, Kan.

Great lessons

I just read Richard Rice's article in the [September] *Good News*, "2 Great Lessons From the Feast of Tabernacles." It was very good and inspiring.

Mrs. Bruce Harper
Calvert City, Ky.

I just wanted to say I really enjoyed this month's [September's] issue of *The Good News*, especially the article about children. I have really learned a lot in reading *The Plain Truth* and *The Good News*, and all I can say is keep the magazines coming. I really do enjoy reading them.

Diann Hull
Dover, Ark.

I enjoy all the articles inside this wonderful publication, but the "Ministry" is the best. You have to use the Bible and go to the passages. I like this very much. It helps me understand better.

Flora Mae Bell
Mount Airy, Md.

More to come

When I received the *Good News* magazine with articles on "Old Testament Personalities," I thought it was a super idea and enjoyed them very much. Now I received my last GN magazine and the feature has been discontinued. Please put it back in your fine magazine. I like the magazine very much.

Gene Zimmerman
Delano, Minn.

The GN plans to feature many more Old Testament personalities in the months ahead. However, because of limited space, we cannot guarantee that the series will appear in every issue. But we'll do our best!

Personal from

Robert H. Armstrong

The Time We Are In, Now

Just where are we now, in the prophesied panorama of events leading to the END of this age?

Both world events and occurrences in the Church indicate we are in the time mentioned in Daniel 12.

In verse 2, Daniel speaks of the resurrection of saints at the time of Christ's coming. Then he speaks of events leading up to that crowning event of history. He says: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal

the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (verse 4).

We have come to that time — the TIME OF THE END! Rapid travel, to and fro, at high speed! We are definitely in the END TIME! Knowledge has been increased on earth amazingly. We have been going with increasing momentum through the age of invention, the age of science and technology, the air age, the space age and now the NUCLEAR age. Now, for the first time in human history, the weapons of mass destruction have

been produced that can erase all humanity from the earth!

In the one decade of the '60s, the fund of human knowledge DOUBLED. Also the world's troubles and evils DOUBLED!

In verse 7 it is stated, "And when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished."

It seems indefinite as to the antecedent of the pronoun *he*, above. Other translations use the word *they*. But surely Satan is now endeavoring

(Continued on page 23)

NEVER BEFORE IN HUMAN HISTORY has the world been in a perilous state like the one in which we now find ourselves. Man has created enough weapons of mass destruction to wipe all life off the earth, and the nations seem bent on doing just that. Both world events and occurrences in the Church indicate we are in the time mentioned in Daniel 12. True Christians must be ready for the end of this age!



Photos by CTK. U.S. Air Force, Wide World

The Time Has Come for Fasting and Prayer!

We are in the last days of this present world. God's Church has not been ready for Christ's coming. Here's the way to become ready.

By Herbert W. Armstrong

OUR TIME FOR finishing the Work of God may now be very short. The new GIANT WORLD POWER of the United States of Europe — the revived "HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE" of 554 to 1814 — could conceivably now emerge to stun the whole world in WONDER within a year or two — and very possibly in five years or less.

World conditions are in upheaval as never before. The Iranian crisis, as I write, Nov. 20, *could* trigger a nuclear WORLD WAR III. It won't — for no such war with the U.S.S.R. is prophesied. But the Kremlin has *warned* Washington that any military action by the United States against Iran would be answered by Russia.

So a *little* nation, Iran, blackmails the mighty United States, burns in angry ridicule the Stars and Stripes and effigies of President Jimmy Carter — while the most powerful nation on earth stands HELPLESS!

The character, personality and actions of the Polish pope, John Paul II, indicate *more* than possibly that he may be the pope to offer his good services to unite the nations of Europe once again. European nations want, seriously, to be united. Of themselves they are unable. John Paul II could make it possible.

If and *when* that happens, the present Work of God, which He is carrying on through His Church, will quickly be finished!

It now appears likely that God's present Work through us will come to an end 1,335 days before the approximate date of Christ's return in supreme POWER and GLORY! It appears the Roman European armies will surround and take half of the city of Jerusalem 45 days later, and the GREAT TRIBULATION will begin 30 days after that. And the GREAT TRIBULATION, running parallel to the worldwide telecast of the TWO WITNESSES (Rev. 11), will last approximately 3½ years.

The prophesied DAY OF THE LORD will probably take place, in its *first* phase, during the latter part of that 3½ years — cutting short the GREAT TRIBULATION caused by Satan's WRATH!

REMEMBER WE CANNOT SET EXACT

DATES. But all signs, both in God's Church, and in the world, do indicate all this is now drawing NEARER THAN WE MAY THINK!

Since I wrote the above, news flashes report Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini has said definitely he is going to put the remaining hostages on trial for espionage, and that he already has found them guilty. This would call for their execution.

President Carter, after counseling with congressional and State Department advisers, declares the United States will use military force if the fanatic Moslem leader in Iran carries out his threat. A group of U.S. warships are in either the Persian Gulf or the Arabian Sea, and the carrier *Kitty-Hawk* has been sent sailing there from the Philippines. The U.N. charter provides for the United States to use military means to defend its diplomats in Iran.

Also today members of the Shiite Moslem sect (headed by the Ayatollah Khomeini) (about one tenth of Islam Arabs) invaded the most sacred of all Islam shrines, the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, killing some and holding others as hostages. The Arab followers of the Islam religion are divided. The Ayatollah Khomeini, virtually a madman, may be seeking to

capture the total power over the entire Islam religion. Anyway, Saudi Arabia, chief oil producer, and President Anwar Sadat of Egypt are on America's side in this.

Following all this, the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan was blown up!

This whole situation is extremely **SERIOUS**. The whole world is aflame and in chaos. Anarchy is ruling in Iran.

We are well into the **TIME OF THE END!** The formation of the United States of Europe — “the Beast Power” of Revelation 17 — is close at hand. And that will plunge our people and the world into the **GREAT TRIBULATION**, to be cut short by the **DAY OF THE LORD** and the coming of Christ in supreme **POWER AND GLORY!**

We must press on as never before, to **FINISH THE WORK** Christ is doing through us! We must now put all else aside — make every sacrifice — to **PREPARE OURSELVES** for Christ's soon coming!

How get ready?

God's Church is not yet **READY** to meet our glorified Lord in the air. How, then, shall we *get* ready?

The **GREAT TRIBULATION** will be cut short (Matt. 24:22) by the “**DAY OF THE LORD**.” That is the time of God's intervention in world affairs, leading immediately into the coming of Christ. God instructs us how to **GET READY**, before the **DAY OF THE LORD**, especially in the prophecy of Joel. Read it carefully. **OBEY IT!** Put it into action! Here is God's instruction to us, **NOW**:

“Sanctify ye [set apart] a fast, call a solemn assembly . . . Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come . . . O Lord, to thee will I cry . . . Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Joel 1:14-15, 19; 2:1-2).

Continue: “Therefore also now, saith the Eternal, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the

Eternal your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil” (Joel 2:12-13).

The **DAY OF THE LORD** will not come until God moves swiftly to cut short the **GREAT TRIBULATION**. But, we are drawing **VERY NEAR** to the **GREAT TRIBULATION**. It probably *has to be MORE* than 3½ years before the coming of Christ in **POWER AND GLORY!** Yet what did Jesus warn about those who say, “My Lord delayeth his coming”? He pronounced woe upon them. We dare not say, “Oh well, there's at least another 3½ years — there's lots of time yet — I'll start fasting and praying later.” That would be a good way to go into a lake of fire, instead of into God's Kingdom!

Fasting and prayer needed in God's Church today

Brethren, we **NEED EARNEST FASTING AND PRAYER NOW!** We need to **GET READY NOW** — and grow constantly in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Some of us are too far from our God right now. Let me tell you of a time when I came to realize that I was not close enough to God. My prayers were not being answered. **ARE YOURS?**

I have written this before, but those of you who read it need to read it again. It was about mid-January, 1930. I had been converted less than three years. God had directly answered my prayers, but now, near mid-January, 1930, they were not being answered. It was near time for Garner Ted to be born. My wife was excessively anemic — seriously lacking in iron in her blood. The doctor feared she did not have sufficient strength for the delivery. He insisted she must go to the hospital.

But the hospital bill for the birth of our first son, Richard David, had not yet been paid, and the hospital would not admit her until it was paid. I was without money. We were utterly without food. We burned wood in the kitchen stove, and we were completely out of wood. I had prayed. Now I asked in desperation, “**WHY** doesn't God answer my prayers anymore?” I knew the reason was mine, not God's. But I didn't know the reason.

The Sabbath was coming on. I

decided to **FAST AND PRAY** until I found the answer.

I fasted Friday night. Sabbath morning I continued the fast — no food — no juice — no liquids. I started Sabbath morning by praying one full whole hour. I did *not* ask God to heal my wife — I asked for nothing, except for God to show me what was wrong with **ME** that my prayers were not being answered. Then I meditated for one hour, searching my mind, to understand wherein I was wrong. This was followed by one hour of searching the Bible to see if God would reveal to me, there, the answer.

Then I started all over again, with one hour of prayer, one hour of soul-searching meditation and one hour of searching the Bible. This hour-by-hour program was maintained until bedtime that night.

By Sunday morning I was *really* hungry. But I continued the hour-by-hour prayer, meditation and Bible searching.

It must have been about two in the afternoon Sunday that one of our daughters called out, “Grandpa and Grandma Armstrong are driving into our driveway!”

By that time, I **KNEW** *why* my prayers had not been answered. The stress of trying to earn a living and such cares had taken my time, and I had not been as close to God as I had previously been after my conversion. I guess the “first love” — or the “romance” of conversion — had worn off, and my mind had been taken up with material cares. I had no longer been close enough to God.

But now, Sunday afternoon, this fasting and prayer and soul-searching had brought me back into **CLOSENESS** with God. I had been reading His many **PROMISES** to answer prayer in the hours of Bible searching. Now I **KNEW** God would hear!

I did not need a long prayer now. I was very close to my Creator. Now, for the first time in this fast, I asked Him hurriedly to heal my wife and restore the needed iron. I asked God to send us wood. I asked Him for food. I asked Him for payment of the hospital bill. I asked Him for needed money. I asked him for a new overcoat — for I had only an old lightweight topcoat with a hole at least six

(Continued on page 27)

Put Your Christianity on Trial

By Norman Shoaf



Jesus Christ is about to marry His true Church and complete the building of His spiritual temple. If we are to have a part in the Kingdom of God, we must make sure we are ready.

Imagine the following scenario:

It is a pleasant spring evening about 10 p.m., and you and your family have settled down for a good night's sleep. The children have been tucked in, and your wife is already dozing. As you, too, begin to drift off, you are thinking about the work you did today on the flower beds or the vacation you are planning for this summer. A gentle breeze coming through the open window soothes you. Everything is quiet, except for a few crickets chirping somewhere outside.

Suddenly you are startled out of your serenity by a loud hammering at the front door. The knocking is quick, persistent, demanding an answer. At first your cloudy mind has to struggle to realize what is going on, but then you are awake, getting up, putting on your robe. Your wife rolls over, sits up, rubs her eyes and asks, "What's going on?"

"Someone's at the door," you mumble, as you turn on a small light in the hall and make your way downstairs.

The rapping at the door grows even stronger, more impatient. Just before you reach the living room and are about to shout "Who's there?" a deep voice on the other side of the door booms, "Open up, in the name of the law!"

The law? Your mind races. What is this? What's happening? You find a light and turn it on. You fumble with the lock and then open the door.

Outside, in the dim, eerie moonlight, stand two uniformed police officers. They are tall, muscular, their faces grim. One of them has been using his nightstick to pound on your door, and he still clutches it in his hand. The officer with the nightstick squints, his eyes adjusting to the light inside, and then asks, in the same deep voice as before, somewhat quieter this time, "Are you Mr. Harry Smith?"

"Why, y-yes," you stammer

sheepishly, bewildered by everything. "I-I am."

The man replies: "We're with the county police, Mr. Smith, and we have a warrant here for your arrest. You're going to have to come along with us to headquarters."

Your mouth drops open. What? Me? Arrest? Scared, you find the strength to ask, "Why, what's the charge, officer?"

Just before the policeman reads you your rights, handcuffs you and shoves you into the back of his patrol car, he replies, "Mr. Smith, you've been charged with being a Christian and worshiping the true God."

At police headquarters you are fingerprinted, photographed and put in a small, bare, metal cell. Your captors inform you that you will be held without bail until you can be brought to trial. Tried — for being a Christian! As the cold steel door slams shut, your life passes in front of your eyes. Trembling, you wonder whether they can possibly convict you for the crime with which they have charged you — devotion to Christ's way of life.

Suppose you were to actually be confronted with a situation such as this imaginary one. Could the authorities convict you?

They *should* be able to, you know.

The evidence against you

Your life should be such a blatant example of loyalty to the principles of Jesus Christ that it would be simple to convict you of the imaginary crime of being a Christian.

What charges should the authorities be able to bring against you? What evidence should they be able to find to prove the charges? What witnesses could be called to testify against you?

Christ said, speaking of Christians: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good

fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:16-20).

Your fruits — what you produce with the Holy Spirit God has placed in you — are the evidence that would be used to press charges against you. And the stronger your fruits are, the surer your conviction as a Christian will be:

Prayer and Bible study. What is your relationship with your Creator like? How well do you know Him and what He is doing — and what He wants *you* to do? If you are a true Christian, you will be growing more in harmony with Him each day of your life.

That harmony is founded upon a solid practice of Bible study and constant prayer, both of which the Bible itself commands.

"Pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17).

"I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (I Tim. 2:8).

