

# The Sword AND Staff

"Preach the Word." (II Timothy 4:2)

"Feed the Flock." (I Peter 5:2)

## The Threat of The Crumbling Home to The Church



By JAMES E. GIBBONS — 1535 Fairfield Drive  
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(IN THE LAST ISSUE OF this paper we ran our first article on "The Threat of the Crumbling Home to the Church." As a foundation for material to follow in this issue, we considered the very basic Bible teaching on marriage, the family, and the home (a knowledge of this is badly needed today in our deteriorating society). We noticed that marriage is a divine institution set up by God himself, everything about marriage is honorable, and that marriage is to be entered into for a lifetime with one mate. We also briefly examined the relationships involved in the family and the home. With these basic, essential, and positive considerations behind us, we now face the very serious problems confronting marriage, the family, and the home in our society today—and consequently the church of Christ.)

### THE THREAT OF THE CRUMBLING HOME TODAY

#### The Deplorable Situation

WE HAVE a most tragic and deplorable situation confronting this nation (and ultimately the church). *Almost one out of every two marriages is ending in divorce today!* (If one out of every two cars on the road cracked up, there would be an immediate cry for a national investigation; manufacturers would be recalling their vehicles right and left). Just a few short years ago (in the last decade) it was said that one out of every four marriages was ending in divorce, and we thought it was awful. What about today then?!

Going back to 1950 (on the heels of the II World War), it was said by a certain writer at that time that our divorce rate had skyrocketed *three hundred percent*—and it was thought a national tragedy. What would that same person think about today? What would the rate of increase be in relation to today? And that same person wrote in 1950, "We are destroying the very foundation of our society. We are destroying the American home faster than Rome did. We are doing the job faster than France did"—and we are made to further question and exclaim: WHAT ABOUT TODAY THEN?!

Think of the shattered and bruised lives! Think of the fall-out of broken pieces from broken homes! No wonder so many people have psychological problems today! Hardly any families are not touched by the trauma of divorce in one way or another, directly or indirectly. They say the poorest risk as a mate in marriage is a child who has come from a broken home situation, and, as we have observed, the marriage/divorce situation is not getting better (BUT GOD CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE THOUGH).

At the same time in the midst of a nation of broken homes, delinquency and crime rates are multiplying and skyrocketing by leaps and bounds. There are many related factors, no doubt, but to get away from the reality of their problems many kids cop-out on drugs and get into all kinds of other trouble. And what a problem we have today! What a deplorable situation!

(Continued on Page 3)

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## Proverbs of Today

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*He who tries to please everybody usually ends up pleasing nobody—and especially the Lord.*

*"Anger, hate, grudges, and jealousy damage the vessels in which they are stored."*

*I have noticed that some parents who have failed to give themselves to their children are always giving them gifts (but nothing can take the place of yourself).*

*"Give everything up for Jesus, but don't give Jesus up for anything."*

*An outward display of superiority is many times a cover-up for an inward feeling of inferiority.*

*"Character is like a rifle—it can't shot higher than it is aimed."*

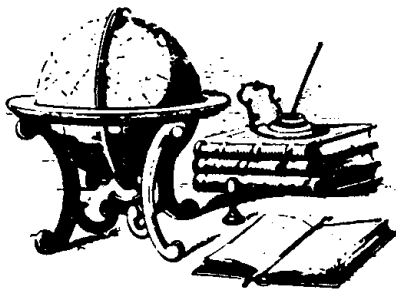
*An excessive show of strength is sign of weakness.*

*"When the house is burning down is no time to rearrange the pictures on the wall."*

*A church built on compromise does not comprise a faithful church of Christ.*

*"A mistake is evidence that someone has tried to do something."*

*If you want some good advice on how to live, ask someone who is about to die.*



## EDITORIAL

## COMMENTS...

### AN ILL WIND THAT BLOWS NO GOOD

IT HAS BEEN SAID that it is an ill wind that blows no good, and this is true. Even bad and the worse things that can happen often leave good in the wake of their apparent devastation. Flowers grow in the midst of the debris. It has been said that the darkest hour comes right before the dawn. So in bad fortune there is potential good fortune.

Colonization of lands of less advanced people during the past several hundred years by Europeans must be looked upon as evil because of the exploitation involved, but some resultant good followed. These countries were exposed (many times) to a more progressive civilization. But best of all, they were opened to evangelism, to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Wars are a terrible scourge and curse upon the face of the earth, but in their aftermath all is not evil. It has been during the intensity of wars that applied technology and learning have accelerated in unprecedented ways, which have as their by-product good for mankind. Sometimes wars have humbled people, making them see their need of God.

Communism is a reactionary and oppressive political force which professedly identifies itself with the cause of the common people (practice is another thing). In spite of all its evils, good has come from all the publicity given to communism (plus the "Hippie" movement). People are more down-to-earth today. Snobbery is less common. Also, our society has more of a social conscience than ever before.

The flooding of the world during the time of Noah was an unequaled universal catastrophe. The waters came down, the fountains of the deep were broken up, and the surface of the earth was radically changed—all of humanity perished except eight people! Of course this cleansed the earth of sin and gave the human race a new start. But only in modern times have we realized other good that has come from this (in this writer's opinion). The fossil fuel that propels your car down the highway, lubricates its moving mechanisms, and heats your home very likely was formed under the intense pressures of the flood and the changings of the earth's surface (today under extreme pressure assimilated in laboratories a quart of oil has been experimentally extracted from a can of garbage within an hour). We certainly would call this outcome of the flood very good.

The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ is the most obvious and dramatic illustration of what we are talking about. From the human viewpoint as Jesus was put to death on the old rugged cross, it looked like all was lost. If God was speaking to mankind through Jesus, it looked like he had failed to get his message across. It appeared to be a show of weakness instead of strength. JESUS DEFEATED...but the whole story had not been told. The third day Jesus came forth from the grave to die no more. It became apparent in the gospel message that Jesus intentionally shed his blood on the cross as a sacrifice to take away the sins of the world. Now the good news was out: JESUS DEFEATED DEATH! That which seemed to be bad was God accomplishing the most possible good for fallen humanity! Praise the Lord!

