



Personal from...

Which Is the True Church?

WHY SO MANY churches? Why *any* church at all? Are all really GOD'S churches?

"There must be one *TRUE* Church," I said 55 years ago, "but where is it?" I had just been shocked, dumbfounded, disillusioned, to see with my own eyes in the Bible that the respected Christian church in which I had been reared taught the very opposite in most respects from the plain teachings of Christ and the Holy Bible.

I had supposed the churches of the Christian religion had received their beliefs from the Bible. Haven't you? Then I asked myself, candidly, WHY so many different churches, teaching different doctrines? And why ANY church at all?

I read in the Bible where Jesus Christ said, "I will build my church." But for what PURPOSE? Like I did until then, most people simply take the existence of churches for granted, never wondering whether there is any need or PURPOSE for them.

It was early 1927, before World War II, that these thoughts challenged me. It was during that war that Winston Churchill said before the United States Congress, as I have so often quoted, "There is a PURPOSE being worked out here below." Most people never think about that, or have any realization of the real PURPOSE for humanity's presence on the earth, or of the AWESOME, incredible human potential.

I was to learn that the Church is, indeed, God's instrumentality for working out that supreme PURPOSE! Yet humanity has been lulled to sleep, deceived, blinded to this great PURPOSE! "The god of this world [Satan the devil] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ . . . should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:4).

But WHY did Jesus Christ start the Church? Look at the world into which he was born, and in which he lived. It was the same world in which you and I live today, except for two changes: 1) This same world has made AWESOME progress, especially during this 20th century—in terms of technology, science and industry; and 2) it has undergone APPALLING retrogression in troubles and evils. All the fantastic progress has been in the materialistic area—working with matter from the ground. All the retrogression has occurred in the SPIRITUAL area—man dealing with man.

WHY did Jesus found the Church? To become God's instrument for working out his grand PURPOSE here below—ultimately to make SPIRITUAL progress and glorious benefits far more awesome than materialistic progress has been! To correct and eradicate the troubles, evils, discontents, sufferings of this world's humanity—to replace them with contentment, happiness and joy, constant eager anticipation of further glorious accomplishments, both spiritually and materially—and to give a then happy and glorified humanity ETERNAL LIFE in vigorous and joyful accomplishment!

What was wrong with the world in which Christ started the Church? What's even far more wrong today? We need to understand how civilization started. It started with the creation of MAN!

God had created vertebrate animals, each after its own kind—"cattle after their kind" (Gen. 1:25), dogs after the dog kind, elephants after the elephant kind. Then God said (verse 26), "Let us make MAN in OUR image, after OUR likeness"—after the GOD kind. But man at that physical creation was not given God-LIFE—immortal, inherent, self-containing life. He was given only temporary physiochemical existence, the same as animals (Gen. 2:7).

However, God offered him eternal GOD-LIFE! But

the man was required to make a choice. It was God's purpose that the divine GOD-CHARACTER must first be developed within MAN. He was made in the form and shape of God, unlike animals. But man was first created with only an animal (temporary) existence. His existence is sustained by breath of air, like animals. His temporary life is supplied by a heart circulating blood throughout his body, like animals.

But, being made in the image of GOD, man was given the power of MIND! His mind, like God's, must direct his motions and actions, whereas animals were equipped with automatic INSTINCT.

Man's mind was supplied by a spirit within man—a human spirit that imparts the power of psychic intellect to the physical brain.

Yet this spirit imparts only the mental ability to acquire materialistic knowledge—knowledge to work with matter from the ground. But God created man to NEED another Spirit—the Holy Spirit of God—that can impart to the mind power to comprehend SPIRITUAL knowledge—knowledge to have a relationship with the spiritual GOD, and to have a right relationship with other PEOPLE.

In many places of the Bible this human spirit within every human is mentioned. In Job 32:8, "there is a spirit in man." In verse 18, "the spirit within me constraineth me"—and in I Corinthians 2:11, no human could know, or have the knowledge possessed by MAN, except by the spirit of man which is IN the man.