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:16).

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

"All scripture is given by God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16).

Understanding and supporting God's government. The foremost thing on God's mind right now is restoring His government to this earth. That government will be the basis of the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of God was the foundation of Christ's Gospel message.

Do you understand God's government, and do you know where it is working today on earth? Are you in full support of that government, and do you desperately want it to rule you and this entire world? True Christians know what the government of God is and are totally behind it. If you aren't sure, then the prosecutors won't be able to convict you on this point. If you would like to know more, write for our free booklet, *Just What Do You Mean, Kingdom of God?*

Keeping God's commandments. True Christians will be concerned with obeying God's laws, both in the spirit and the letter. Those laws, based on love and outgoing concern — the *give* way of life — will be the basis of government in God's Kingdom and will be the standards by which the entire world is judged. To be convicted of Christianity, you must be a *keeper* of God's commandments, not a *breaker* of them.

Christ said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17).

Paul and John, apostles taught at Christ's feet, supported His teachings:

"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31).

"He that saith, I know him [God], and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4).

God's commandments include His weekly Sabbath and annual Holy Days, which God's true Church understands as picturing His plan of salvation. True Christians will be aware of how Satan has deceived the whole world with pagan holidays and will be keeping all of God's ordained festivals. Do you observe them as you should, both physically and spiritually?

Doing good works. To prove that you are a true Christian, your prosecutors should be able to charge you with a long list of good works you

have performed. Unselfish acts of service to others are one of the hallmarks of a Christian life (Matt. 25:31-46).

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27).

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

Is your attitude one of giving, sharing, helping, volunteering, sacrificing your interests in favor of the best interests of others? A Christian's clear goal in life is to do things that produce abundant life and happiness for other people, both those in the Church and those who have never heard of it.

Becoming spiritually pure. When Christ returns to this earth to rule, He is going to marry a clean, pure bride who is wearing sparkling, beautiful garments (Rev. 19:7). You, as part of the Church of God, are a member of the "body" that will wed the Savior of the world. You should be preparing now for that glorious wedding, becoming spiritually pure and perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5:48).

"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it . . . That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27).

Your mind should be fixed on honest, just, pure, lovely things — and so set that you can never be swayed from that way of thinking (Phil. 4:8). Spirit-born Sons of God will have developed perfect character and chosen the "give" way over the "get" way once and for all.

If the policemen who arrested you on the Christianity charge gave you a lie detector test, you would be nearly unable to think anything except right, beautiful, godly thoughts. This test would be one of the strongest pieces of evidence they could use to convict you, if lie detector tests were admissible as evidence in the court. How strongly do you manifest the

fruits of God's Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)?

Witnesses for the prosecution

When suspected criminals are tried, their convictions usually require more than a clearly defined set of charges and bits of circumstantial evidence. The strongest condemnation of a person in the prisoner's box comes from *eyewitnesses* who can testify that they saw the accused commit some illegal act. If the defendant was caught red-handed, so to speak, by a reliable witness, there is little he can do to maintain his innocence.

So in the imaginary trial of the Christian, the prosecution should have available a number of witnesses — people who saw the follower of Jesus commit the "crimes" of which he is accused. And in real life, the multitude of witnesses around you should have no question in their minds as to your persuasion in life.

Once again we look to a definite instruction Jesus Christ gave His followers.

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:14-16).

Your attitude and works should plainly proclaim that you are trying to glorify God by living His way of life. Christ has put you in a world with literally billions of witnesses to whom He wants you to display the character you should be developing. If you are like the salt that has lost its savor (verse 13), no lawyer on earth could find an honest witness to convict you.

But all the witnesses to whom you should be showing a model life are not in the world.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1).

(Continued on page 28)

The Most Important Book of All Time.

Exciting
to Study...
Satisfying
to Read...

HOLY
BIBLE

GN BIBLE SPECIAL

Photo by Roland Rees

7 Keys to Understanding the Bible

By Herbert W. Armstrong

Editor's Note: This eye-opening article by the Worldwide Church of God's pastor general first appeared in the July, 1953, Plain Truth. The information is just as vital now as it was nearly 27 years ago, and even more so, as we draw closer to the end of this age! As part of this issue's special section on Bible study, we are happy to reprint this important knowledge for the benefit of our readers.

Do you realize God has purposely closed much of the Holy Bible from human understanding, *until now*?

Look at the pitiful spectacle — hundreds of different sects and denominations, all confused and mixed up, each with its *own* different ideas, beliefs and practices — all disagreeing as to what the Bible says — none understanding its full true message!

WHY?

Because none of them possesses the *keys* needed to open the doors to understanding, and therefore this spiritual treasure house is closed to them.

Locked up until now!

Even the prophets inspired in writing the Word of God did not understand much of what they wrote. Daniel records in his last chapter:

"I heard this, but I did not understand it" (Moffatt translation). When he asked the meaning of what he was inspired to write, he was told: "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are *closed up and sealed* till the time of the end" (KJV) — or, as Moffatt translates it, "*till the crisis at the close*" (Dan. 12:8-9).

The whole world is now in chaos — we have now entered the world-*crisis*

at the *CLOSE* of this age! But even now, Daniel was told, "the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (verse 10).

Since this very Word of God reveals that "Sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4), those who encourage the breaking of God's law, teaching that it is done away — as nearly all sects and denominations do — are, in Bible terminology, "the wicked." And who are "the wise," who shall now understand?

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a *GOOD UNDERSTANDING* have all they that *do* his commandments" (Ps. 111:10).

Again God's angel caused Daniel to record: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan. 12:4). Yes, much of the Word of God, especially the prophecies, were shut up and sealed until now. Today people *run* to and fro, all over the world, in automobiles, trains and planes. Today knowledge has been increased. We have reached the world-CRISIS AT THE CLOSE of this age! The wise — those who fear God and keep His commandments — can now UNDERSTAND!

Even 50 years ago this true understanding *was still closed and sealed*! None of the established church denominations has been willing, in these 50 years, to admit error, correct false teachings or accept new light now suddenly revealed! No wonder they all disagree! They are in *BABYLON* — *CONFUSION*!

In the first place, none can understand by himself. The carnal mind cannot see spiritual things. These

truths are *revealed* through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit — and God gives His Spirit *only* to them who OBEY Him and keep His commandments! Only the truly converted can even *begin* to understand.

But even having that beginning, there are *SEVEN KEYS* needed to unlock these closed doors of truth! And just as one key alone will not unlock your safety deposit box at the bank, so no one, no two or even six of these keys will open the scriptural doors to full UNDERSTANDING. It requires ALL SEVEN KEYS.

Seven vital keys thrown away

Christ gave His apostles *the keys* of true UNDERSTANDING, which unlock the door to the KINGDOM OF GOD.

To Peter and the others, He said: "And I will give unto thee *the keys of the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. 16:19).

But He prophesied apostasy. "Many false prophets shall rise," He said, "and shall deceive many." Paul foretold the great "falling away" from God's truth and Christ's Gospel, turning unto *FABLES* (II Thess. 2:1-9; II Tim. 4:1-4). It had even begun in Paul's day (II Thess. 2:7). Church leaders only used *the keys* to lock up the door of the Kingdom, and then threw the keys away, even as the Pharisees and rulers did before them:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" said Jesus to them, "for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matt. 23:13).

And so naturally, today no denomination of traditional Christianity, sect or church possesses these seven KEYS!

Here they are: God's true Church has all of them!

1

The true Gospel

Almost no one has this first key, believe it or not! The Gospel of Christ is the Gospel Christ preached — a particular message sent from God by Jesus Christ as Messenger. The Gospel of Christ is CHRIST'S OWN GOSPEL — not a story *about* His Person!

Today people are led to believe that the Gospel is telling the story *about* Jesus — telling people *about* a Savior, they believe it is "the Gospel of salvation," not understanding the true way of salvation themselves! No wonder there is NO POWER in what is falsely preached as the "Gospel" today! The Gospel of Christ "is the POWER OF GOD unto salvation." Today most popular denominations do away with all that is vital in Christ's Gospel, saying He was preaching only to Jews under the old covenant! WHAT IGNORANCE!

What *is* Christ's Gospel? What is the message God sent to mankind by Jesus Christ? It is the GOOD NEWS of the KINGDOM OF GOD! Kingdom means GOVERNMENT! It is the message of *Divine Government* — government by GOD'S LAWS!

It is the prophetic proclamation of the coming WORLD GOVERNMENT to rule all nations and bring today's confused, chaotic, war-weary earth PEACE and JOY! It is the vital, dynamic, powerful living message of GOD'S GOVERNMENT, first in individual hearts in God's true Church, now in this world, later all nations internationally in the WORLD TOMORROW!

Of course that power-filled message includes the knowledge about the Savior, High Priest and coming King! Of course, it includes the true way of salvation, which the churches seem to have lost! And it includes also knowledge of the location of the TERRITORY to be ruled over by the King of the coming Kingdom — the fact it is *this earth* and not heaven!

But there can be no GOVERNMENT without LAWS, and so the TRUE GOSPEL also must proclaim the LAW of God, which alone can bring peace to the world and success, happiness and joy to the individual!

The TRUE GOSPEL has to do with the

nations of today's world, world conditions today and Christ's reign over all nations in the WORLD TOMORROW! It is a full, complete, dynamic and POWERFUL Gospel, which has been kept by the powers of darkness from the world for 1,900 years! *This knowledge is the first key!*

2

Salvation IS creation

The idea preached in this dark, confused world is that salvation is God's plan for *repairing the damage* caused by Satan in "the fall of man" in the Garden of Eden.

God, so the world has been taught by church leaders, had *completed* His work of creation — man was a *finished* creation, spiritual, immortal, perfect in character. Then along came Satan, and by cunning he wrecked God's handiwork, thwarted God's purpose, caused man to fall to the low plane of sinful human nature, ruined God's perfect creation! Then God is supposed to have looked down upon this colossal smashup, and to have thereupon thought out THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION as a means of *repairing the damage*.

Salvation, then, is presented merely as God's effort to *restore* man to a condition *as good as* Adam was in the first place. The picture is that God has been doing His very best for 6,000 long years, but Satan has resisted Him! God has found Himself unable to avoid a CONTEST with Satan — a "GREAT CONTROVERSY" as one writer phrased it — in which God has done His best, but Satan has continued to outsmart Him and now today, with TIME ABOUT UP, the vast majority of people on earth are still unsaved — still on Satan's side! The contest is almost over, and the best God can now do is take revenge, and soon to send Christ to DESTROY ALL THE WICKED whom Satan has kept on his side!

Can you see *that* picture could only have come from the deceiving false GOD OF THIS WORLD, Satan himself? It presents Satan at every turn as more powerful than God — as succeeding in his rivalry! This entire concept is a damnable LIE!

The TRUTH is the second important

KEY — and it explains GOD'S PURPOSE in placing humanity on this earth!

Salvation is *not* a "repairing of the damage" done by Satan in the Garden of Eden. Satan never did alter or change God's purpose or plan. The devil has never thwarted God's will. All has gone always, and always will, exactly according to GOD'S PURPOSE!

Salvation is merely the COMPLETING of CREATION! Creation was *not* completed 6,000 years ago, at the time described in Genesis 1! That was merely the *first* or *material phase* of a creation *now still going on!* What God then created was *physical* — *material*. The spiritual creation is a process, continuing, according to God's plan, today!

Man was created PHYSICAL, not spiritual — MORTAL, not immortal — of the dust of the ground — the clay model that God the Master Potter is now fashioning and shaping, *spiritually*, into the FINAL image! Man was created purposely, in the mere PHYSICAL image of God, a free moral agent, with possibility revealed to him of *receiving* as God's gift the very spiritual nature of God, so that he may by God's power be made into a perfect, righteous, spiritual character, then given immortality as God's gift! *There is no contest!* Satan does nothing except what God *permits!* And God permits it FOR A PURPOSE.

Character is created by experience, and experience requires time, and therefore it is a process! As Christ our example learned by suffering, so do we! The fact that SALVATION is the COMPLETING OF CREATION — the *spiritual* phase of Creation — that GOD'S PURPOSE is to create in us, as free moral agents who make our own decisions, the supreme masterpiece of all His creative acts — holy, righteous, spiritual, immortal CHARACTER — resisting the downpull of Satan and self-desire, building character by LIVING GOD'S LAWS — that knowledge of GOD'S PURPOSE is *the second vital* KEY!

3

God's dual method

A duality runs through every phase of God's plan. First, the *material* creation of Genesis 1, completed; second, the *spiritual* creation still in pro-

cess pictured finally complete in the *prophecy* of Revelation 21 and 22. There was the *first* Adam, material, of the earth; and there is the *second* Adam, Christ Jesus, spiritual, from heaven. There was the *first* covenant with Israel, material and national, devoid of salvation, based upon the birthright promise; and there is the NEW covenant, spiritual and individual, with a spiritually begotten Israel, based upon the scepter promise. God made man mortal, of the dust, in order to convert him into immortality, composed of Spirit.

In this very salvation process is the DUAL METHOD — the very word *salvation* means, first, rescuing from the penalty of eternal death, and second, the act of preserving or imparting eternal life as God's gift. And so, in being saved, we first are now *begotten* of God by the indwelling of His Spirit in our mortal bodies as the temple or house of the Spirit — and are now merely the *heirs* of salvation; and second, we shall finally be fully *born* of God at the resurrection of the just, when we shall *inherit* the Kingdom.

This same DUAL PRINCIPLE runs all through prophecy! First, a former or preliminary fulfillment that is merely the type or forerunner of a second, the final climactic fulfillment occurring, usually, during this CRISIS AT THE CLOSE we already have entered! And positively *none* can understand the Bible prophecies unless this DUALITY of fulfillment is understood. It is a vital key!