The Christian has learned to look at the things that happen to him with an optimistic eye. He knows all of the promises of God in Christ are *yea*, *yea*, and none are *nay*, *nay* (II Cor. 1:19,20). He knows that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). He knows that suffering purifies and perfects—it develops character. The Christian knows that in death there is victory—whether he lives or whether he dies, there is no way he can loose. Amen! □

## THE THREAT OF THE CRUMBLING HOME TO THE CHURCH



(Continued from Page 1)

### Why Do Buildings Fall?

We are made to ask WHY? Why are homes crumbling and falling apart today? Perhaps we can find the answer by asking another question by way of illustration. Why would a building, and why do buildings, crumble and fall?

There are many factors involved in answering this question. Buildings may crumble and fall because of faulty workmanship. If the building is not erected on a solid foundation, and if inferior materials go into its construction, trouble lies ahead. Combine with these things external causes such as floods, storms, winds, freezing, and all kinds of erosion, and you will see why buildings fall. There is a certain amount of upkeep that must take place. Add to all of this, then, the fact that buildings are sometimes deliberately demolished. Thus, we have a pretty good over-all view of ways buildings crumble and fall.

How does that tie in with marriage and the crumbling home situation today? Psalms 127:1 tells us, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it..." Too many are leaving the very ONE out of their marriage who instituted it in the first place, and who alone can make it work ideally. He is the Master Workman, and his workmanship is unto perfection. Then, most people are not building their homes (and lives) on the solid foundation of the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:24-27). Too often the materials they bring into marriage fall short of being of good quality. Too many young people (and adults) are so immature—not good material for an enduring marriage. And their love and morals are not strong enough cement to hold the marriage together when the going gets a little rough or temptations come along. Too many people are so selfish they actually don't know how to love someone else. Faced with petty differences, they think themselves incompatible and irreconcilable, so they deliberately bring the walls of their marriage and home tumbling to the ground. They demolish it in divorce.

As with a physical building, many do not realize there is a certain amount of upkeep that must go into a marriage daily. Too many have had a naive, fairyland concept of marriage in the past. As in the fairy story of neverland, the prince and princess were married and "lived happily ever after." Marriage becomes a cure-all for all things without regard for what kind of materials go into it and to the upkeep that must be maintained.

### Ill Winds Are Blowing

Ill winds are blowing across the land today. There are many and diversified external forces bearing down adversely upon the home and family life. Too many have sown to the wind with their ungodly philosophies, and, as

in ancient Israel, we are going to reap and already are reaping the whirlwind (Hosea 8:7). These humanistic philosophies have made havoc of absolute concepts in the realm of morality—to too many people nothing is absolutely right or wrong within itself anymore (if you preach absolutes you are called a legalist and are accused of not having love). Evolution, among many other pagan philosophies, has left modern man bankrupt in his outlook, and, believing he is an animal, too many times he has been acting like one.

A book came out about nine years ago (1968) called *The Sexual Wilderness*. If the author thought it was a sexual wilderness back then, what would he call today? This is the age of the PLAYBOY, ushered in by the PLAYBOY magazine—a magazine freely advocating its play boy philosophy with explicit pictorial poronographic lessons in immorality (now followed by dozens of other magazines even more lewd!). And the playboy philosophy is practiced by millions!

It seems that our national leaders are so morally bankrupt that our courts can't even come up with a definition of poronography. Besides the obscene lewd-nude-and-crude magazines, movies are shown across the land in almost any city where every imaginable and perverted sex act is actually committed on the screen right before your eyes. And our judicial leaders don't know the difference between right and wrong enough to bring about sentence to close these hell-holes of Sodom and Gomorrah! (ALAS!).

Yes, this is the "land of the free" and the "home of the brave"—the home of the permissive society: ABOUT ANYTHING GOES! But freedom must be more than permissiveness if it is to remain free. If freedom is not in the bounds of responsibility it will consume itself. Cancer is the situation when the organs and cells of the body no longer stay within their appointed bounds—they reach out freely and unstrained to become malignant, AND IT DESTROYS THE BODY! Fire free to burn in the confines of a furnace is good, but unrestrained and released to burn anywhere at random it is one of the most destructive forces in the world.

Today it is not uncommon to read articles in women's magazines that suggests that adultery is good for a marriage (?!). Recently while coming out of a grocery store, this writer happened to notice this caption on a ladies' magazine on the sales rack: "Happily Married—And Unfaithful: Can A Woman Love More Than One Man?" And this article was not condemning such! Leafing through the magazine, this writer noticed that it concluded by saying (in so many words): Who are we to say it is right or wrong? It is a personal matter. (Ill winds are blowing!).

Then, the endless soap operas on TV are ill winds that blow no good as far as the home is concerned. Here the viewers are exposed to the defiling trivia of endless stories involving love affairs, triangles, divorce, abortions, someone having someone else's baby, etc. That is the morbid diet of garbage that weak and stifled minds watch and feed upon day after day. You are what you think. Surveys indicate that children who watch this mental garbage on a continued basis have a distorted concept of marriage and react adversely in home situations.

Yes, ill winds are blowing across our land that can only bring destruction to the home and decent family life.

(Continued on Next Page)

## THE THREAT OF THE CRUMBLING HOME TO THE CHURCH (Continued from Last Page)

### The Sanctity of Sex and Marriage Under Attack

We are living in times when the sanctity of sex and the sacredness of marriage are constantly under attack in our society. Whether it be directly or indirectly, the devil is at work. Whether it be the general atmosphere of loose attitudes in our sex-oriented society, the much-published pollution, or the very words of some radical university professor, the end results are the same—the undermining of the home. Even in a small community college in the area this writer lives, a certain college professor said, "The institution of marriage is a failure—we need to try something else, something better" (we deliberately step off a cliff, break a leg, and then say that the law of gravity is a failure; we need something better...that's about how logical this statement is)—and is it any wonder that so many college kids (and other people) are shacking up together today?! When this writer talked to a young couple about the wrong of what they were doing, they replied, "Well, everybody's doing it." (Obviously an exaggeration, but it is becoming increasingly common today). Promiscuous practices are very common today.