Likewise, no man can comprehend spiritual knowledge but by the Holy Spirit of God—which may be given to him as God's gift upon genuine repentance and belief. It is needed to comprehend spiritual knowledge and character. In verse 9, same chapter, spiritual knowledge cannot enter the carnal mind through the eye, ear or five senses, but, in verse 10, God reveals spiritual knowledge by and through his Holy Spirit.

This Holy Spirit is the very impregnating Spirit of eternal life—GOD-life—self-containing, inherent life. This was offered to the

first, created man and woman—Adam and Eve, in the incident of the tree of LIFE, and the forbidden tree of the "knowledge of good and evil."

When Adam rejected the tree of LIFE, and took to himself the acquisition of spiritual knowledge (good and evil), God CLOSED OFF THE TREE OF LIFE from mankind—WITHHELD THE GIFT OF HIS HOLY SPIRIT (Gen. 3:22-24)—until the second Adam, Jesus Christ, should come and pay the penalty of human sin in man's stead!

So, starting with the human Adam, man built the man-made CIVILIZATION, swayed, influenced, impelled by the invisible Satan the devil!

Beginning with Adam, equipped with acquirable materialistic knowledge ONLY—lacking knowledge for a right relationship with human neighbor or with God, man built his own system of teaching or educating his children. Thus as the system of education developed, it remained limited to materialistic knowledge. After trial and error man learned how to produce AWE-SOME progress in materialistic and mechanical fields. But he retrogressed in his ability to get along with fellow humans—and he had no close relationship with his Maker.

Man simply was NOT developing the divine GOD-character within him!

Man developed his own RELIGIONS, swayed by Satan, who appeared as an angel of light, but deceived the whole world (Rev. 12:9). Man formed his own gods out of wood, stone, other materials. This world's religions were developed.

Man organized his own ideas of GOVERNMENT—to regulate the lives of his fellows. Yet man was impelled by self-centeredness, the spirit of "GET"—of vanity, covetousness, jealousy and envy, competition, strife, violence and WAR—of REBELLION against the way of God, or God's way of life. God's way is LOVE—the way of "GIVE" instead of "GET"—the way of cooperation, serving, sharing. And so human governments seek selfish advantage over other governments and end up

in controversy, WAR and DESTRUCTION!

Man built his own economic system—all contrary to God's way. And the whole world's economy is sick today. Half the world is illiterate, destitute, poverty stricken, living in filth and squalor—many starving to death.

Man's social system is based on "GET"—vanity, greed, self-interest and self-gain at the expense of fellowman.

Into such a world came JESUS CHRIST, the only begotten son of GOD—actually God in human flesh, yet capable of death.

Jesus said, "I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH."

WHY?

MAN's unhappy civilization of discontent, unhappiness, frustration, human suffering, started with the physical ADAM, influenced by Satan.

The CHURCH is God's instrument through which he is building the NEW civilization of the KINGDOM OF GOD—the WORLD TOMORROW—a world of humans changed through God's power into GOD BEINGS! A world of dynamic happiness and PEACE!

But how did Jesus START God's Church? In a sense, he had started it long before, through the prophets of ancient Israel. They, with the apostles, became the very FOUNDATION of the Church, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). The writings of the prophets were already written and being preserved.

But Jesus now called DISCIPLES. They were not apostles—ones "sent forth in power and authority." A disciple is a student—a learner being taught. And Jesus called 12 of them. Actually he called 14—but only 12 were to become official. The other two were alternates, to be chosen later if one of the official 12 dropped out.

Jesus did not start the Church through these students. He taught them the doctrines of GOD's world to come, so that they, upon "graduating" from his teaching after three and a half years, could, with the writings of the prophets,

(Continued on page 40)

Personal from...

(Continued from page 2)

become the FOUNDATION upon which to build God's Church.

But the Church was not founded until Jesus had been crucified in payment of human sins, resurrected and ascended to God's throne in heaven as head of the Church, and its High Priest. Christ has been serving in that capacity ever since.

Adam had rejected eternal LIFE through God's Spirit, through which God would reveal his SPIRITUAL WAY OF LIFE—the way of LOVE! And remember, God had CLOSED OFF human access to God's Holy Spirit. The nations that developed on earth had no access to God's Spirit or eternal salvation.