4

God's Holy Days

These were given to God's people to picture and to keep them in the understanding of God's PLAN for bringing about His purpose — His reign over all the earth whose people shall have been converted to righteous immortality!

Every sect, organization or denomination that does not observe God's Holy Days and fastened its eyes upon the pagan Romish holidays instead, has never understood the knowledge of GOD'S PLAN!

God's Holy Days picture:

First, Passover, the crucifixion of Christ.

Second, Feast of Unleavened Bread, putting sin out of our lives,

or, keeping God's commandments — and during this Festival was the wavesheaf picturing the resurrected Christ accepted of God as our High Priest.

Third, Feast of Firstfruits or Pentecost, picturing the coming of the Holy Spirit and the completing of this, the merely *first* and preliminary harvest of souls.

Fourth, Feast of Trumpets on first day of seventh month, picturing the Second Coming of Christ at the beginning of the seventh millennium at the *last trump*.

Fifth, Day of Atonement, picturing justice done by laying Satan's guilt in our sins upon his own head, removing him and chaining him in the symbolic bottomless pit, making us finally AT ONE with God. Atonement means at-one-ment.

Sixth, Feast of Tabernacles, for seven days, picturing the KINGDOM OF GOD during the seventh millennium, the great fall harvest of souls.

And seventh, the Last Great Day, immediately following the Feast of Tabernacles, picturing the final Great White Throne Judgment, which almost nobody today understands, and the final COMPLETING of God's plan!

5

The truth about Israel

The fact that the nation Israel became divided into two nations, the 10-tribed Kingdom, retaining the name the kingdom of Israel, possessing the birthright promises, and the kingdom of Judah, composed of Judah and Benjamin and a large portion of Levi, possessing the scepter; and, secondly, the fact revealed during this time of the end that the Jewish people today are merely a portion of the descendants of the kingdom of Judah; and the Americans, British and democracies of Northwestern Europe are the so-called "lost 10 tribes" or descended from the house of ISRAEL — and that Britain is Ephraim, and the United States is Manasseh, co-holders of the birthright, which is the true explanation of our sudden rise to the greatest national power and wealth ever possessed by any nation.

Prophecies cannot be understood without this vital key.

6

Bible interpretation of symbols

God has concealed until now His prophecies of these colossal end-time world events now occurring by means of SYMBOLS used to describe these events — as well as by the fact of His dual principle and that our Israelitish identity has been hidden from men.

Symbols, like parables, were used, *not* to make meaning clearer, but to *hide* and *conceal* God's true meaning until the time came for *Him* to reveal the interpretation of the symbols. Just as Jesus' parables were not understood until Jesus Himself explained them in plain language, so with symbols. For generations men have been putting human interpretations upon God's symbols. An important KEY, therefore, is that these symbols are interpreted in plain language in the Bible itself, if not in the context, then elsewhere, and we must search for *God's own interpretation*, never apply our own.

7

God's Sabbath

Since this is the *test* Commandment — the one most professing Christians refuse to obey — the one that causes the greatest *test of faith* and reliance upon God to be able to keep it, it stands as the final completing *basic key* — for "A GOOD UNDERSTANDING have all they that *do* his commandments!"

Also it is the basic key to the *identity* of ISRAEL. The house of Israel threw away this key to their identity — and thereby became the "lost 10 tribes!" The great majority of the house of Judah likewise threw it away and lost their identity — not known even today! The Jews who returned to Palestine under Ezra and Nehemiah became strict sabbatarians and have remained so to this day — and therefore the world looks upon them as ISRAEL (because they carry Israel's *identifying* SIGN) although they are *not* Israel, but only a small portion of JUDAH!

This completes the KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING — the KEYS TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

The churches have lost these KEYS! No wonder they are all mixed up, in confusion, each claiming the Bible says something *different*, none understanding ITS TRUE MESSAGE! □

So Many Versions

By Herman L. Hoeh

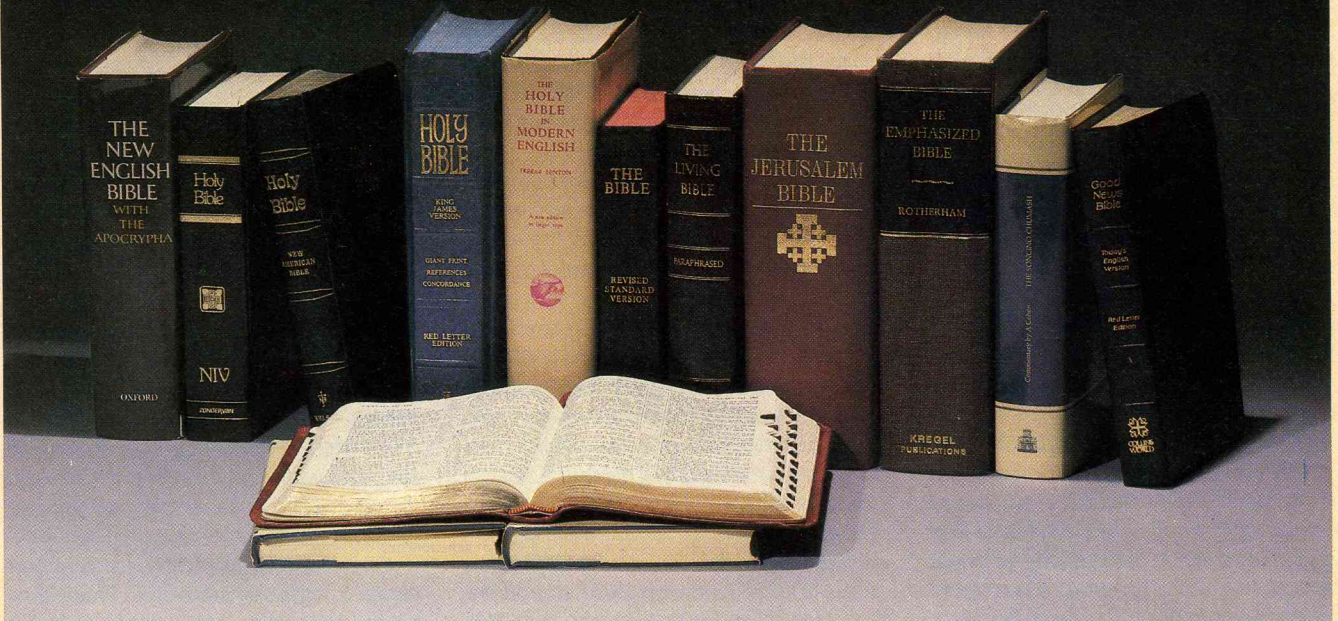


Photo by Warren Watson

A veritable explosion in 20th-century Bible translations is occurring. Some are excellent; some tragic. Explained here is the way to choose good translations.

In this fast-paced 20th century the primary languages of the Church members are English, followed by Spanish, French, Afrikaans and German. Yet God spoke to us through His prophets and apostles.

How, then, are we to understand the ancient words of the prophets and apostles whose voices have been recorded in ancient languages?

In translation! But who is to translate? God could have sent holy scribes inspired to translate the words into modern languages for us. But He did not.

Translation not now a Church of God function

God, in effect, has decreed that uninspired men must translate His message.

God is in a very real sense testing the scholars of this world to see how careful they are in translating His

Word! He is not now asking His Church to do scholarly translations. But God is testing us to see how careful we are in reading and choosing their translations of the Bible!

But why so many translations of the Bible?

The answer, of course, is two-fold. Living languages change with the passing of generations. King James I of England did not speak the same style of English that U.S. President Abraham Lincoln spoke 2½ centuries later. And we do not speak in the style of either today. That is why the language of the *Authorized* or *King James Version* of the Bible seems archaic. And the language of the *Revised* or the *American Standard Version* produced at the turn of the century seems old-fashioned.

The second reason for continued translating is the explosion in archaeological and linguistic knowledge.

Over the centuries the meaning of Hebrew words changed. Moses and Jeremiah did not use Hebrew words with the same nuance of meaning. And Noah's vocabulary was so different that the kind of wood the patriarch used in building the ark is still obscure (Gen. 6:14).

Through archaeological discoveries and developments in linguistic skills it has become possible to recover the meaning of hundreds of words that were obscure to earlier translators.

Take as an example the muddy translating, based on word-for-word, of Isaiah 66:17 in the *Authorized Version* of 1611, "They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord."

Compare that with the vigorous rendering — based on translating mean-

ing for meaning — in *The New English Bible* of 1970, "Those who hallow and purify themselves in garden-rites, one after another in a magic ring, those who eat the flesh of pigs and rats and all vile vermin, shall meet their end, one and all, says the Lord."

A major difference in style! A graphically clearer meaning! Is it any wonder that the present generation demands something more than the *King James Version*?

20th-century explosion in translations

It was 2¾ centuries before the English-speaking world recognized the need for revising the *Authorized Version* of 1611. But the resultant *Revised Version* of 1881-1885 was itself in need of further revision in half a century.

The answer was the *Revised Standard Version* of 1946-1952. Its style was so modern — its textual changes so many — that it was vehemently attacked. Yet, looking back 30 years it seems as if the *Revised Standard Version* — based on the old way of translating, with word-for-word correspondence — is extremely conservative.

To fill the need of *modern* language versions at different educational levels, Catholic scholars in Britain and the United States — with English-speaking colleagues from around the world — have produced five major modern language versions in less than 20 years.

The Jerusalem Bible edited by Catholic scholars in Britain appeared in 1966. It is based on the new way of translating, meaning for meaning. *The New English Bible*, also based on the new way of translating, is a Protestant British version that appeared in 1970.

U.S. Catholics issued the *New American Bible* the same year. It is based on the old way of translating, but uses a vigorous vocabulary.

The American Bible Society published in 1976 *Today's English Version*. Its simple English reads like a newspaper and is designed to reach millions of the lesser educated and those who speak English as a second language. In 1978 the *New International Version* appeared. It is a transdenominational evangelical Protestant work, underwritten by the New York International Bible Society.

And this list does not include the dozens of partial or complete transla-

tions of the Bible accomplished by individual scholars in the last 90 years. Nor does it include the issuance of *The Holy Scriptures*, a major translation by Jewish scholars of the Hebrew Scriptures into English. It was published by the Jewish Publication Society of America in 1917. An updated Jewish translation is in preparation.

Making choice among many

In deciding among Bible translations, people usually ask, Which *one* should I choose?

This is the wrong question to ask! It is never wise to use just *one* translation. We should ask, instead, which versions or translations are the most carefully worded? Which the most effective for reading?

Which preserve the original texts most accurately? And, what of the cost of buying different translations? This last question is easiest to answer. If you cannot afford a new edition, go to a used bookstore. There are almost always different versions available at cheap prices.

But now to the other questions. The most carefully worded Bible should be used for study, whenever possible. But that does not mean the most carefully worded Bible is either the most accurate textually or the most readable. Translation is an art, not an exact science. It involves style of expression. Translators may be skilled stylists in language or excellent linguists, but not necessarily both.

So, which *Bibles* should we *first* choose? Notice that I use the plural — *Bibles*. Begin your reading or study with a minimum of two versions as a safeguard. You may — and should — add others as the need arises, having altogether perhaps seven or eight translations if you follow Solomon's principle in Ecclesiastes 11:2.

The wisdom of experience would require that the first two should be the *Authorized* and the *Revised Standard* versions. Both are issued in expensive and inexpensive editions. Concordances are available for both!

The *Authorized Version*, prepared during the reign of King James I, set the standard for style in the English language. It is still the most widely used for this reason.

The *Revised Standard Version* of 1946-1952 is a careful translation. It is an authorized revision of the *American*

Standard Version, published in 1901, which in turn was an American revision of the *King James Version* of 1611.

By contrast all other recent versions are completely new translations into modern English. They are not revisions, but fresh translations from the original languages.

Comparing translations for meaning

The worth of a Bible translation is to be found in its precision and accuracy of meaning. The most logical verses to use as a test are — you should have guessed! — Genesis 1:1-2.

The beginning verses of any translation of the Bible reflect the character of the whole translation. Why? Because the first two verses of Genesis in Hebrew are so full of meaning, yet stated so succinctly!

How a translator words these two verses reflects his understanding as much as his knowledge of grammar. In fact, the word construction in Genesis 1:1-2 is such that two translations are possible *grammatically*.

One of the two possible translations gives a correct meaning. The other contradicts the plain statement of Isaiah 45:18: "For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it in chaos, he formed it to be inhabited!)"

With this excellent translation from the *Revised Standard Version*, let us turn, now, to the different versions, and see how the translators rendered the meaning of Genesis 1:1-2.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

This is the traditional wording of the *Authorized* or *King James Version* and the Jewish Publication Society's *The Holy Scriptures*. This wording is also followed by the *Revised Version*, the *Revised Standard Version*, the *New International Version* and the *Jerusalem Bible*. (These four versions, however, all use the plural "heavens" — the more modern form.)

Now see how verse 2 is rendered in the *Authorized Version*, "And the earth was without form, and void." The *Revised Version*, "And the earth waste and void." The *Revised Standard*, "The earth was without form and void" — deleting *and* at the beginning of the sentence.

The Jewish translation, followed by the Catholic *Jerusalem Bible* and the *New International Version*, clarify the meaning further: "Now the earth was formless and empty." The use of the word *now* connotes a time distinct from "the beginning." The *New International Version*, in addition, footnotes the verb *was* indicating another possible translation: "Now the earth *became* formless and empty."