God looks upon all sexual activity before marriage and outside of marriage as wicked and wrong (Hebrews 13:4; I Corinthians 6:9). And in contrast with the virtuous woman in the book of Proverbs (Proverbs 31:10-12), the immoral and loose woman is called a STRANGE WOMAN (Proverbs 2:16-19; 5:18-21). The word "strange" means alien, foreign, or odd. It is said of this sexually loose female that she "forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God" (2:17). Those who forsake God's plan of personal purity and sex restricted to the holy relationship of marriage are called "strange," alien, odd. They are abnormal. (And that's what the devil wants—to corrupt and distort God's plan! Beware!).

Then today the devil not only wants to destroy God's institution of marriage, and consequently the home, through immorality in the usual sense, he would like to break down and confuse the actual distinction between the sexes as God made them (Gen. 1:27). You remember that among other things God called the male and female arrangement "very good" (Genesis 1:31). That is the way it is supposed to be, but the devil is at work.

The following little story will get our minds keyed to the direction our thoughts are now moving:

A man standing on the street corner turned and spoke to the person next to him, "You see that child over there? Times have changed until you can't tell whether it is a boy or a girl."

The one standing nearby said, "That's a boy, Sir, my son."

In an apologetic way the man responded, "Oh, oh, I beg your pardon; I didn't know you were the child's mother or I wouldn't have said that."

Whereupon the other person replied, "I'm not the child's mother; I'm his father!"

There should be a difference in the appearance of the male and the female, whether it be seen in the length of their hair or distinctive kind of clothing. Men should be men and women should be women. The apostle Paul said it was a shame for a man to have long hair as it made him appear effeminate (I Corinthians 11:14). The differences between the sexes should not be confused. It is unwhole-

some and distorts the plan of God.

Today we are hearing a lot about the rights of "GAY" people, and they are not talking about happy people either. These are practicing homosexuals (how the devil always tries to make evil look good, and such perverted evil it is!). This is about like talking about the rights of adulterers and murderers as a special class of people. You have got to be in the right before you start talking about your rights. The apostle Paul says that such sexual perverts are lawless and outlaws as they stand before the LAW OF GOD. (I Timothy 1:9, 10). Notice the kinds of wrong-doers they are lumped together with, as the law condemns all of them: "...for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for THEM THAT DEFILE THEMSELVES WITH MANKIND, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons" etc.

The last of June the homosexuals declared a "Gay Pride Week" (!?) . This headline was over an Associated Press release: "MARCHERS MARK GAY PRIDE WEEK IN SEVERAL CITIES." The article started this way: "Carrying placards and chanting, thousands of homosexuals and their supporters marched in major cities around the country yesterday to mark 'Gay Pride Week' and to demand equal rights for gays." It continued, "Police in San Francisco said more than 100,000 people gathered yesterday..." The article also told about those who gath-

(Continued on Page 8)

### SAFELY HOME

*I am home in Heaven, dear ones;  
All's so happy, all's so bright!  
There's perfect joy and beauty  
In this everlasting light.*

*All the pain and grief are over,  
Every restless tossing passed;  
I am now at peace forever,  
Safely home in Heaven at last.*

*Did you wonder I so calmly  
Trod the Valley of the Shade?  
Oh! But Jesus' love illuminated  
Every dark and fearful glade.*

*And He came himself to meet me  
In that way so hard to tread;  
And with Jesus' arm to lean on,  
Could I have one doubt or dread?*

*Then you must not grieve so sorely,  
For I love you dearly still;  
Try to look beyond earth's shadows,  
Pray to trust our Father's will.*

*There is work still waiting you,  
So you must not idle stand;  
Do your work while life remaineth,  
You shall rest in Jesus' hand.*

*When that work is all complete,  
He will gently call you home;  
Oh, the rapture of the meeting;  
Oh, the joy to see you come!*

By MRS. RAYMOND BOYD

## PAUL'S VISION OF HEAVEN



• By RICHARD GERINGSWALD—Lake Lynn, Pa. 15451

PARADISE? Is it a mere fantasy? Is it wishful thinking of the child-like mind to fly with Peter Pan to Never-Never land, or to skip with Dorothy down the yellow brick road to the Emerald city of OZ, or to join Captain Nemo and sail our Nautilus 20,000 leagues through the sunken splendor of the seven seas, or to join Buck Rogers and rocket through the galaxies to unknown worlds, or to live in an island paradise in a towering tree house with Swiss Family Robinson, or to join Billy Bones and Long John Silver and sail to our Treasure Island?

This Paradise we talk about transcends the earthly imaginations and childhood fantasies. How would you like to talk to someone who has seen Heaven and come back to tell you about it?

There is an incident in Scripture where one was taken to Heaven (either in reality or in a vision); he returned to earth and then communicated important truths about the heavenly world from personal observation.

Enoch and Elijah were taken to Heaven but they did not return to converse with men. Elijah and Moses appeared at the transfiguration to talk only to Jesus.

Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, in John 11 related nothing of Heaven after he was raised from the dead.

The saints who came from their graves in Matthew 27: 52 during the resurrection of Jesus Christ related nothing of Paradise.

Of the millions taken to Rest, not one has been permitted to return to tell us about its glories.

This seems to be a fixed law and a settled principle in that Lazarus himself could not return to warn the rich man's brothers—they had the writings of Moses and the

prophets!

Mohammed talks of a trip to Heaven. (Paul who was a true prophet remained silent). He describes his ride on a white donkey from Mecca to Jerusalem and passed through the seven heavens. He greeted all there. Gabriel was his escort. He came to within two bow shots of the throne of God and felt so cold when he was touched by God, and then he was commanded to pray fifty times a day upon his return to earth. Moses had the sentence reduced to five. Mohammed returned to the Jerusalem temple and then the Mecca temple and only one-tenth of the night was past...

Why did God not send saints to tell us the glories of Paradise? Why not clear up the doubts of the believers? Why not come and convince a thoughtless world? Why not show that God faithfully rewards His people? Why not let Paul testify of the glories of Heaven? We don't know the answers to all of these questions.

The word "Paradise" occurs only three times in the New Testament. Luke 23:43 was Jesus' promise to the thief that he would be with Christ in Paradise. Revelation 2:7 has the Ephesian church promised to eat of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God if they were overcomers. Finally the verse that draws our attention is II Corinthians 12:4 when Paul was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words.

