

# The Sword AND Staff

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

•

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

## *Our Great and Glorious*

# GOD

THE BIBLE DECLARES the reality of God; the world of nature and human experience verify it. God is just as real as life and just as close as death. The most profound thought that can enter the mind of man is that of God, and the highest ambition to which man can aspire is to know God and serve Him. The writer of Hebrews stated: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

What a great truth—GOD IS! It has correctly been said, "GOD IS A SPIRIT, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." Although everything points to these facts and the reality of God, there is so much about God that we don't and cannot know. With Job we are made to ask, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7). And with Moses we humbly admit, "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 this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29).

It is important that we remember and not forget God, for God remembers those who remember Him and He forgets those who forget Him. He puts those first who put Him first, and He leaves out those who leave Him out. It is that simple. Psalms 9:17 reads, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that FORGET God." Then from the other angle: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance" (Psalms 33:12). "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that REMEMBER his commandments to do them" (Psalms 103:17,18).

Romans 1:28-31 further demonstrates what happens when man forgets God, leaving God out of his thinking. The writer

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**THE SWORD AND STAFF**

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James E. Gibbons is editor.

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## Proverbially SPEAKING...

*HE WHO will not master himself will be the servant of others.*

"Knowledge is proud that he knows so much; wisdom is humble that he knows so little."

*People who don't have a reason can become very unreasonable.*

"The disobedient prophet was slain by the lion, the obedient Daniel was preserved in the lion's den."

*We should be "Christians only" because that's the only kind of Christians found in the New Testament.*

"Some people who claim to have an open mind really have an empty head."

*DISCOURAGEMENT occurs when a person has lost COURAGE.*

"It is better to die for righteousness than to live by sin."

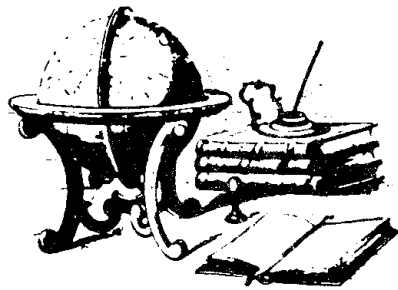
*If you marry for puppy love (mere infatuation) then the chances are that you will lead a dog's life.*

"**RUDENESS** is a weak man's imitation of strength."

*Being a part-time "Christian" will not even take you part of the way to heaven.*

"You can not shake hands with a clinched fist."

*IT WON'T do much good to be strict with our children if we are not strict with ourselves.*



## EDITORIAL

## COMMENTS...

### A PERSONAL LETTER FROM THE EDITOR TO OUR READERS

DEAR READER AND FRIEND,

I would like to tell you some personal things involving this publication perhaps which many of you didn't know. Some may visualize "us" being a publishing company, etc., whereas in reality the "us" is an "I." Getting out this paper is largely a one-man effort with the printing done on a small press in the basement of his (my) house. The name *THE SWORD AND STAFF* simply means the Word of God.

This issue marks the beginning of the twentieth year *THE SWORD AND STAFF* has gone into the mail. Although a young man in my early twenties, I first started printing this paper in 1957. I had just left denominationalism, and the traditionalism and worldliness that plagued the so-called New Testament churches that I then came in contact with greatly alarmed me. Although I had no personal financial resources, nor yet have, my love of the Lord and His simple truth prompted me to launch out on this endeavor. This paper was published for four years, but then from 1961 through 1966 it didn't go into the mail. But by the grace of God I was able to revive it again in 1967 and have continued until now. This issue finds me, the editor, fifty years of age. Time has only made my convictions on the Bible stronger, and I have come to more fully realize what a great and glorious God we have. In view of what I *KNOW* the Bible teaches, and the worsening world and church situation, there are many other things I would like to say before my eyelids close in death. However, there are problems, and they are getting bigger.