Each of these versions is a sound translation, essentially accurate, and in keeping with the revelation of Isaiah 45:18.

Now contrast the preceding with the following interpretations.

"In the beginning, when God created the universe, the earth was formless and desolate" (*Today's English Version*). The Catholic *New American Bible*, "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland." *The New English Bible*, "In the beginning of creation, when God made heaven and earth, the earth was without form and void."

Each of these translations, though possible in Hebrew, is unsound and contradicts Isaiah 45:18. When left with a choice grammatically, these translations chose the wrong alternative because they assumed the creation began in chaos.

Two other widely used translations — James Moffatt's and Smith-Good-speed's — similarly err in rendering Genesis 1:1-2 into English.

Now look at the New Testament — Mark 1:1. The *Authorized Version* reads, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." That is a correct translation. The *Revised Version* and the *Revised Standard* share the same wording.

The Catholic *New American Bible* effectively reads, "Here begins the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The *New English Bible* has the same effective wording. These are all direct and correct translations of the original Greek.

Contrast these with the following interpretations, "The beginning of the gospel *about* Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (*New International Version*). "The beginning of the Good News *about* Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (*Today's English Version*). These translations imply the book of Mark is

Mark's good news about Jesus Christ. This is a total error.

Mark wrote about the good news Jesus brought — the message of Christ that the Father delivered to Him for mankind. That good news is about the Kingdom of God that is about to break into world affairs to bring peace to the earth. That good news includes the proclamation that Jesus is the Messiah, but it is much more. It is consequently wrong to translate Mark 1:1 "about Jesus Christ."

Granted, the grammar of the Greek *Iesou Christou* allows for both *of* and *about* as possible translations. But the more natural meaning is *of* — and Mark 1:14 proves that *of* is the only proper translation. For we read in the *New International Version* what that Gospel is:

"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'" (Mark 1:14-15). The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is the good news Jesus brought. It was not Jesus' message about Himself or Mark's message about Jesus!

At this point we may make a deduction about the accuracy of the English versions. The literary tradition of the *Authorized* or *King James Version* — the *Revised Standard Version* and the Jewish Publication Society translation of the Old Testament — is fundamentally sound. Each of the recent modern language versions, suitable though they may be, fall short in introducing creation or the Gospel.

It is for this reason that in Britain, in 1973, after the publication of the *Jerusalem Bible* and *The New English Bible*, both Catholic and Protestant scholars agreed that their "Common Bible" would be an ecumenical edition of the *Revised Standard Version*. That is why it is presently recommended as the first Bible to purchase along with the traditional *King James Version*.

Comparing translations for style

Style and meaning are both essential in a great translation. The *Authorized Version*, thought to be very modern in its day, possessed lasting stylistic qualities. It shaped English literary expression for two centuries. But changes in pronouns and verb endings, not to mention sentence struc-

ture variations through the impact of modern advertising, have required new 20th-century translations.

The *Revised Version*, completed at the close of the 19th century and noted for its accuracy of meaning, was quickly outdated in style. It used archaic verb endings and pronouns that had long since fallen into disuse in daily speech.

The *Revised Standard Version* removed both archaic verb endings and pronouns, except in addressing the Deity. Its style of phraseology reflects the high literary tradition of the *King James Version*. This stylistic quality enhances its use in public reading. But it is also one of its limitations. In private reading it seems stilted, not the way we speak or write today. For example:

"The Lord said to Satan, 'Whence have you come?' Satan answered the Lord, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it'" (Job 1:7, RSV). The style of *The New English Bible* is very short and colorful and modern. "The Lord asked him [Satan] where he had been. 'Ranging over the earth,' he said, 'from end to end.'"

No other modern-language version is more forceful than *The New English Bible*. But what it gains through style and clarity it may lose in precision and accuracy. It is an excellent reading Bible, but never one's first choice as a study Bible.

In this it parallels the modern English Catholic *Jerusalem Bible* and the James Moffatt translation. Both are excellent Bibles for reading and for comparison, but always as secondary study aids.

The *Jerusalem Bible* wonderfully translates Matthew 24:22 thus, "And if that time had not been shortened, no one would have survived." The Scotsman Moffatt translated, "Had not those days been cut short, not a soul would be saved alive." For more than 50 years the Moffatt translation has stood the test of effectiveness.

The *New International Version* is equally clear, but less effective in its verb usage: "If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive." In choice of expression the *Revised Standard Version* is more traditional and less clear, "And if those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved." The word *saved* is a

(Continued on page 21)

God's Word reveals to man the things he needs to know but could not otherwise discover. Studying that Word is imperative to the spiritual growth of Christians! And since God's purpose is that mankind become part of His Family, family Bible study should be an integral part of your life. This article shows more about how to study God's instruction Book together.

The purpose for which God made man, as Herbert W. Armstrong, God's apostle, has explained, was to reproduce Himself. God is now in the process of building a perfect, immortal *Family* of beings just like Himself.

As this physical life pictures that spiritual reality, we must realize how vitally important the human family and the success it achieves as a unit is to the development of God's Family.

Collective study vital

Collective family study of the Bible as well as *individual* study should be an integral part of our Christian lives. Notice God's admonition to families in Deuteronomy:

"Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

"Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the Lord swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth" (Deut. 11:18-21, New International Version).

While allowing each family member to worship God and to learn more about His character, family Bible study makes available time for parents and children to spend together, building a stronger family relationship. Fellowshiping and studying the Bible — with the father, mother and children all present — is a positive force to offset all the negative pressures

society places on the family structure.

The fact that one or both parents are Church members places the children in a special category in God's eyes. He can call them when they are old enough to understand His truth, and parents can help them by teaching them about God and the perfect way He wants His people to live (I Cor. 7:14).

Teaching children about God

If a child is taught the proper way of life from the time he is very young, he will not cast aside that training when he grows up (Prov. 22:6). Family Bible study periods provide perfect opportunities for parents to teach their children about God.

Several principles should be remembered in educating younger children about their Maker. Emphasize to your children this overall principle: "Obedience to God and His laws produces happiness and blessings. Disobedience and rebellion bring unhappiness and punishment." Develop your children's sense of morality — make sure they understand that the only way to be truly happy is by pleasing and glorifying God.

Don't fictionalize the Bible

When you are telling children what the Bible says, make sure you tell them *exactly what the Bible* says. For example, don't fictionalize about biblical characters just to hold your children's interest. Give them a realistic, mature, serious view of God's Word.

Don't depend on storybooks *about* the Bible — use the Bible itself. Most other sources, with the exception of the Work's own Youth Educational

Services (YES) materials, are many times unscriptural and put false concepts about God and the Bible into children's minds. Nor do these other "helps" teach the true purpose of life — the authors ignore the subject because they don't understand it themselves.

Relate the Bible's lessons to everyday life. Examples can promote understanding, especially for younger children.

Set a regular time for teaching your children about the Bible, and stick to it. If the family discussions are interesting, the children will look forward to Bible study time — and thus gain a healthy attitude toward delving into God's Word.

Keep sessions short enough so your children don't get tired. Some parents have turned their children against God's Church by forcing them to endure long lecture periods.

Over the years my family has found it rewarding to discuss God's Word after a meal (whether during the week or after a Sabbath brunch). In this relaxed environment, many of today's problems and joys can be shared and lessons learned. Encourage all members to participate.

As children mature into adolescents and teenagers, you can introduce them to more complicated concepts and encourage them to begin to study the Bible on their own.

Studying God's instruction Book as a family group will strengthen the unit that physically pictures God's goal for the world tomorrow — billions of perfect, powerful, Spirit-born members of His own Family, enjoying endless happiness and achievement and ruling the universe. □

An Approach to Family Bible Study

By Dexter H. Faulkner



How to Solve Bible Difficulties

Sometimes puzzling questions crop up when you study the Bible. You can find the answers if you search for them.

By Robert C. Boraker

Agnostics and atheists attack the Bible by claiming it cannot be divinely inspired because of its seeming contradictions, discrepancies and absurdities. You may have been confronted with these claims. Or you may have found what you thought was a contradiction in the Bible.

But you don't need to doubt the authenticity, authority and inspiration of God's Word. You can find the answers to these difficulties. You can strengthen your faith in God and His Word with a few simple guidelines.

The foundation of all knowledge

The Bible is the foundation of all right knowledge. It is the revelation of God's mind, will and character. And God is far greater than man in knowledge, wisdom and spiritual character. Yet God has given the Bible — His revealed and inspired Word — to men who are imperfect.

Therefore, when men try to understand the revelation of an infinite, all-powerful, all-knowing God, there is bound to be difficulty. It's like a young child trying to understand a lecture given by a college professor. He may understand the words themselves, but he will not grasp all the meaning of the ideas expressed.

Expect to have questions

You may find it difficult to understand certain parts of the Bible. This is to be expected. The apostle Peter wrote that in Paul's epistles there were "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:16).

Realize that some parts of the Bible will be hard to understand at first. You will find things in the Bible that will puzzle you. You may even find some apparent contradictions that you cannot reconcile. But don't become deceived into thinking the Bible is filled with errors. Squarely face these difficulties and "search the scriptures" (John 5:39) to find the answers.

Many difficulties arise because of man's ignorance of the facts. But anyone who gives up his belief in the divine origin and inspiration of the Bible because of some facts he cannot reconcile is a shallow thinker indeed. The one who denies that the Bible is of divine origin and authority has more numerous and weighty difficulties to explain than one who believes the Bible to be the inspired Word of God.

The very fact that you may not be able to solve a difficulty does not prove it cannot be solved. If you can see no possible solution, don't jump to the conclusion that a solution is impossible to find. Should a beginner in algebra, after having tried for hours to solve a problem, declare there is no possible solution because he couldn't find one? Of course not! And neither should Bible students think there are unsolvable difficulties in the Bible simply because they themselves are not able to solve them.

When some people come to a difficult scripture, they decide immediately what the doubtful text must mean. Having made up their minds quickly as to the meaning of this particular verse, they must then change their minds about other verses and misinterpret them in order to make them fit with the new one. Trying to put your own ideas

into the Bible is the surest way of misunderstanding it entirely.

Reserve your judgment about any difficulties in understanding the Bible you come across. Don't reject truth or the Bible itself because you don't understand certain parts at the moment. Those who make a big issue of some minor points they don't understand often overlook the really important purpose for which the Bible was written.

The more you study the Bible, the more questions will be answered. As your knowledge increases, more and more difficulties will disappear. God intends that we understand all the Bible.

The reasons for difficulties

Why are there apparent contradictions and discrepancies in the Bible? Why has God permitted them to exist? And what good are they? These are questions you may have, and they need answering.

The apparent contradictions and discrepancies in the Bible stimulate the mind. They prompt men to search the scriptures for the solution. They attract the inquiring mind.

The apparent discrepancies and difficulties in the Bible are also there as a stumbling block to people whom God is not calling today. Remember that God is not revealing His truth to everyone in our day (write for our free article, "Is This the Only Day of Salvation?"). Most people's eyes have been blinded, and the way God has blinded people is by writing the Bible in such a way they couldn't understand it unless they diligently studied it with a humble and open mind and had the help of God's Spirit.

The parables of Christ, for example, were for this purpose of hiding the true meaning of Christ's teaching (Matt. 13:13-15). The Bible was not written in a clear-cut, right-down-the-line manner. In order for it to be preserved for us today, it had to be written in a way so people could interpret it to suit themselves, and so the atheists, agnostics and critics could find fault with it and "stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto they were appointed" (I Pet. 2:8). Also see Isaiah 28:9-13.

Make no mistake about it. If the Bible is inspired by God, there can be no errors in it as originally written — because God could not make a mistake. The Bible plainly says, "The scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). The Bible cannot contradict itself! There can be no real discrepancies. "It should never be forgotten that in spite of what critics have said, no error or contradiction of any kind has ever been proved to have existed in the Scriptures as originally given by God" (*Scripture of Truth* by Sidney Collett, p. 81).

The major cause of difficulties in understanding the Bible is carelessness in studying the Bible with a prayerful and humble mind. So to eliminate these difficulties, it is necessary to study the Bible in the right way and to have the right attitude about it.

Attitude is key factor

Those who study the Bible merely to find errors will never come to understand it properly. Such people do not fully comprehend and apply the purpose of God's Word. This purpose is given in II Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

If you recognize the authority of the Bible as being the inspired Word of Almighty God the Creator and study it with the purpose of showing you where you are wrong and to find the right instruction that will help you grow to spiritual maturity, then the supposed contradictions and other Bible difficulties will be no problem to you.

You must have this right attitude of heart and mind. God says, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. 66:2).

If you tremble at God's Word and respect the authority and power behind that Word so much that you are afraid to reject or disobey it, then you have the right attitude and can fully benefit by your study of the Bible. Don't try to correct or improve the Bible. Let it correct, reprove and teach you.

Key to understanding

Many people come across difficulties in the Bible because they don't know how to study it. And you must study it to find the truth. The apostle Paul said, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

This study of the Bible should be with zeal! It is something to put your whole heart into. Devote your time and mind to it. God says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave" (Eccl. 9:10).

Bible study and prayer go hand in hand. They cannot be separated. Bible study, to be effective, must be accompanied with prayer. Pray and ask God for guidance and understanding. Ask Him to reveal the true meaning of what is said in His Word and then expect that He will. Pray for the help of the Holy Spirit.

Man of himself is totally ignorant of God and cannot even understand His Word without spiritual guidance. Jeremiah said, "I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). We need guidance through the help of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is necessary to understand spiritual truth. The natural human mind is incapable of understanding spiritual revelations. Paul explained this in I Corinthians 2:14: "The natural man" — that is, the natural-born, unconverted mind — "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." They are revealed by God's Spirit as the 10th verse says, "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." The Holy Spirit within us is the key that alone can unlock the doors to scriptural understanding.