The word "paradise" means "a land elevated and cultivated," or "a garden around the house planted with trees, grass, and shrubs," or "pleasure gardens and parks, with wild animals, around the country residence of the kings and princes."

Read II Corinthians 12:1-7 for our consideration now. In verse 2 Paul assumes a humble identity as he talks of his own experience which he had kept secret for fourteen years. II Corinthians was penned approximately 57 A.D. and if you subtracted fourteen years we would go back to 43 A.D. when Paul was in Tarsus and Antioch. We read of the account in Acts 14:19 in Lystra when Paul was stoned and thought dead. Did he have this vision of Paradise at this time?

On the road to Damascus Saul had a vision of Christ before his eventual baptism and conversion in Damascus, but it is doubtful that he had his vision of Paradise at this time. Otherwise it would have been 24 years ago in II Corinthians 12:2.

Adam Clarke gives the time of the vision of Paradise to the time Paul and Barnabas were sent from Antioch to Jerusalem with alms for the poor in Acts 11:25-26.

Whatever the time and place, we do know that it happened.

Paul was caught up to "third heaven." To the Mohammedan mind there were seven heavens:

- 1) the velum or curtain that folded up in the morning;
- 2) the firmament (with the sun, moon and stars);
- 3) the clouds;
- 4) the habitation in Jerusalem, the temple, and the altar;
- 5) the dwelling place where angels sing;
- 6) the fixed residence from whence comes the treasures of snow and hail;
- 7) the Araboth, where the souls of the righteous dwell.

These seven heavens were familiar to the Jews and Mohammedans. The rabbis had two heavens. These were the clouds and the sky. The third heaven would be beyond the sky, thus an invisible region.

(Continued on Next Page)

## PAUL'S VISION OF HEAVEN

*(Continued from Last Page)*

These are mere theory.

The Bible discusses three heavens:

- 1) The Atmosphere (from the clouds to the stars);
- 2) The Starry Heavens (sun, moon, planets and stars);
- 3) The Throne of God beyond the stars.

These are factual.

In verse 4, Paul described what he saw with the phrase "unspeakable words which it is not lawful for man to utter." It is not lawful to speak the secret things of God according to Deuteronomy 29:29.

Moffat translates this section as, "heard sacred secrets which no human lips can repeat." Now the question is, "Was Paul forbidden to describe Paradise or did Paul feel that mere words would not do it justice?" Were they words that *ought* not be spoken or were they words that *cannot* be spoken?

Perhaps God saved that right for John in the book of Revelation.

Finally, in verse 7 Paul was afflicted with a "thorn in the flesh." What was that affliction? Tertullian thought it was a chronic ear ache. Chrysostom thought it a tormenting head ache. Cyprian labeled it as bodily torments. Clarke considered it a messenger of Satan (a false prophet) telling lies and distressed Paul by the opposition in Corinth. Others theorized this thorn was a stutter and paralysis. And still others thought Paul had a case of head gout.

From reading Galatians 4:13-15, "ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me," and Galatians 6:11, "ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand," we could conclude Paul had some type of chronic eye problem.

We find that Paul was in a strait betwixt two possible situations in Philippians 1:21-23.

With Paul's vision of Paradise he could be in Heaven with a good set of eyes, with no troubles and no persecutions, against being on earth with a thorn in the flesh, trouble, physical problems, persecution and heart ache.

Paul chose the latter.

Why did Paul give no details as to what Paradise was like? Maybe it was a vision to encourage Paul in later trials. Perhaps he was speechless for the glories were so far above his imagination that they were incomprehensible.

Marco Polo, a world explorer, was doubted when he described the glories of China. One spurned him and demanded, "Say you lie!" Polo responded, "I only told you half the glories."

The great truths revealed to Paul were truths God did not desire to reveal to man. God did reveal enough to give us comfort and hope in this world for we walk by faith, not by sight. Therefore we have a confidence in God that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Paradise is beyond human fantasies. It is more than a play of the mind searching for a Utopia. Paradise is not a fantasy of a child, but an eternal fact of God as recorded in His Word.

Stroll the cool, tree-shaded garden, beside the crystal streams in the Paradise of God with Adam and Eve.

Whirlwind with Elijah to the very throne of God.

View the city built four-square with the apostle John.

Be caught up to the third heaven with Paul to view unspeakable splendor of unspeakable things.

Greater adventure lies ahead in eternity for those blessed by God.

*Be Strong!*

*We are not here to play, to dream, to drift.*

*We have hard work to do and loads to lift.*

*Shun not the struggle—face it: 'tis God's gift.*

*Be Strong!*

*Say not the days are evil. Who's to blame?*

*And fold the hands and acquiesce—O shame!*

*Stand up, speak out, and bravely, in God's name.*

*Be Strong!*

*It matters not how deep entrenched the wrong.*

*How hard the battle goes, the day how long;*

*Faint not—Fight on! Tomorrow comes the song!*

*...in the Paradise of God.*

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## The Indestrutable BOOK

THE BIBLE is indestructible. There is no danger that any man, or any combination of men, will destroy the Sacred Volume. They can and do destroy the faith of men in the Bible; but they cannot destroy the Bible.

About twenty-five hundred years ago, Jehoiakim, king of Judah, cut the roll of Jeremiah's prophecy, with a pen-knife and then consigned it to the flames; but he did not destroy the inspired message of the "weeping prophet." Jehoiakim died in disgrace and, as the prophet said, was given the "burial of an ass." "Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah: They shall not lament him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah Lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (Jeremiah 22:18, 19).

Early in the fourth century of our era, Diocletian, the Roman Emperor, launched a relentless and bitter attack on the Bible. He sought to consign every copy of it to the flames. About two years after he began his ruthless destruction of Bibles, he erected, over the ashes of burned Bibles a monument which bore the inscription—*Extincto Nomine Christianorum*—"Extinct is the name of Christians." Twenty years later, another Roman Emperor, Constantine, was seeking to put the New Testament in all the churches in the empire.