Such nations as Egypt, Babylonia, Greece or ancient Israel had no access to "salvation" or eternal life—no access to comprehension of revealed SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE.

Let me emphasize here, by repetition, humanity did not know—have the knowledge of—how to live with man or with God. Largely, man had lost knowledge of God. God revealed himself to ancient Israel—revealed to that nation HIS WAY OF LIFE—but, because that way was spiritual, it was never comprehended nor lived by Israel.

Generations of humans came and died—"unsaved"! But, "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this [by resurrection] the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Again, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all [the same "all"] be made alive [by a resurrection]" (I Cor. 15:22).

In that judgment, humans shall be called to account for what they did — all their sins. But they shall learn that Christ paid their penalty in their stead, and, on repentance, faith, receiving God's Spirit at last, growing in grace and spiritual knowledge, they, then at last, may receive immortality in God's Kingdom, just as called Christians may now.

One of God's prophets—a predecessor of the Church—foretold, "...it shall come to pass after-

ward, that I [God] will pour out my spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28).

But it was not in God's master plan to pour out his Spirit upon ALL flesh at the founding of the Church. Jesus Christ was and is the ONLY door through which we may be reconciled to GOD and receive eternal life through his Spirit (find salvation).

But Jesus said plainly, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). NO MAN CAN! Unless chosen and drawn by God through his Spirit, none can come to Jesus and receive God's Holy Spirit.

God's Church started on the day of Pentecost with only the 12 APOSTLES and about 108 other believers—although another 3,000 were baptized the same day.

But WHY start the Church so small?

Remember this principle: Whatever God does in his own supreme supernatural power he does in a stupendous way. But whatever God does through humans always starts the very smallest and grows.

Jesus trained 12—taught them as students—so that they could teach the larger number in the Church GOD'S WAY OF LIFE.

Likewise God's Kingdom—to become tremendously big—started and today IS small. WHY?

Just as Jesus called 12 students to be taught, so that they could teach the Church, so the Church—the TRUE Church of God—has remained comparatively small, because they are called as DISCIPLES or STUDENTS, to LEARN God's way of life, so that the Church, to become God's KINGDOM, shall be able to teach multiple thousands of millions in the coming millennium and final judgment.

The Church is the affianced Bride of Christ, to be changed to God beings and married to him at his Second Coming. Jesus spoke of it as the grain of mustard seed, starting the smallest, becoming the greatest. The world today is SATAN'S world. The WORLD TOMORROW—the Kingdom of God—shall ultimately become much larger than Satan's world.

The smaller number of the Church are all DISCIPLES—stu-

dents—learners, GROWING in grace and spiritual KNOWLEDGE (II Pet. 3:18), being now educated spiritually and trained in spiritual LIVING to teach and rule over the WHOLE WORLD after Christ's coming!

To the Church, Christ himself says: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21). And, "he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron..." (Rev. 2:26-27). We shall be kings and also priests, and shall reign ON THE EARTH (Rev. 5:10).

This world—civilization—started actually by Satan through Adam. God's Kingdom (his divine FAMILY) was started by CHRIST, through the Church. As Adam and his children were the material Satan used to build this world, so the Church is the spiritually begotten material CHRIST is using to build (create) the KINGDOM OF GOD—the happy, peaceful WORLD TOMORROW!

What is the Church? The Church is simply that spiritual ORGANISM of those CALLED OUT of Satan's world—out of Satan's WAY OF LIFE, into GOD'S WAY OF LIFE! "Wherefore COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM [of this world and its ways], and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (II Cor. 6:17). "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the *renewing of your mind*..." (Rom. 12:2). "GROW in grace, and in the KNOWLEDGE of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18).

Yes, 55 years ago I searched for the ONE TRUE CHURCH. It did still exist, but had lost much of the original TRUTH taught by the original apostles. They learned the TRUTH from Christ and the writings of the prophets. Jesus IN PERSON was the personal Word of God. The Bible is the SAME Word of God in writing.

God taught me through that Word of God—the writings of the apostles and the prophets. Because I GAVE myself to him in complete surrender to his will, he used me to build back up that one TRUE CHURCH! □