But the Holy Spirit is given only to

those who obey God (Acts 5:32). The greater your obedience to God, the greater your wisdom and understanding of the Bible will be.

When studying the Bible, one approach is to study one book at a time in order to understand its general contents. Find out who wrote each book. When, where and for whom did he write? Under what circumstances did he write the book? Does his book contain laws, poetry, history, religious instruction or prophecy? What are the practical lessons and doctrines taught? What connection has this book with other parts of the Bible? What is the time period when the events were written?

Not only is it important to read a book from beginning to end, it is also important to read a connected set of books consecutively to the end to get the general thought that pervades throughout.

George Mueller of Bristol once said, "There may seem to be apparent contradictions in the Word, but by patiently and calmly going on reading and meditating, these are removed."

The Bible should be studied systematically and thoroughly. Without this systematic study, we may miss some of the gold nuggets hidden in the deepest parts. Nothing that God has had recorded in the Bible can be lightly passed by.

Analyze what you read

When you read the Bible, hunt for something. Read a chapter over and over again until you understand it. After a chapter has been read, analyze it and write your own table of contents. This will impress on your mind what the chapter is about and will help you retain this knowledge.

Study every single passage with II Timothy 3:16-17 in mind. Ask yourself: What reproof, correction and instruction is here for me? Apply the Bible personally — to yourself. Take the plain and simple meaning of the passage as if it were written for yourself. Believe in the Bible as God's revelation to you, and act accordingly.

Approach Bible study this way and there will be no problem solving any difficulties or apparent contradictions that may arise. There is a fair and reasonable solution for every supposed difficulty and discrepancy found in the Bible. □

Is the Bible Living in You?

Would you like your Bible study to be more meaningful — even one of the most thrilling aspects of your life? It can be! This article will show you how.

By Richard Rice

When you hear the terms *Bible study* or *studying the Bible*, what comes to your mind? Is it a picture of a bespectacled scholar poring over thick, dusty, esoteric books, taking copious notes and trying to search out some dubiously significant theological discovery?

Perhaps this is what the term *Bible study* means to most people. But, this definition is not entirely accurate. Make no mistake, detailed research and proper academic study of God's Word is important, and it's not quite like the stereotype described above.

But there is a deeper, more advanced form of studying the Bible every true Christian needs to apply.

The practical approach

I Thessalonians 5:21: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." The word *prove* actually means to *test by doing*. It means to try out, put to use or experience firsthand. You test-drive a new car before you buy it — you prove the auto to see whether you want to own it. Remember the biblical example of the man who had just bought five yoke of oxen and wanted to prove them first before following Christ (Luke 14:19)? What he meant was that he wanted to test them to see if they were strong and healthy and capable of doing hard work.

That is the approach we should take toward the Bible. Paul instructed us to prove or test the worth and value of God's Word by putting it to use in our lives. When Jesus Christ said man must live by every word of God (Matt. 4:4), He had this concept in mind. God intends that we do more

than just read the pages of the Bible.

This is what God's teaching should do: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:13).

The Word of God is to *effectually work* in us! That is, it is to lodge deeply within our minds, stir us to action, move us to do good works and inspire us to develop the nature of God.

The real key to understanding the Bible is simply this: once you have read and studied God's Word, you must act on it. You must test it by doing and put it into practice in your life. You are to live the Bible's teachings with all your being. You can then produce and radiate the glorious fruits of God's holy character.

This is the ultimate in Bible study. As you apply and inculcate the Bible's teachings, you will actually experience its miraculous power and inspiration. The written Word of God will begin to live in you and through you, transforming your life into the likeness of God Himself. The Bible will have deeper meaning than it ever had before.

Jesus said the application of His words would have this impact in our lives, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). His Word is like food, to be eaten and converted into spiritual character (John 6:48-51).

Living the Word remakes you

When we study the Bible in an attitude of worshiping God and then med-

itate on and apply its principles, we become more like God. His Spirit — His life — works in us. "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

The apostle Paul spoke of putting on "the new man, which is *renewed in knowledge* [of God, the Bible and the Christian way of life] after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10).

When we actively incorporate the Bible into our lives, we are incorporating the mind and nature of God. Jesus Christ is the Word of God personified (John 1:1). He lived God's commandments, inspired them to be written for our good and has told us as Christians to abide in them.

By living God's Word and allowing it to transform our lives, we actually live as Jesus would. We put on Christ and become like Him in thought and action. This process in reality remakes us! Paul said elsewhere that we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Cor. 3:18). There is simply no substitute for the experience of Christian living.

"But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use [a living application of God's Word] have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14).

David, a man after God's own heart, knew the secret of understanding God's Word: "A good understanding have all they that *do his commandments*" (Ps. 111:10). Notice that un-

derstanding follows the doing. When you practice the Word of God, you will begin to understand it. The Bible will come alive and make sense, because you will have proved to yourself that it works.

I know a man who likes to tinker around and do minor repair work on his car. He's got a manual that explains the basics. It's a good book and shows just how to make certain repairs. He's learned a lot from it, but until he put it to use, he only had a superficial understanding of its theory and instructions. This need for actual experience is true in most vocations.

God's instruction Book to man, the Bible, is much the same way. We can read it, research it, analyze it and even memorize key verses, but until we truly begin to apply it, we will never completely grasp or understand the Bible's real value and meaning. Herbert W. Armstrong has said many times that unless knowledge is used and acted upon, it is of no practical value.

How to live the Word of God

Living the Word of God and seeing its wonderful truths unfold, is one of the most exciting experiences available to us as human beings. Through His Word, God has revealed every facet of the powerful, invisible, spiritual laws He has set in motion to govern every facet of our lives: love, interpersonal relationships, health, finance, success. Living God's Word brings deep, rich rewards, both physically and spiritually.

Take the law of tithing as an example. A person would have trouble understanding how tithing works if he didn't put it to the test in his life. But true Christians know from experience that it works. We tithe and God blesses us. As we obey God and trust Him in faith, He opens up doors of opportunity and pours out His blessings. The Bible works because God stands behind it and makes it work.

How could one ever know the truth of the promise of Proverbs 3:6 unless he took God at His Word and tried it out: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct thy paths"? The proof of understanding comes from doing. Christians do God's will and they understand. God always follows through with His promises when we respond to His instructions.

Jesus' instruction in Matthew 4:4

bears repeating, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Note how all-encompassing this verse is.

We are to live by every word of God — not just by a few favorite inspirational passages. If we are to grow into the fullness of Christ, we must never pick and choose like those people Mr. Armstrong has termed a-la-carte Christians. We're to heed and obey every word that God has spoken.

By using this approach in daily Bible study, you will become more well-rounded and balanced. By absorbing the Bible's message into the whole of your being, you will start to become perfect as God is perfect (Matt. 5:48). The apostle Paul said, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect [complete] thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16-17). It is by living the whole of Scripture that we come to know God and grow in His fullness.

The Bible isn't a book to be left on a shelf — it's to be internalized and made a part of your life. Your outward conduct should be a constant reflection of God's Word working in you.

Bring the Bible alive

How do you apply the Bible? The following outline lists steps that can help you bring what you learn in Bible study into living reality. It's a step-by-step plan that's easy to follow and it works! I call it the Three-A-Three-R-Formula because the first three steps begin with the letter *A* and the last three steps begin with the letter *R*.

1. Attention: Give conscientious thought and attention to what you're reading as you dig into God's Word. Think and concentrate. Go beyond the surface — go beyond mere words. Realize that God is speaking to you personally, and that He expects you to give your utmost respect and honor to what He is saying.

2. Association: Associate every word and every thought you read to your personal life. Think of all the ways you can apply God's instructions to every facet of your existence, to your family, your business, your social life and the entirety of your environment.

3. Application: It is not enough just

to associate the teachings of God's Word. You've got to live them — to apply them — and experience the abundant success they were designed to produce. God's Word is living. It will bring great spiritual and physical rewards to you, as you practice it.

4. Repetition: A one-time effort is not enough. You must keep applying God's Word over and over until it becomes your nature. Live again and again whatever precept or principle you're trying to inculcate, until it becomes an unconscious habit.

5. Reflection: Being human, you need to constantly consider the progress you're making. You need to go over the scriptures you have studied and ask: "Am I measuring up? Am I forgetting anything? Did I overlook something? Am I really applying the Word of God everywhere in my life as I should?" This exercise should take place at least once a day — if not several times — to ensure that you do not forget the things that you learned.

6. Review: Whereas reflection has to do with specific daily applications of God's Word, review deals with your general, overall progress. Often you need to take a bigger view of what you are hoping to accomplish and whether you are growing. Looking back over the material you have covered as a weekly review can be extremely valuable to your growth.

In other words, are you staying on track? Is everything coming together in focus? Are the pieces falling in place? Are you starting to assemble the superstructure of character?

The time to start this practical approach to Bible study is now. The apostle James exhorted us to be "doers of the Word, and not hearers only" (Jas. 1:22). David said he made haste and delayed not to keep God's commandments (Ps. 119:60).

Searching out truths in commentaries and Bible helps can be helpful — these tools can round out your knowledge. But the most important way to learn about the Bible is to live what you find there, and your true depth of understanding will increase. Remember: "Study [be diligent — actively live God's Word] to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). □

Motivating Yourself to Study the Bible

By Allen Stout

Do you have to force yourself to study the Bible? Does your mind wander because the material is no longer as new and exciting to you as it was when God first opened your mind to understand? Have you set and failed to keep rigid schedules to make yourself *get in* your Bible study?

Bible study can be an interesting and exciting part of your day, but it takes effort and planning. Seven basic steps are outlined here to help you make your study of the Bible a scintillating, profitable adventure as well as a quest for knowledge. Try applying these principles.

Think in spiritual terms

The first step is to ask yourself: "What is my life all about? Where am I going?" Recognize the fleeting vanity and futility of this life's pursuits. The book of Ecclesiastes has much to say along these lines. Perhaps you have begun to become entangled again in worldly desires (II Tim. 2:4).

Satan is diligently seeking to get you in his clutches. His greatest weapons are the lusts of the flesh and the vanity of the mind. He has already deceived the whole world with these tactics (Rev. 12:9). Mankind is caught up in the quest for materialistic goals, grasping at the elusive momentary pleasures of this life.

Instead of following after worldly pursuits, follow the admonition of Jesus Christ: "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink, or Where-withal shall we be clothed? . . . But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:31-33).

God's Kingdom is spiritual. It takes God's Holy Spirit to understand His mind and His plan (I Cor. 2:9-16). So we need to do what Paul admon-

ished Timothy to do, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" (II Tim. 1:6). Think spiritually in studying the Bible.

Ask God for help

The second step to profitable Bible study is to ask God daily — and especially before every study period — to give you more of His Spirit and to increase your understanding from His Word.

Christ promised, "When . . . the Spirit of truth, is come [it] will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). Without God's Spirit we are none of his.

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5).

Set definite goals

"Where there is no vision [hope, dream or desire] the people perish" (Prov. 29:18). It's hard to get excited about taking a trip if you have no destination in mind. Bible study is no different. You need definite purposes and objectives to stir up your interest if you expect to get anywhere.

Empty goals such as the common, "I've got to get in 30 minutes of Bible study every day, come what may," or, "I'm going to read the Bible through once every year," do little to motivate or spark your desire. You may accomplish the particular objective and possibly even gain a small measure of self-discipline, but seldom much more.

Goals need to be challenging and satisfying, and they should stimulate personal growth. They should be practical — seeking answers to basic questions and problems of everyday life, seeking vision into the higher goals and purposes God has for man.

Why have you been called now? How can you honor God in your family life and on the job? How is God dealing with you to perfect His character in you? How can you help others?

As Paul wrote to Timothy: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness" (II Tim. 2:15-16).

Why study the Bible? Because "the holy scriptures . . . are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:15-17).

Avoid vain, philosophical questions that do not profit, because "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of His law" (Deut. 29:29).

The Bible provides the foundation for understanding all knowledge, and it gives the keys to solving all problems. It's all there: the knowledge of creation, the purpose of human life, God's spiritual laws — these basics foster a right understanding of the past, the present and the future, and serve as foundations for all other branches of knowledge.

Take any subject and view it from the biblical foundation, and you will have a much better understanding of the secular knowledge man has been able to generate — you will have it in proper perspective.

Write your Bible study goals in a notebook so you won't forget them. Your Bible study will accomplish much

if you have clear, definite objectives when you begin.

Plan your Bible studies

Organize your goals and objectives into related subjects and set up priorities, with the most important subjects first. Avoid the mistake of the scribes and Pharisees, who put the little things first (Matt. 23:23).

Organize your time. Set aside a specific period every day to allow yourself the opportunity to accomplish the goals you have established. Be flexible, of course, when you're pinched for time, and adjust your schedule or adapt your study to fit the time — but don't just skip it.

Bible studies can vary from regular personal studies to occasional family or group studies, depending on the subjects and need.

Take notes. What you learn from a particular study may be quickly forgotten if you don't write it down. You can review written notes occasionally and add to them in future studies. You may also want to cross-reference your Bible. God's Word was inspired and written according to a definite overall plan, but the knowledge of any particular subject is usually scattered throughout its contents.

As it is written, "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line, here a little, and there a little" (Isa. 28:9-10).

Use reference materials

Bible dictionaries, concordances, commentaries, as well as books on history, science and other fields, can give helpful background information and better Bible insight, if properly used. Remember that you should use them only to *supplement* and magnify the Bible's meaning. They should never *replace* the Bible, which is the only source of true understanding.