Voltaire predicted that the Bible, within one hundred years, would be a forgotten book. Within much less than a century the Geneva Bible Society was using his home as a basis from which it distributed millions of Bibles. Bob Ingersoll, American agnostic, once held a Bible high in his hand and boastfully exclaimed, "In fifteen years I will have this book in the morgue." Within fifteen years Ingersoll was in the morgue—in his grave; but the Grand Old Book lived on. — *Selected* □

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# What The Bible Teaches About The Church

MEANING OF THE WORD "CHURCH" - "Called out." The church, then, is the "called out" body of people over which Christ is head and Saviour.

## Its Figures

FLOCK OF GOD—Acts 20:28  
HOUSE OF GOD—I Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:5, 6  
HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH—Gal. 6:10  
BODY OF CHRIST—Eph. 1:22, 23  
KINGDOM OF GOD—St. Mark 14:25 and 1 Cor. 10:16

## Its Establishment

TIME—30 A.D., Day of Pentecost  
PLACE—Jerusalem  
LONG-RANGE PREDICTIONS:  
Dan. 2:36-45; Isa. 2:1-4; Amos 9:11, 12; Jer. 3:14-18  
PREPARATORY PROMISES:  
Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:5  
Matt. 16:18, 19; Mark 9:1; Luke 24:46-49  
FULFILLED:  
Acts 2  
THEREAFTER AN ESTABLISHED FACT  
Acts 5:11; Col. 1:13; 1 Cor. 12:27

## Its Nature

DIVINE:  
In ownership—Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20  
In foundation—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20, 21  
In establishment—Dan. 2:44  
In builder—Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28  
UNIQUE:  
Christ has but one church—Eph. 4:4; John 10:16  
Denominations are not the divine church.  
INTERNATIONAL:  
According to prophecy—Isa. 2:2; Zech. 8:23  
According to fulfillment—Eph. 3:5, 6; 2:11-22  
HOLY:  
Originated with God—Dan. 2:44  
Free from spots and wrinkles of men—Eph. 5:27  
Christians warned about inferior workmanship—1 Cor. 3:10, 15  
Holiness characterizes members—1 Pet. 1:14-16  
TRIUMPHANT:  
Prophesied—Dan. 2:45  
Christ to triumph over all—1 Cor. 15:24-26  
That triumph realized—Rev. 19:11-21  
PATTERNED:  
The Bible reveals that plan (see the Bible teaching of this chart for proof.)  
Like Moses concerning the tabernacle, we are to build all things according to the divine pattern—Heb. 8:5

## Its Terminology

INDIVIDUALS:  
Christians—Acts 11:26; 1 Pet. 4:16  
Disciples (learners of Christ) Acts 11:29  
Saints (cleansed by Christ) Rom. 1:7  
Sons of God (relationship through Christ) Rom. 8:14  
Brethren (relationship in Christ) Rom. 12:1

## CONGREGATIONS:

Churches of Christ—Rom. 16:16  
Churches of God—1 Cor. 11:16

## UNIVERSALLY:

Church of the firstborn—Heb. 12:23  
Church of God—1 Cor. 15:9

## Its Membership

PENITENT, BAPTIZED BELIEVERS—Acts 2:37-41, 47  
"The Lamb's book of life," the true church's roll book—Heb. 12:23. Only those whose names are written in it will be saved—Rev. 20:15; 21:27

## Its Work

### DEVELOP ITS MEMBERS SPIRITUALLY:

Through worship—  
Teaching—1 Pet. 2:2  
Mutual exhortation—Heb. 3:13; 10:24, 25  
Prayer—Jude 20; 1 Thess. 5:17  
Lord's supper—1 Cor. 11:23-24; Acts 20:7  
Singing—Col. 3:16  
Through the oversight of elders—  
Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1, 2; Heb. 13:17  
Through corrective discipline—  
1 Cor. 5; 11 Thess. 3:6, 14, 15; Gal. 6:1, 2

### PROVIDE FOR ITS NEEDY:

Practiced—Acts 4:34, 35; 11:27-30  
Ordained—Rom. 12:13; 1 Thess. 5:14

### EVANGELIZE THE LOST WORLD

Commanded—Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 1:8  
Carried out by early church—Col. 1:23  
The message told—Acts 8:1, 4  
Financed by tithes and offerings—1 Cor. 9:1-14  
Prayed for guidance—Col. 4:2-4; 11 Thess. 3:1, 2  
Special warnings concerning bearing the right message—Gal 1:8, 9; 11 John 9-11

## Its Organization

CHRIST THE SOLE HEAD WITH ALL AUTHORITY—Eph. 1:22, 23; Matt. 28:18

HIS WORD DELIVERED THROUGH APOSTLES THE GOVERNING LAW—Matt. 28:20; 1 Cor. 14:37; Acts 2:42

### OFFICERS—

EVANGELISTS—Eph. 4:11; 11 Tim. 4:5  
Evangelize men and cities—Acts 8:5-40  
Set congregations into order—Tit. 1:5  
Return to strengthen and purify—Acts 15:36, 41; Tit. 1:13, 14; 11 Tim. 4:2-4

### ELDERS—Acts 14:23

Oversee the congregation—Acts 20:28  
Teach the congregation—Acts 20:28  
Protect the congregation—Acts 20:29ff

### DEACONS—1 Tim. 3:8-13

NO OTHER ORGANIZATION EITHER WITHIN OR WITHOUT THE LOCAL CONGREGATION. Consider Phil. 1:1

## SHE IS NOW AT WORK LOOKING FOR THE RETURN OF HER LORD

"Purifying herself" - 1 John 3:2, 3

"Rescuing others" - Rev. 22:17

"Hopefully waiting" - Tit. 2:13



# THE THREAT OF THE CRUMBLING HOME TO THE CHURCH (Continued from Page 4)

ered in New York, Chicago, and Miami. As it told about the demonstrators in Chicago, this sickening news item was reported: "At one point a pair of shirtless, bearded men locked into a clinch and engaged in a round of kissing for television cameras." (Someone pinch us! Is this for real? This has got to be a bad dream. When will we wake up? We are sorry to say that it is bad and it is real, but it is not a dream!).