We have reluctantly "voiced" our situation to some of you in a "news-letter." We have sent out a few distress signals along. But "we" have reached the point where I must be more personal about this. The future of the paper is at stake. I am unselfishly devoting myself to this work, so I unashamedly tell you these things (in fact, through the years I have been involved with secular employment to be able to continue what I have a burden to do). Although I have my own printing press, expenses really are getting out of hand. Graphic art supplies are expensive (paper, ink, etc.), and the mailing expense has almost doubled since the last issue of this paper. In January the rates jumped from 3.8¢ to 5.9¢ per copy mailed. We mail around 10,000 papers. Not counting foreign ones, and bundles, the cost is close to \$600. Getting out a single issue, just counting basic things, comes to about \$1200! (And, as a matter of interest, each issue represents hundreds of hours of work. Obviously we have a burden of the Lord to do this or we would have stopped long ago).

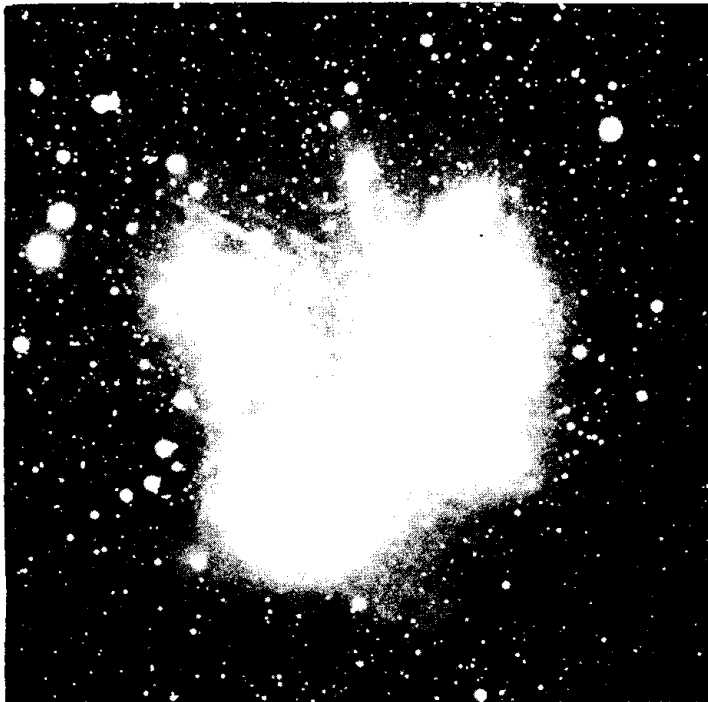
The so-called "subscription" to the paper has merely been a formality to assure that at least something would be coming in to help with the expense. Even if we wanted to, time would not allow us to send renewal notices (being largely a one-man effort). We leave it up to you to send a "renewal" offering when you think you should. Names are not removed from the mailing list unless you request it. We are not out to "make money," but simply to pay our bills as we do what we have a burden to do.

Where do we go from here? How are we to continue? I believe that I am doing what God wants me to do. I am resolved to press on in this work. But we need somehow to cut costs or increase our financial backing...if we are to survive. Here are some suggestions (and please pray for us). (1) IF YOU DON'T READ THIS PAPER, please let us know so we can take your name off the mailing list. (2) Send a "renewal" offering along to back us. A great number of you receive this paper as a result of someone else "subscribing" for you. Why not "renew" your subscription and send some new ones also? (3) We plan to add extra pages to the paper since it will cost no more to mail and since the rates have about doubled. Then when we are able to get it in the mail, you will be getting more reading for the same cost of mailing. (4) We are not "begging" for money (God forbid!), but stating our situation.

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## OUR GREAT AND GLORIOUS GOD

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Paul is talking about the ancient Gentile world. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient (proper, seemly); Being filled with..." And he proceeds to tell us of all kinds of sin and wickedness. The human mind is not a vacuum. If God is left out of our thoughts, ungodliness will come in and flood our minds and lives. It is that simple.

In this article we wish to occupy our minds on thoughts of our great and glorious God. There is great reward in serving God. He made us, and He knows what is best for us. Let us seek to know Him and His will. Let us honor Him for Who He is.

### I. GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF IN ANCIENT TIMES.

Modernists speak of the "idea" of God in the Bible. They say it had its roots in polytheism, mixed with idolatry, but was purified and modified by touching other cultures. We are told the idea of God evolved from a very crude form to a pure monotheism in the time of the prophets toward the end of the Old Testament Scriptures. But this is *not* true. The Bible rather is a progressive revelation of God of Himself in His dealings with mankind.