Don't give up if understanding the Bible is still difficult. Keep your inspiration up by discussing your Bible studies with others of like mind. God will add to your understanding if you are in the proper attitude and are truly seeking to know God's mind and how He would have you serve Him.

Some have allowed themselves to lose interest in the Bible after years of reading and studying God's Word, the

"Bible Correspondence Course" and a continuous stream of articles in *The Good News* and *The Plain Truth*.

Don't let familiarity turn you off. When you review familiar subjects, seek to make them more relevant. Try to gain a deeper understanding of God's Word and how current events tie in with His plan and Bible prophecies. With a little effort and a constant awareness of world conditions, you can be a self-starter. You can motivate yourself and have the drive to succeed. As you realize how badly you and this world need God's help and understanding, stir up the Spirit that is in you. Remember Satan is out to discourage you by every means possible.

Meditate on what you study

Meditation, an important but often overlooked tool, is one of the most helpful ways to add new life and meaning to your Bible study.

David was inspired to write: "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts" (Ps. 119:97-100).

Meditation — concentrated reflective thought and mental dissection of a topic — can increase your grasp and memory of the Bible.

Put the Bible into practice

When you have applied the above principles and developed real interest and zeal in Bible study, don't forget to act on what you learn from the Holy Scriptures!

We are to prove what is acceptable to God and then hold fast to it (Eph. 5:10, I Thess. 5:21). God gives a good understanding to all those who keep His commandments (Ps. 111:10). Christ said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

Bible study will take on a whole new meaning as you reap the fruits of righteousness and grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. You will be a living example of what the Bible teaches. Then you will really "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Pet. 3:15). □

So Many Versions

(Continued from page 13)

correct translation, but the meaning is not as clear as "saved alive" or "survived."

Compare these translations with the less than fortunate attempt of *Today's English Version* (The Good News Bible), "But God has already reduced the number of days; had he not done so, nobody would survive." Not every modern-language version succeeds equally! This oversimplified "Good News Bible" is hardly more successful in other passages.

Among the better modern-language translations by single scholars — we call these translations rather than versions — is William F. Beck's *The New Testament in the Language of Today* published in 1963. A Lutheran translation, it has properly been characterized as "a refreshing translation in simple, precise English." Listen to the clarity with which he translates in modern language Luke 23:52-56:

"He [Joseph of Arimathea] went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. He took it down, wrapped it in some linen, and laid it in a grave cut in the rock, in which no man had yet been laid. It was the day of preparation, and the day of rest was just starting.

"The women who had come with Him [Jesus] from Galilee, following close behind, saw the grave and how His body was laid. Then they went back and prepared spices and perfumes. But on Saturday they rested according to the commandment."

This passage is by far more effective than either the *Authorized* or the *Revised Standard* renderings — though not necessarily more accurate. Joseph of Arimathea had not yet finished laying Jesus in the grave when the day of rest — the first annual Holy Day in the Festival of Unleavened Bread — had begun. This could not have been a Saturday. For after the women returned home they prepared spices and perfumes and then, on Saturday, rested according to the commandment!

Only a Wednesday crucifixion, a burial Wednesday evening and a resurrection Saturday evening three days later could account for Luke's history.

Two other modern-language Bibles

have gained vogue. One, *The Amplified Bible*, was published in 1965. It is an attempt to present various possible translations within the English text — hence the title *Amplified*. The result is a translation that is redundant, tedious and too often not accurate. Example: "In the beginning God (prepared, formed, fashioned) and created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1)." That is not a valid method of presenting a translation.

The second, *The Living Bible, Paraphrased*, was completed in 1971. It is a readable paraphrase in idiomatic present-day English, but it is not a translation! It is full of imaginative details not supported by the biblical text. It cannot be relied upon! And it should not even be compared to legitimate translations.

Far better to spend some time with Ferrar Fenton's translation of the Bible or Richard Weymouth's or Kenneth Wuest's translations of the New Testament. Or to read *The Modern Language Bible* (a new and improved edition of the Berkeley translation).

Comparing translations for textual differences

A Bible translation may be accurate, but that does not necessarily make it correct. For the correctness of the reading is still dependent on the kind of text type chosen for translation.

For example, the scholars under King James who prepared the *Authorized Version* "translated out of the original [Hebrew and Greek] tongues: and with the former translations diligently compared and revised." But when the *Revised Version* was prepared a whole new world-view of the Greek text of the New Testament had occurred.

The *Authorized Version* relied heavily upon the traditional Greek New Testament text in circulation in Byzantium — the area of Greece and Asia Minor. But a significant number of passages derived from the Latin text of the New Testament were ill-advisedly retained because people were familiar with the Latin Bible, not the Greek, prior to the 15th century.

Over the past four centuries large numbers of early New Testament manuscripts and fragments with many variant readings have been discovered in Egypt and elsewhere in the Mediterranean world. Modern scholars prefer to

use them for study of the text of the New Testament because of their age. The Greek-speaking church in Asia Minor and Greece has over the centuries maintained a standard New Testament text. The differences are major.

The Greek manuscripts in circulation in Greece and Asia Minor — the areas where Paul preached and to which Paul and Peter and John wrote — preserve major passages of the New Testament not found in early manuscripts from Egypt and elsewhere. These passages include, for example, John 7:53 to 8:11, the account of the woman taken in adultery; Mark 16:9-19; Luke 22:19-20, the Passover account; 24:12, Peter's visit to the tomb; and Acts 24:6-8.

These five passages — which in the Greek Church are regarded as Scripture — are only a small part of the story. Altogether, the *Revised Standard Version*, following manuscripts from Egypt, deletes about 85 other passages, placing them in footnotes.

In addition it deletes more than 650 words, phrases or sentences without any indication in footnotes. The *Revised Standard Version* also includes more than 430 textual variations from the standard text found in the Greek Byzantine world of Greece and Asia Minor.

Of course, it is conceivable that the Greeks, among whom Paul preached and to whom Peter and John also wrote — these Greeks, who kept the Passover for centuries on the 14th of Nisan — could be mistaken about their New Testament that they read each week.

And it is conceivable that the hellenized Egyptians — who were among the first to abandon the Sabbath and adopt Sunday, who abandoned Passover on the 14th of Nisan and adopted a Sunday-morning communion — it is conceivable that these people carefully and accurately preserved the New Testament without alteration!

Or at least that is what most modern scholars believe!

Let's put the two major text types to a test. The *Authorized or King James Version* preserves the reading in Mark 1:2-3 of the manuscripts in circulation among the Greeks to this day. It reads: "As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messengers before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in

the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

All other modern English versions, with one exception, adopt the manuscript reading of Egypt, popularized in the last century by Brooke Westcott and Fenton Hort. It reads, in the *Revised Standard*: "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

Which is correct? Is it written in "Isaiah the prophet" or "in the prophets"? Look at the footnote in the *Revised Standard Version*. Mark 1:2 is a quote from Malachi 3:1; Mark 1:3 is a quote from Isaiah 40:3.

The *Authorized or King James Version* is correct. The Greek-speaking Church has preserved this text correctly. The quotations are "written in the prophets" — Malachi and Isaiah. Only one of the two quotes is from Isaiah.

A hasty or ignorant scribe thought he could improve Mark's text. He recalled that the quote in verse 3 is from Isaiah, so he hastily assigned the entire quotation to what is "written in Isaiah the prophet." He was wrong. He tampered with the text.

This example is strong reason for not discarding the *King James Version*. Modern-language translations alone are not sufficient! They may be excellent translations, making outdated expressions clear.

But they must be compared with the English text of the *Authorized or King James Version* or the translation of the *Greek Orthodox New Testament* by metropolitan Fan S. Noli, a rendering into English "from the approved Greek text of the . . . Church of Greece."

And for the Old Testament it would be valuable to compare modern-language translations by Christian scholars with the 1917 version of The Holy Scriptures by Jewish scholars.

Happy comparison! Happy reading! Happy study for the 1980s. □

Editor's Note: Have you found this "GN Special" section helpful? What topics would you like to see covered in the future? Please send any comments or suggestions to *The Good News*, 300 W. Green St., Pasadena, Calif., 91123.

PERSONAL

(Continued from page 1)

to scatter and even totally nullify the power God has given to His Church. There has been a falling away, though compared to the total number, it has been minimal. And the attack of the State of California was an action calculated to DESTROY the Church of the living GOD! Yet Jesus Christ our living HEAD has used it to draw us much closer to HIM and to one another.

Our Work in the hands of Christ is NOT YET FINISHED, and He will not allow the Work to stop until it *is* finished! And when will that be? It surely can't be much longer. We are certainly on the final lap, if not the homestretch — but no definite date can, of course, be set.

But when Daniel writes, in verse 7, "all these things shall be finished," he refers back to the subject of this 12th chapter mentioned at the beginning — when the archangel Michael shall stand up (verse 1) (as also mentioned in Rev. 12:7) and Satan shall be cast down — and the GREAT TRIBULATION (verse 1 and Matt. 24:21-22, Mark 13:19-20, Luke 21:22) from the beginning will be 3½ years.

Daniel did not understand, but the angel said, "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end (Dan. 12:9).

And then what — in the TIME OF THE END, into which we have entered? "Many shall be purified and made white, and tried... but the wise shall understand" (verse 10). WE ARE IN THAT TIME OF TRYING AND TESTING, TO BRING US CLOSER TO GOD — TO PREPARE US FOR CHRIST'S COMING, NOW!

Many of us are being tried and tested as NEVER BEFORE — and for our own good!

But, verse 11, from the time the daily sacrifice shall be taken away. Consider this a moment. This does NOT imply a material temple to be built in our time in Jerusalem. It does seem to imply the Israelis may restore the daily (twice daily) sacrifice — possibly at the Wailing Wall. The indication is the armies of the "beast" of Revelation 17, entering Jerusalem (Dan. 11:41, Zech. 14:2)

will stop this daily sacrifice. "And the abomination that maketh desolate set up." What is this abomination?

This refers to Daniel 11:31 and Matthew 24:15. In Daniel 11:31, the armies of Antiochus Epiphanes were at Jerusalem, and some commentators have interpreted it as Antiochus placing a statue of Jupiter in the Holy of Holies in the temple. Not only does Matthew 24:15 also refer to this. But in a parallel New Testament Luke 21:20 speaks of the same thing as "Jerusalem compassed with armies." This is the correct meaning of this "abomination." It is the armies — not a statue — that made Jerusalem desolate.

From this time (Dan. 12:11) to Christ's coming will be 1,290 days.

Now, verse 12, "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the" 1,335 days.

Never before have we understood these periods of 1,260 days, 1,290 and 1,335 days. But it seems evident, now, a blessing is pronounced on us — GOD'S CHURCH — who wait and endure until the 1,335 days — approximately 1,335 days prior to Christ's coming. But since no one can know the day or the hour of His coming, we probably shall not be able to know the exact day that this 1,335 days begins. But apparently that is the time when OUR WORK SHALL END. That will be a time when the UNITED EUROPE shall appear — the revival of the medieval "Holy Roman Empire." We shall then be warned, and readied to be taken to a place of refuge and safety from the great tribulation. Forty-five days later "the beast's" armies will surround Jerusalem. Thirty days later the great tribulation will probably start with a nuclear attack on London and Britain — and possibly the same day or immediately after, on United States and Canadian cities. The GREAT TRIBULATION, we shall then fully realize, is the time of "Jacob's trouble," spoken of in Jeremiah 30:7. And Jacob's name was named on Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. 48:16). At that time a third of the people in our nations will die, or shall have died, by famine and disease epidemics. Another third will die of the war — our cities being destroyed (Ezek. 6:6), and the re-

maining third will be carried to the land of our enemies as slaves (Ezek. 5:12).

But while this most terrible TRIBULATION is happening to our people, shall we of God's Church be protected? My son Garner Ted is now scoffing in derision at our being taken to a place of safety during the great tribulation.

Does Revelation 3:10 mean what it says? The Unger's Bible dictionary, under article on the great tribulation, refers to Revelation 3:10, showing the great tribulation covers the whole earth. No other such time of worldwide trial and trouble is prophesied. A Bible I formerly used had in the marginal reference of Revelation 3:10 "or, the great tribulation."

Also Revelation 12:14 shows the Church being FLOWN into a place of safety in the wilderness. After this (Rev. 12:17), Satan will make war with the *remnant* or Laodicean Church. That leads up to Christ's coming.

So, where are we NOW, in the panorama of prophecy?

We have reached the time just before a "United States of Europe" restores the "Holy Roman Empire," under the papacy, in a union of church and state.

The present pope, John Paul II, could very well be the pope who will trigger this and bring it into reality. Gene Hogberg's articles in *The Plain Truth* show much light on this very likely possibility. Once that third great world power is formed, our work will soon be over. That could happen in a year, two years or five years. It could happen SUDDENLY, leaving the whole world aghast in WONDER!

Right now the Iranian crisis is the BIG NEWS. The Moslem present head, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, is today threatening to try the remaining U.S. Embassy hostages as spies, which would mean they would be executed. That could provoke a WAR — unless President Jimmy Carter is too weak.

The WHOLE WORLD is NOW ON FIRE! This is not the GREAT TRIBULATION, but is certainly preliminary to it.

It's time for intensive FASTING AND PRAYER. □



Help Your Parents Enter God's Family

Are you showing enough respect for your mother and father? How much are parents the responsibility of children in the Church of God?

By Selmer Hegvold

My parents are dead. They both died at the age of 80, 10 years apart. Each had had a happy, productive life, and both were members of God's Church. I live in the assurance that I will see them both alive again — when the great trumpet sounds, and Christ returns to restore God's government to this earth.