And the alarming thing about it is that these people are being heard. The American Psychiatric Association has dropped homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. *Psychology Today* magazine seems to think they are not abnormal after all. And listen to this headline from a California newspaper: "SAN FRANCISCO SCHOOLS ADD GAY COURSES TO SCHEDULE" (wow!). Then we read: "The San Francisco School Board has unanimously approved inclusion of gay lifestyles studies in high school sex education classes. The board voted 7-0 to accept a resolution which would 'sensitize without advocating a lifestyle.' The focus on gay lifestyles studies is on 'eliminating stereotypes and namecalling in schools' according to one board member..." (Think of that! Impressionable children and young people being exposed to such rot in a non-critical way in the public schools as an alternate lifestyle!).

Read the Bible and you can see what God thinks about homosexuality. He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because because of this depravity, and no one knows where those cities were located unto this day. Because of this sin the "cup of iniquity" of the Canaanites was full, and God used Israel to bring judgment upon them in the conquest of Canaan (Notice Leviticus 18:24,25). Regarding the children of Israel, God said, "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them" (Leviticus 20:13). Romans 1:21-32 pictures homosexual perversion and depravity as the ultimate state of degeneration people reach when they cast off God. Along with other sins, Paul says here that people who "commit such things are worthy of death" (also people who give their consent to such sins, although not doing them personally, are said to be worthy of death. Beware, permissive Americans!). And if God called the immoral woman in the book of Proverbs a STRANGE WOMAN, what do you think He would call homosexuals? Maybe the language of the street is not so wrong or cruel after all—that's exactly what they are!

Yes, we are living in a world with strange problems, unusual situations, the world of the drug abuser and pervert. We overheard a preacher say that he was getting fed up with it, that he would just like to deal with a plain old-fashioned sinner again (No doubt this is exaggeration, but these are unusual times in which we are living).

Many ill winds are blowing across the land and upon the home. We are facing a national crisis of the crumbling home which is spilling over into the church.

## THE CRUMBLING HOME—THREAT TO THE CHURCH

### It Surely Is A Threat

The crumbling home was one of the threats to the purity and unity of the church at Corinth (I Corinthians 6). In fact, the environs of Corinth (saturated with carnality) were not the most conducive to family life. There was a saying in

the ancient world: "It is not good for every young man to go to Corinth." However, these immediate internal problems of the church involving incest and immorality were winked at by the members, and this was corrupting and disrupting the purity of the community of believers as a whole. Paul proddingly questioned: "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" Crumbling homes indicate deteriorated and crumbling spiritual conditions, and it can't help but spill over into the church. The perilous times of the last days (as prophesied by Paul) were made that way by wickedness, which included being "disobedient to parents" and people not having "natural affection" (II Timothy 3:1-6). The paralyzing influence of this was felt in the church because we read that they were "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof..." If our homes and families are deteriorating and crumbling, it is impossible for it not to have the same adverse effects on the larger family of which Christians are a part, the church—the debris from crumbling homes does not make the best building blocks to go into a church. If your marriage is on the rocks, chances are that you (or your mate) is not on THE ROCK (it may be that both of you are not on THE ROCK). If God is not real to us in our everyday lives, in our homes and family relations, our religion is not the real thing—the church cannot publicly do for you and your family what you will not do privately for yourself. Things can't be HELL in your home,

(Continued on Page 10)

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## Though Your Sins Be As Scarlet

שָׁנִים

THE ABOVE WORD, reading from right to left, is SHANIM. It is rendered SCARLET in Isaiah 1:18: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

This beautiful thought is not properly and completely expressed in our common versions. Sin does not have color—scarlet, red, green, blue, gray or black. There is more involved—which the original word tells us. It means double-dyed or double-dipped. In order for colors to be fixed or made color-fast in ancient times, they were double-dipped. When the fabric was double-dyed, it became permanently fixed in its color or stain. It was indelible. No rain, dew, washing or long usage would remove it.

This shows the staining nature of sin. No efforts of man, be they good works, sacrifices, prayers, religious rites, or drugs, can remove the stain of sin. Only DIVINE cleansing can remove it.

Jeremiah foretold this (Jeremiah 31:31-34), and it was fulfilled in Christ and the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:8-12; 9:22; John 3:16; Matthew 26:28; I John 1:7).

It is one thing to recognize the cleansing in Christ and the gospel, and another to have the cleansing benefits. The application is seen in such passages as Mark 16:15-16; John 20:30-31; Acts 3:19; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 22:16; Acts 2:37-38).

Further, the one cleansed—the Christian—must walk in newness of life, faithful to his Savior in all things.

Do you need the stain of sin removed? Accept Christ by obeying his gospel. Daily live for him.—W.J. Butler

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



# THREE BASIC RULES FOR THE ASSEMBLY



• By DALE A. WILLIAMSON—Lakeland, Fla. 33801

THE BIBLE does teach that Christians are to come together in regular public assembly. At the same time the Bible doesn't prescribe any set pattern concerning the order of services. As we study the Scriptures, we learn that people in assembly did praise God together, did sing together and prayed together. There was communing, studying, mutual exhorting and preaching. The time of the day, the place, and the order in which various things are carried out are not set forth in the New Testament. There should at all times be a purpose, a meaning, a spirituality and orderliness prevailing.

On the one extreme there is the cold formal ritualistic type of services. To be in such a service gives one the feeling of being in a morgue. To the other and likewise dangerous extreme is the haphazard clamorous service. Somewhere in between there must be the answer.

Things at Corinth had gotten out of hand in the public assembly of the church. This was true in regard to the observance of the Lord's Supper. It had become so corrupt that Paul wrote, "It is not to eat the Lord's Supper" (I Corinthians 11:20). Again in the 14th chapter he deals with the assembly of the saints. The services were like a mad house. They had no order of worship, and there were many disruptions, disturbances, and distractions.

We may not face exactly the same problems in our public assemblies. But it seems to me that many times things have gotten out of hand in the assembly of the saints. Oft times there is disorder and commotion.

## I. "LET ALL THINGS BE DONE FOR EDIFICATION" (Verse 26).

Several times in this chapter he speaks of edifying. To edify means to build up. As Christians we need the help of each other to be built up in the faith. It isn't enough for the Christian to say, "This really helps me," or, "This makes me feel so good," or perhaps to go so far as to say, "I am acting under divine influence." We should be concerned as to whether our actions and attitudes will benefit others in the assembly. Does our behavior build others up—encourage them?

Paul said, "LET ALL THINGS..." What about the

singing? Is it just so much noise? Do the songs we sing and the way we sing them really edify? Do they instruct us and admonish us. Paul wrote, "...teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" Colossians 3:16.

Does the teaching, the class discussion, the preaching edify? If not, then we are missing out on that which we should expect in the assembly.

## II. "GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION BUT OF PEACE" (Verse 33).

Among other things, the Corinthian church was having confusion concerning speaking in tongues and prophesying. Paul said that God was not the author of confusion.

We can do nothing about what was going on in Corinth, but we can do something about what is going on in our assemblies today.

Our action and conduct are a reflection on God. When a visitor comes into our service, does he wonder what kind of a God we serve? Is the uproar deafening?

Let's talk about quietness for I believe it promotes peace.

Quietness before the service begins will help. This doesn't mean we aren't to speak to each other or to be friendly. We should greet one another with cordiality that is Christian. We need to be pleasant. But it does rule out boisterousness—cutting up, running and yelling and the roughhouse stuff that goes on before and after services. Children need to be taught that the meeting house is no place to run around. It is not the time and place for chasing each other and engaging in a wrestling match. Parents need to know what their children are doing before and after services as well as during services. And perhaps it would help if they would set a better example. I can well understand why visitors sometimes don't want to come back. They are afraid to!

The same rule prevails during the class sessions and the preaching services. This does not eliminate participation, nor does it rule out singing and praising God, and teaching and preaching that can be heard. But it does do away with whispering, talking to one another, and running to and from the bathroom.

## III. "BUT LET ALL THINGS BE DONE PROPERLY AND IN AN ORDERLY MANNER" (Verse 40).

The King James version says, "decently and in order." This means in such a way as not to offend against propriety. The adjective, the adverbial form of which is used here, means well-formed, comely; that which excites the pleasing emotion of beauty. The exhortation then is to conduct the public worship in such a way that it might be beautiful so as to make a pleasing impression on all who are right-minded.

"IN ORDER"—Not tumultuously as in a mob; be as in a well ordered army, where everyone keeps his place and acts at the proper place and time.

What happens so many times is this. The one in charge of services comes rushing in at about a minute before starting time and begins to pick out some songs. Then several minutes after time to start he inquires as to who is to play the piano. In the service he will call on someone to pray. He doesn't know who it will be until just before time to

(Continued on Next Page)

## THE THREAT OF THE CRUMBLING HOME TO THE CHURCH (Continued from Page 8)

in your family relationships, and HEAVEN in the church (which is supposed to be the kingdom of heaven)—you are the church whether you are assembled or not. The apostle Peter admonished that husbands and wives live together in mutual respect in the practice of true religion “that your prayers be not hindered” (I Peter 3:7). If our homes go down the drain, the church is not far behind (if not already down the drain).

### Needed: The Message of John the Baptist

The message of that harbinger of old is still needed today—yea, badly needed! It would go a long way toward solving our marital problems. It would put our crumbling homes on a solid foundation again. Of the coming John the Baptist, the prophet Malachi wrote: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:5, 6; Luke 1:13-17; Matthew 11:11-14). John’s message was a message of REPENTANCE (Matthew 3; Luke 3). People’s hearts and lives were changed. They were brought back to God, and as they drew closer to God they automatically drew closer to one another (like the spokes in a wagon wheel: the closer they get to the hub, the closer they get to one another). Thus, the generation gap was closed. The hearts of the fathers were turned to their children and the hearts of the children to the fathers. By the same rule, it turned a man’s lust for another woman into genuine love for his lawful wife—after all, she is the one God wants the husband to love! (If you must have an affair, have it with your wife—this is God’s plan!).

Titus 3, as well as most of the New Testament, shows how this repentance is to be lived out. Repentance is a radical change of mind that produces a change of being. Repentance must be retained in day to day living to be real. This is applied to older men and women, as well as to the younger ones in Titus 3. All are admonished to be SOBER. This means to be sober-minded, a natural description of the continued state of repentance in one’s life. This different way of looking at life is evidenced in every activity of life and especially in marital relationships. We have something to live for that makes us rise above pettiness. True Christians find that their homes have become a little heaven right down here on earth. They find that they love their mates more every passing day—that Christian marriage is a most exciting adventure.

### Facing the Challenge of the Crisis

Our society seems to be coming apart at the seams; the very foundation of our society is crumbling. In the midst of this confusion many times we are faced with situations and problems that we feel helpless before—we just don’t have all the answers. People can really make messes out of their lives.

This writer hates to be a prophet of doom, but he is convinced the situation is not going to get better, but worse. People have forsaken the ancient landmarks, and there are too many ill winds blowing across our land today. Somehow the church must pick up the broken pieces of these crumbling homes and try to put them together again. We must somehow salvage the wrecks of the broken lives that our permissive society is producing. The church family needs to be really just that—THE FAMILY OF

GOD. Too many have never known what a true family situation should be like. We need to give love, security, and understanding to these people who too often have not experienced this. In other words, *we must be more than the institutional church!* The church must be involved with fallen humanity. The church should be a harbor of tranquility amidst the storms of life wherein people can find stability. It should be a place where people can find security and derive strength which they so badly need.

May we be true Christians and marry ONLY IN THE LORD, or we are headed for trouble! Choose a date fit for a mate (and the date is not fit for a mate if he or she is not a Christian). Upon marrying, build your marriage and your home on the teachings of God’s Word. “Rejoice with the wife of thy youth,” and live all the appointed days of your life with her (Read PROVERBS 5:15-21). Keep your sights aimed at the heavenly home, and it will bring a little heaven to your home down here on earth right now. □

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### WHY ISN’T BAPTISM IN JOHN 3:16?

“IF BAPTISM is so important, why isn’t it mentioned in Ephesians 2:8, 9; John 3:16; Romans 10:9, 10; and John 5:23, etc.?” is the typical question of the natural man who has been caught with his hand in the cookie jar. “Nay, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?...” (Rom. 9:20).