If your parents are alive somewhere today, how much would you give to know that they, too, will inherit everlasting life in the Family of God? You have the opportunity of the age!

You could be missing that opportunity, and what's more, you may be in the process of breaking one of the Ten Commandments and forfeiting your eternal life. Don't let that happen! Action now will not only save your eternal future, but bring unbe-

lievable happiness and joy to you and your family.

Understand the Fifth Commandment

God's Church keeps His commandments. And parents are so important in God's mind that He set apart a great law to make us appreciate our relationship with our parents. A thundering voice from the smoking top of Mt. Sinai commanded, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Ex. 20:12).

The stable family is the center of every sound and thriving nation. But modern Israel — the United States, the British Commonwealth and the nations of northwestern Europe — has forgotten the importance of the family.

I know some people in the Church who have not visited or written to a father or mother in more than a decade. And for some this neglect is deliberate. Can we honor our physical parents and not associate with them? Can we just leave Mom and Dad to live their own lives? Can we somehow justify not getting involved? Many seem to think they are honoring their parents by leaving them in virtual isolation.

They are wrong! Are you one of them? Even if they mistreated you, disowned you, never gave you one reason to love them, deserted you when you needed them most or foisted you off on foster parents, you still owe them the first move toward reconciliation.

The commandment in Exodus is to the *children*. We are all children,

though we might be parents also. God accepts no excuses for *not* honoring our parents; we *must* show respect for them. In return, this is God's promise, "that thy days may be *long* upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

The promise is long life. Your long life will be spent on a completely revitalized and renewed earth — and elsewhere in the universe — for all eternity! No matter how well you honor your parents today, don't be too sure that relationship can't be improved. Study the Fifth Commandment again and reflect on its full meaning.

I love my children. Herbert W. Armstrong loves his children. I'm sure you love yours too. But, is there a commandment from God that charges parents to *honor* their children? Again, the directive clearly is the reverse — a charge to all children!

Some in God's Church have said, "Until my dad earns my respect, I cannot honor him." The Bible nowhere lifts your responsibility to respect your parent until he has redeemed himself in your eyes.

Don't take this lightly. Your conduct toward your parents could have a deciding influence on their chance for salvation. An about-face in your attitude toward them could create a better relationship between you — it could open their eyes, if they are outside the Church, and make them willing to investigate God's Word. The change in your approach could save your parents' lives — as well as your life — eternally.

Satan loves broken homes

The devil knows the value of a strong family relationship, and he probably rubs his hands in glee over people who refuse to show love for their parents.

God was the Father-Creator of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. God carefully instructed them in His way before He allowed the devil to get to them. But they immediately succumbed to Satan's enticements. They were thus the first to come under the curse for breaking the Fifth Commandment — in rejecting God, the first humans dishonored their divine Parent.

Punishment was swift — Adam

and Eve were banished from paradise on earth, and their descendants have had to struggle to extract a livelihood from the soil for the past 6,000 years. Adam and Eve made a choice — and allowed the devil to continue his ruthless rule over the earth to this day.

The statistics on divorce, shattered homes, "fatherless" children in foster homes, increasing acceptance of homosexuality and society's lack of respect for the sanctity of marriage are appalling. The devil is well on his way to destroying the family solidarity that blocks his way to victory over God's great plan for mankind.

Our minds are bombarded in ways we little understand. Satan broadcasts his vile thought processes — his fiery darts — constantly, and we have all been tainted and even crippled by his influence. The "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2) is aroused and furious, because he knows his time is short:

"Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. And when the dragon [devil] saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman [Church] which brought forth the man child [Christ]" (Rev. 12:12-13). We are at war (Eph. 6:12)!

Satan is the cause of the shattered families prevalent in this world. He is the invisible ruler of the earth (II Cor. 4:4), and only one Church has remained free of his control.

He hates the Worldwide Church of God with an unfathomable vengeance, and he has succeeded on occasion in making violent inroads into the Body of Christ. He will never ease up in his efforts to destroy us, and his method is to divide and conquer! A divided home is Satan's tool of destruction for too many in God's Church today. But you can upset the devil's strategy before it destroys you and your loved ones. There is a way.

Strengthen your marriage, your home and your family relationships as never before! The message God has for the world must be delivered in power, and the greatest physical power His Church has is the witness of our strong family ties. Shore up that witness more than ever in these

final days of this world, before it is too late.

A study in tragedy

The following letter bears quoting. It came from a woman who had difficulty reaching out to God, our Father in heaven, because of her own wretched relationship with her father. The letter illustrates a problem common to many people.

She writes: "Every time I prayed to God, the words, 'Our father,' were only phonetic sounds." The first words Christ instructed us to utter in reaching out to God in vital prayer (Matt. 6:9) were only "phonetic sounds," words that were meaningless to this woman who desperately needed to get through to God. Because she could remember no strong father-figure in her growing years, she had no basis to recognize God as Father or to honor her own physical father.

She continues: "I prayed, I cried, 'My Father in heaven!' But I didn't have the sincerity in the word; I couldn't understand! I wanted to speak to Him *as a father*, but found it impossible!

"I strained my ears during every sermon about prayer, and the advice from them was, 'If you want to know God, go to Him as a Father!' This I wanted to do. I cried and cried over this, but it seemed to no avail — now I know why! And since I know *why*, I can finally say, after much mental anguish, 'My Father,' and really, truly mean it!

"My mother and father were divorced when I was about 6 years old — I saw him only two or three days out of a month. Though I loved him very much, it was *impossible for a normal father-child relationship* to exist between us.

"My mother remarried — not because she loved the man — she needed his help. He treated her very badly — I could never look to him as someone to go to for help in time of need, although I truly had love for him."

Father images of this sort are distorted and unreal. This woman's problem is mild when considered alongside the many that we as ministers are consulted about. But her story shows what far too many confront in striving to honor parents they ei-

ther don't love, don't know or have had little contact with.

She goes on: "So you see, although I had two fathers (a real one and a stepfather), I really had none at all! So how could I approach God and think of Him as my father when I didn't even know what a father was?" How could she *honor* the Father in heaven and feel confident of His responsive love when she had never had a loving father-daughter relationship to use as an example?

"But, now" she continues, "rejoice with me, the barrier is gone! I was *forced by trials to seek Him out*, not only as the Almighty and powerful Being that He is, but as a Father, someone to whom I can go in time of need, someone on whom I can 'cast all my burdens, because he cares for me' — as a father!"

The burden lifted

"Now my prayer life is improving because I have more to talk with Him about. I don't have to keep everything to myself all the time." The marvelous breakthrough for this woman came by persevering in *prayer until she got through* and saw the answers coming one on top of another. God saw her desperate plight and delivered her by demonstrating the fatherly love she had never received from her human father.

"He gave me strength to bear what I would not have been able to do alone! I just want to keep saying, 'Father,' now that I know what it means! I was always worried I was taking His name in vain! I feel like I've had a cool drink of water in a hot desert now that this is off my mind!"

"I'm sure that I am not the only one who felt this way. I know there are others who will be just as happy as I am when they really learn to look upon Him as a warm and loving Father and not just as our Creator and Supreme Ruler!"

Human family a type

God is a Family. That Family consists of only two persons now. But because it is a family, small in number though it is, it is designed by the great God to grow. Others, like Christ, who is "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29), are to be born and enter into the divine

Family at Jesus' Second Coming, now almost at hand.

To give us the opportunity to learn what it takes to become part of the Family of God, He established the human family structure.

On the God-plane, God the Father is supreme and Christ the Son, while very God Himself, is subject to the Father. The Church is being made ready to marry the Son as His glorious Bride:

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: For the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints" (Rev. 19:7-8). Very soon now there will be the Father, the Son and His Bride — the *divine Family*.

Notice, though, that we are to be honoring God now. In the same way, we in our physical families today must learn to honor our parents *now*.

Parents have many times learned life's lessons the hard way. They want to spare their children from the cruel experiences they themselves had to suffer. But youth, it seems, never listens and learns. Human nature in children, like in their parents before them, takes them through the same school of hard knocks.

God inspired Solomon to appeal to our young: "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck" (Prov. 1:8-9).

A wise son listens to and applies his father's advice and counsel — his rewards will be blessings unlimited in this life and eternal life beyond.

Most parents are terribly disappointed to see their child hurt. God encourages parents to "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is *old*, he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6).

Many of us, on growing up, find that Dad's wisdom has increased markedly since we were young. Age has a way of making us belatedly value our parent's counsel and training from earlier years at home.

We rarely, as youngsters, patiently listened and absorbed the teaching and exhortations of our parents. We

knew so much more than they did! It is a rare teenager who absorbs his father's years of experience — which can provide the key to happier living — and avoids the pain of learning the hard way.

Honor your parents

A reconciliation with your parents is up to you. God expects you to break down any barriers of communication that have risen between you. He looks to you — not your father or your mother. Begin now and you will be amazed at the rewarding results. Tomorrow might be too late.

If you have not corresponded for years, write your parents a letter. Begin by explaining that your actions have not been properly motivated in the past — that confession will ease you into the rest. Explain your new-found appreciation for the years of their love in bearing, feeding, clothing, comforting, training and guiding you through the important formative years of your youth.

Many children only realize at the funeral of their father or mother that they never really thanked their parents. How wonderful it would be if your parents could know you cared before it is too late!

Appreciation is one of the greatest balms to a weary spirit. A simple postcard with your words of appreciation scrawled across it will virtually make the day for the parent receiving it. A short phone conversation and words of thanks will keep the light sparkling in your mother's eyes for days afterward. *You will be honoring your parents.* You will be obeying the Fifth Commandment. And obedience to the great spiritual law of God brings great blessings to you.

Watch the response to this first step toward honoring your parents. Listen to your parents' words of advice — in applying them you will grow.

Who knows? Perhaps this small effort on your part might cause your unconverted father or mother to begin to examine this "strange religion" with which you have become associated. Don't be surprised. It has happened in many cases, and the joy that comes with it can be yours.

Begin to truly honor your parents today, and perhaps they will follow your lead and also begin to honor the great God, the Father of us all. □

Fasting and Prayer!

(Continued from page 3)

inches in diameter in one side of the rear. This prayer took no more than 18 seconds. Then I closed, saying, "You've promised to supply ALL our need, and You know what we have need of *before* we ask, so send whatever else You know I need."

God's answer

Then I ran out by our garage, and my father and mother were just getting out of their car. Dad had removed the rear seat and piled kitchen-stove wood in the back of the car. Mother had a huge baking pan with cover on it, full of cooked food that needed only warming. Part of my 18-second prayer was answered while I had yet been praying! We enjoyed a *most* welcome visit with my parents.

On awakening Monday morning, my wife's cheeks were rosy red. The doctor was astounded! She had iron to spare! The Monday-morning mail brought the means of payment for the hospital bill, including Garner Ted's birth, in advance!

Later Monday morning, I stopped up to see my younger brother, Russell, at the gas company office. I always took my old topcoat off on entering the lobby of an office building, folding the gaping hole inside and carrying the coat on my arm. Russell said:

"Look, I know it's embarrassing for you to have to hide that hole in your coat. Today Meier & Frank's have a special sale on overcoats. Anything I charge on my charge account beginning today will not be billed until March 1, and I'll have until March 10 to pay it. You go over and pick out a good warm overcoat, and during noon hour I'll come over and have it charged."

"Oh, no, Russ," I exclaimed, "I can't have you buy me an overcoat." I was embarrassed! Then a voice seemed to say to me: "Didn't you ask Me to give you a new overcoat? Are you too proud to receive it the way I have chosen to answer your prayer?"

Immediately I stopped protesting, and said, meekly, "Okay, Russ, I'll do it, and see you at noon."

That afternoon I happened to stop in at the Portland *Oregonian* office, to see their merchandising man, a Mr. Davidson.

"Well, hello, Mr. Armstrong," he said, "you're just the man I need to see right now. The Bissel Carpet Sweeper people want you to put on a survey for them, to learn direct from consumers the amount of demand for carpet sweepers in face of vacuum-cleaner competition. How soon could you do it?"

"Right away," I answered. There was going to be a good-sized check for this, as soon as the survey was completed.

I went immediately to the office of the company from which we rented our house. Our rent was past due, and they were about to get nasty about it. I told them of the survey, and they agreed to wait for the rent until I received the check.

God knows our needs

That was EVERYTHING I had asked God for Sunday afternoon — except I had asked God to send whatever *else* He knew was a need.

Tuesday, I think it was, my youngest brother Dwight (composer of our hymns) drove to our house.

"Herb," he said, "I want to leave my car here until you take Loma to the hospital. I was just thinking, you might have to go in the middle of the night, with no way to get there. Meantime, I want you to use the car as much as you need."

Thursday evening my sister Mary, Dwight's twin sister, came over.

"Loma," she said to my wife, "I brought over a dressing gown. I don't know why. It's the strangest thing, but something made me kneel and pray this afternoon, and in my mind I heard a voice saying, clearly, 'Take a robe over to Loma!' It was repeated twice. I didn't know you needed a robe, but here it is! This was a most unusual experience."

"Well, Herbert and I understand," said my wife, "I will need a robe in the hospital, but I never thought about it until now."

God had sent what HE knew, before I asked Him, that we needed!

I hope this experience of mid-January, 1930, now 50 years ago, will be the means of helping some of you to take

an effective step toward GETTING READY for CHRIST'S COMING!

What kind of prayer?

But now what *you* need to know about fasting. Fasting without prayer is of no avail *spiritually*. There is a real *physical* benefit, if you understand it, but not many doctors know the physical benefits of fasting. Animals fast by instinct when physically sick.