I would also ask you a question—Why isn’t the blood of Christ mentioned in those verses? It is essential, isn’t it? (Hebrews 9:22; Revelation 1:5; etc.). You see then that not everything essential to salvation is mentioned in one verse. Although it may be implied like baptism is in Ephesians 2:8; John 3:16; Romans 10:9, etc. because baptism is an act of faith (Romans 10:17; Mark 16:16).

God said it in Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; I Peter 3:21, etc. Will you not believe it unless it is mentioned in John 3:16 or Romans 10:9?

Like the rich man’s brothers (Luke 16:28-31) who since they wouldn’t believe Moses and the Prophets, they would not believe if one came back from the dead and warned them. If you will not believe it in Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; John 3:5, etc., I’m afraid you wouldn’t believe it if it was mentioned in Ephesians 2:8, 9, and John 3:16.

And remember this: baptism is just as important as God says it is, no less, and no more. Maybe one reason baptism is not mentioned in John 3:16 is that it fits in with the strong delusion God promised to send those who receive not the love of the truth, so they’ll believe a lie and be damned (II Thessalonians 2:10-12). —Lowell Green □

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### THREE BASIC RULES FOR THE ASSEMBLY

(Continued from Last Page)

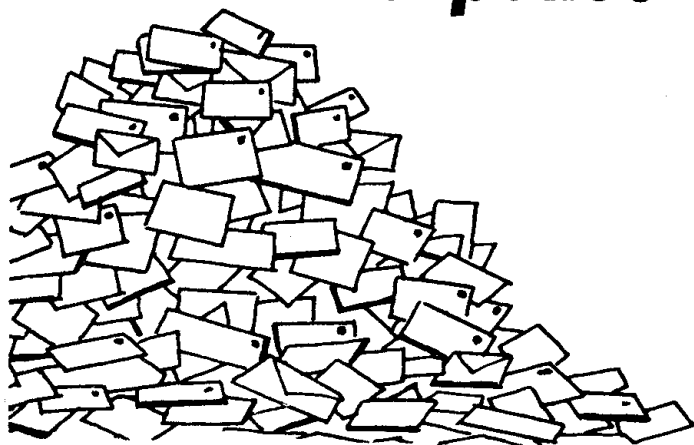
pray, so the one he is going to call on and of course the person who is expected to pray doesn’t have the least idea that he will be called on. Personally, I like to know at least a few minutes ahead of time when I am expected to lead in prayer. There have been times when I’ve felt like saying when asked to lead in prayer without any warning, “No, I am not ready.”

As the service goes on he will probably inquire, “Does someone have a special number?” Does this sound familiar to you? Does this fall within the category of “decently and in order”?

We can have orderliness in our services without being stiff and cold. We can have a warm and friendly atmosphere without being disorderly. □

# READERS'

## ... Response



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"We certainly do appreciate THE SWORD AND STAFF and we also are grateful to you for the work and the time that you put into each issue. Evidence keeps coming through each one that this is truly a 'labor of love' for you. We aren't able to send more money, but we have some 'rich' encouragement for you—That is Galatians 6:9!

"Keep your light on—"

### OHIO:

■ "This is awful to say, but I never saw the subscription date on your publication until this last one came. My name was turned in by another member of our congregation and I just never looked at that part of it. Please accept my apologies for being so blind or whatever it is. Enclosed is check to cover my past due, present, and 3 other names."

■ "Amen! Praise the Lord! A wonderful work you are doing. Don't worry when other people write in to be critical of the paper. As long as the New Testament pattern is followed is what counts. This has to be the mightiest small paper and uncompromising in printing of God's Word there is. Please keep up the work in keeping us informed of what we are to do if we are to keep in tune with His Word..."

■ "I would like to renew my subscription and also would like to receive THE SWORD AND STAFF for the last two years in book form... We all need a paper such as this one to keep us all strong in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it also helps out in understanding different subjects to a greater degree. May the Lord bless you in your labors for Him."

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"We have just finished restoring a sister who got involved with some people who speak in tongues..."

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■ "Many publications are available today, but few as compact as yours. I do hope you are able to continue..."

"Especially your material on marriage and the home is so important. It's much better to try to save homes via preventive teaching than to try to salvage one following open rebellion to God's Way."

### NEW ZEALAND:

■ "Enjoy the reading very much. Want to pass it on here 'down under'."

### CANADA:

■ "A fellow minister has introduced me to THE SWORD AND STAFF and I would like to be included in your mailing list..."

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### MARK THIS DATE: MARCH—1979!

MOST Christians would be thrilled at the prospects of taking a tour of Bible lands. Such a tour is planned (the Lord willing) for March, 1979, with the editor of this paper being one of the tour host. Plans are for the trip to include Rome, Greece, Asia Minor, and Israel (exact details to be made available later). Such a tour adds a deeper dimension to a person's faith and Bible knowledge, as well as being a great spiritual and educational experience within itself. It is an experience of a lifetime.

Most of us need a little time to plan ahead (for financial reasons and otherwise). Well, you have almost two years to get ready for this tour. Mark the date "MARCH—1979" and work toward that end. Write to us (THE SWORD AND STAFF), and when details have been worked out with the tour company and printed material is available, we will send it on to you. □

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### A MIND FULL OF SCRIPTURE DOESN'T MAKE A CHRISTIAN

AT THE VILLAGE church in Kalinovka, Russia, attendance at Sunday School picked up after the priest started handing out candy to the peasant children. One of the most faithful was a pugnosed, pugnacious lad who recited his Scriptures with proper piety, pocketed his reward, then fled into the fields to munch on it. The priest took a liking to the boy and persuaded him to attend church school. This was preferable to doing household chores from which his devoted parents excused him. By offering other inducements, the priest managed to teach the boy the four gospels. In fact, he won a special prize for learning all four by heart and reciting them non-stop in front of the congregation.

Sixty years later, he still liked to recite Scriptures, but in a context that would have horrified the old priest. The prize pupil who memorized so much of the Bible was the late Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev. —Selected □

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BELOW IS a listing of the booklets, tracts, and materials which are currently available from THE SWORD AND STAFF. If something is not listed here, that means it is presently out of print. This literature has been widely used. We believe that you will be pleased with the Scriptural soundness and helpfulness of each item. Place an order today. And while you are at it, order the bound volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF. You have the publication material in more of a permanent form this way. More and more people are seeing the value of doing this.

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