But fasting alone, without intense prayer, will not draw you closer to God. But *what kind* of prayer?

Jesus gave a parable describing two kinds of prayer. The self-righteous publican used prayer to try to convince God of his self-righteousness. "I thank thee, O God," he prayed, "that I am so much better than this sinner beside me. I want you to realize, God, how GOOD I am. I fast often, I pay tithe, I am a very righteous man." But the poor sinner beside him was praying humbly: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner. I'm not worthy even to pray to you."

There was also the incident of a lunatic, demon-possessed (Matt. 17:14-17). The disciples had tried to cast out the demon, but failed. When Jesus cast out the demon, the disciples asked why they had failed. Jesus answered: "Because of your unbelief . . . Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (verses 20-21).

Jesus fasted at times to keep Himself close to God the Father. Could *YOU* cast out a demon? I have, more than once. The first time I was asked to come to a house to cast out a demon, I first fasted and prayed. The demon had possessed a woman, kept in bed. While I was talking with others in the living room, this insane woman yelled out: "I hear you out there. I know who you are — I hear you on the radio!"

I walked into the bedroom. The crazed woman took out from under the covers a flatiron, raised her hand as if to throw it at me.

I took an instant step toward her, pointing a finger directly at her, commanding, "In the name of Jesus Christ, put down that iron." She (the demon in her) saw I was unafraid and spoke with a voice of authority. She put down the iron. I talked with the demon a couple moments, in the same manner Jesus talked to the demon-possessed.

Then I said, with authority, "You foul demon, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to *come out* of this woman!"

The woman grinned. "*YOU* come out!" she said saucily.

I commanded her again, saying to the demon it *HAD* to come out, for I spoke by the authority of Jesus Christ.

"I WON'T come out," answered the demon with the woman's voice. "I've been paying taxes on this place since 1929. I've got a right to stay here."

"You have NO RIGHT! Jesus Christ commands you to come out!" I replied, keeping a stern commanding voice.

The woman sank into a sleep. The next morning they took her to the state hospital for the insane, as they had planned.

Examining her, officials said: "Why did you bring this woman here? She's not insane. She's as sane as any of us."

I checked up. They had lived in that house much longer than since 1929. That was the year she went insane. This event occurred, as near as I remember, in 1934.

I have had other such experiences, but must not take space here to recount them.

Realize your faults

When you fast and pray, do *NOT* use the time of fasting and prayer as a means of inducing God to answer your prayers. Your fasting will not compel God to jump when you crack the whip. If your prayers have not been answered, it is *YOUR* fault, not God's. Fast, as I did in the example cited above, to learn where *YOU* have been wrong. Perhaps you asked for something you should not have asked. Perhaps you were too far apart from God, and close to this world and material problems or pleasures. When you pray while fasting, examine *YOURSELF*! Discern whether your *ATTITUDE* has been right. Seek to draw closer to God and to His *WILL*. Seek for *FAITH* (which He will give you). Then, when you have undergone this self-cleansing, and know you are in *GOD'S WILL*, believe His promises and expect your prayers to be answered.

THE TIME HAS COME for all of us in God's Church to draw *CLOSER* TO HIM! I hope what has been written here will help you. □

Christianity on Trial

(Continued from page 6)

Paul had just finished listing in chapter 11 the heroes of faith who had served God down through time: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets, etc. He immediately follows that list with a statement identifying those people as a "great . . . cloud of witnesses," who should influence us to obey God better! This group of God's chosen servants lived lives that "witnessed" to God's glory, and, symbolically, they are now watching those who claim to be God's servants today. In the resurrection, these people who learned to obey God perfectly will be able to judge whether or not some of us serve God as well as we would like to believe.

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Rev. 6:9-11).

God is completing the construction of His spiritual temple with the body He is working with in this end time. The Church of God today must live up to the awesome legacy of previous faithful servants of God, who have already qualified to be in God's Family. And again, these Christians of former times serve as a symbolic witness of those who now claim to worship Christ.

We are also being watched by Satan the devil, the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10), who would dearly love to witness to God that we are not obeying Jesus Christ, though we claim to.

And above all, our lives and hearts are being searched by God the Father and Jesus Christ, to whom the Father has given the responsibility of judging the entire world (John 5:22). We had better be doing everything

we can to please these great Witnesses!

Put yourself on trial

How well would you be able to defend yourself if you were brought to trial on the charge of being a Christian? Would you have to plead guilty and accept the consequences, or would you be able to easily beat the rap by cataloging just a few of the skeletons in your spiritual closet?

At this critical juncture in world history, and as we are drawing nearer to a special time of the year for those who are keeping God's true Holy Days, Christians must put themselves on trial and cast a cold eye over their spiritual conditions. Each of us needs to throw the book — the Bible — at ourselves and test our character in the perfect mirror of God's law.

Checking ourselves for the sin "that doth so easily beset us" is one of the duties of the Passover season. Once we have found the sin — the spiritual leaven — we must work to put it out of our lives. This is pictured by the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

Jesus Christ is preparing for His marriage, and His bride must be perfect. True Christians have been given the opportunity to be the bride at that very special wedding, and to actually join Christ in a loving, exciting, eternal relationship. But we must be ready when He returns.

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversion and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (II Pet. 3:10-14). □

Perhaps the least attractive fruit of God's Spirit is long-suffering. We are quick to extol people who manifest joy, peace or temperance, but we sometimes fail to recognize the character produced through hardships and adversities.

Many in God's Church have had the faith to be healed of illnesses and infirmities, but others are required to have faith enough to *not* be healed.

Gary Sefcak has had to exercise that kind of faith.

Lee and Florence Sefcak, Mr. Sefcak's parents, were an integral part of Ambassador College in its early years. As a result of hearing *The World Tomorrow* broadcast, they and their children, Gary and Joyce, moved to Pasadena from Texas in 1951. In 1952, the Sefcaks attended the Feast of Tabernacles at Siegler Springs, Calif. Gary, 19, was a freshman at Ambassador College.

By 1954, Lee Sefcak had become only the third employee at the fledgling college press. Gary was anticipating the beginning of his junior year at Ambassador College when, on July 24, tragedy struck.

During an afternoon at the beach, Gary dove into an oncoming wave — a wave seemingly no different from those preceding it. Suddenly, he found himself in the middle of some sort of commotion, being dragged ashore as if by strong hands. He seemed to be viewing the scene from afar — he was unable to assist himself in any way.

The doctors explained later that the wave had slammed Gary violently into the churning waters, jamming

Close-Up

Personality profiles of members and co-workers of God's Church around the world.

his head downward upon his chest at impact.

Gary's spine was severely damaged, and the doctors predicted he would always be immobile. From the critical list to traction and two weeks in the hospital to four weeks at home and finally being fitted for a brace with a strong back support and a neck collar, Gary had to be cared for like a baby.

With the brace and a walker specially made by his dad, Gary began the herculean task of rehabilitation, until finally after a year's absence from classes, he was able to resume his Ambassador studies. He was hired at the Mail Processing Department later that same year.

In spite of enervation, inconvenience and discomfort of the braces, Gary learned each phase of the tiny

mailing office and was ultimately training the constant flow of student labor assigned to the various sections. In 1958 Gary graduated from Ambassador College and became a supervisor in Mail Processing.

For nearly two decades afterward, hundreds of you reading this article had the opportunity to learn from Gary Sefcak, learning not only the workings of the Mailing Department, but also how to cope with life's difficulties, with Mr. Sefcak's example to follow.

In 1974, the constant struggle was obviously taking its toll on the weary body of Gary Sefcak, and after a thorough physical examination, doctors announced that if he didn't quit working he would either be dead or useless within five years.

Mr. Sefcak worked only infrequently after the examination, and began a form of hobby-therapy designed to prevent continued atrophy.

In mid-1977 the Sefcaks moved from Pasadena to Redlands, Calif. His wife of 11 years, Karla, an Ambassador graduate, is truly a help meet for her husband — working as well as hurting with him, and sharing in his agonies and ecstasies. They have two children.

As a result of the hobby-therapy, Mr. Sefcak began to make doll houses for various people. He and his wife worked together, and orders began to come in for scale models of historic buildings in the area. Soon several businesses began to recognize the quality of their products.

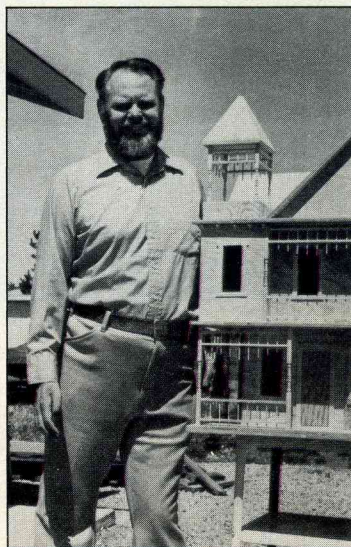
Orders for multiple units started to roll in. Additional purchases of equipment became necessary, and some of the work had to be delegated to friends and associates, as the tiny replicas leaped in popularity.

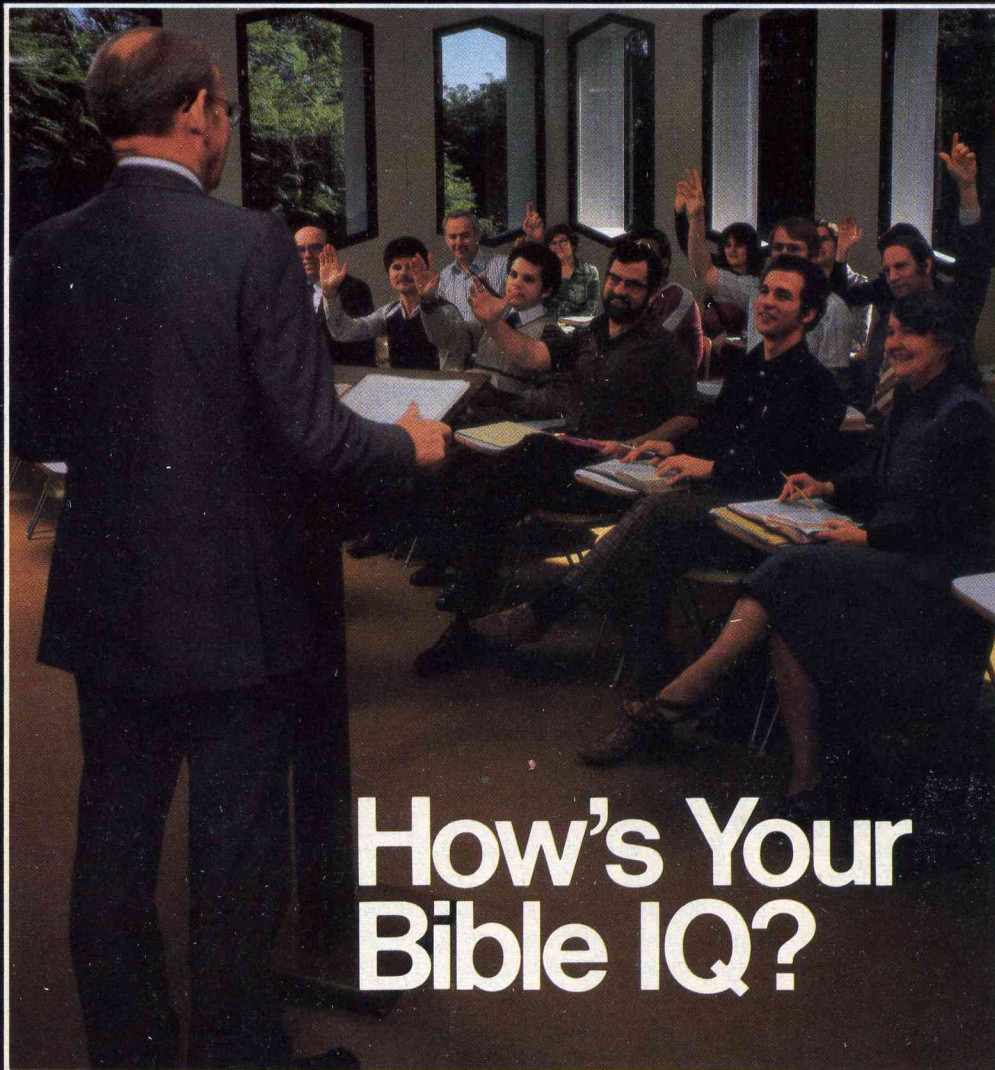
But other activities also demanded time from the family's busy schedule. Mr. Sefcak was added to the speaking schedule at the Banning, Calif., church where they attend, and Mrs. Sefcak was responsible for the inception of a girl's club there.

And in all those activities you will find this man whom doctors thought would by now be useless.

Gary Sefcak has been, and is, a living example of faith. As he labors through life he exemplifies, along with the other fruits of God's Spirit, long-suffering. — *By Bob Smith*

GARY SEFCAK DISPLAYS some of his intricate handiwork. He has overcome a tragic accident to go on and lead an active, productive life.





How's Your Bible IQ?

True or false:

- The Gospel is the story about Jesus Christ.
- Man is an immortal soul.
- The "saved" go to heaven when they die.
- Sinners burn forever in hell.
- Being "born again" is a spiritual experience in this life.

How did you do? All the statements above are false. Surprised?

Professing Christians claim to believe in the Bible, but most of modern Christianity's doctrines are the opposite of the teachings of God's Word!

If you would like to improve your Bible IQ, request a copy of our free booklet, *How to Study the Bible*, today!

USE THIS SPECIAL
"PEEL-OFF" LABEL ON
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INSIDE