Genesis 1:1 not only is the first verse in the Bible, it is one of the great verses in the Bible. It reads, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Moses wrote this, looking back to the time of creation from the time he wrote (and we will look at God's personal revelation of Himself to Moses a little later and his experience with God).

The Bible nowhere tries to prove the existence of God—it simply states it. Ancient people never doubted the existence of God—it was self-evident. Those who are unbelievers in the Bible are not pictured as such because of intellectual reasons, but because of sin. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good"

(Psalms 14:1). Hebrews 3:12 speaks of "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

*Elohim* is the Hebrew word for God in Genesis 1:1. This is the general designation of God, stressing His divinity, His grandeur, His power and might as the Creator and sustainer of the universe (equivalent to *theos*, the New Testament word for God). This word for God, *El*, reoccurs time and time again in Bible names like *Isra-el*, *Samu-el*, *El-ijah*, *Beth-el*, etc. Actually the word *Elohim* in this reference (Genesis 1:1) is plural, and "created" is singular in the Hebrew. This is very revealing, as well as being very interesting. In the Hebrew extension, magnitude and dignity are expressed in the plural; also, this hints at and prefigures the future revelation of God in His three personalities. This whole thought is carried over into verse 26 when God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..."

Genesis 2:7 is another great verse in reference to God. It reads, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Here, coupled with *Elohim* (God), we have the word "LORD." Isaiah later in the Old Testament represents God as saying, "I am the LORD, that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Isaiah 42:8). And it was by this name that God identified Himself to Moses (Exodus 6:2, 3).

The exact pronunciation of the Hebrew word translated "LORD" has been lost. It was the unspeakable personal name of God. After the Jews returned from Babylonian Captivity, having learned their lesson well in reference to idolatry, they so respected God that they refused to utter His name lest they take it in vain. When they came to this word for the name of God (which is frequent in the Old Testament), they wouldn't say it. Instead they said another word, *Adonai*. The vowel markings of the original name represented by LORD were dropped, leaving only the consonant stems. Thus, over the years the ancient pronunciation has been lost. By taking the vowel sounds from *Adonai*, the replacement word, and putting them with the consonant stems of the original name of God, scholars and translators have come up with such names as Jehovah, Yahweh, and other variations of these spellings. Cloverdale was the first one to use LORD in English to represent the name of God and that always spelled with capital letters. Therefore, every time you see LORD in the Scriptures that represents the personal name of God which we really don't know how to say.

This is regrettable because it is how God revealed Himself to man in a personal way. This personal name of God would present Him in His personal covenant relationship to man; it would present Him in His benevolence and goodness. How fitting it is used in connection with the creation of man.

Yes, God is a personal God. Adam and Eve talked and were in very close communion with their Creator. Enoch "walked" with God. Noah found "grace" in the sight of the "LORD." Then years later God (the "LORD") called Abraham out of the midst of another apostate and idolatrous generation to personally deal with him, promising him that of his posterity He would make a great nation and that in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). God is called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

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# OUR GREAT AND GLORIOUS GOD

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(Exodus 3:6). Certainly He was personal to these old patriarchs.

God's revelation of Himself to Moses was really some experience for Moses. Moses was in exile in the wilderness, and in a most unusual way God appeared in the burning bush. He identified Himself to Moses as the God of his fathers (Exodus 3:1-6). As he was commissioned to lead the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, he wanted some reassurance from God. He wanted to know how to handle the people when talking to them about God. With this request in mind, God further identified Himself by saying, "I AM THAT I AM. . . Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Exodus 3:14). "I AM THAT I AM"—this is understood to mean the Eternal Self-Existent One. How great and appropriate!

Moses was destined for some great and glorious experiences with God. In the exodus from Egypt while encamped at Mount Sinai, Moses personally received the ten commandments from God engraved on tables of stone (Exodus 19 and 20). In fact, he received all of the laws of the Old Testament. While dealing so personally with God, and talking with Him, Moses wanted to see this Almighty Eternal Being. Of course God is Spirit, and that created a problem, but God hid Moses in the cliff of the rock and he was allowed to see His glory as it passed by. The presence of God was seen in the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night as it led them toward the promised land. The personal presence and glory of God filled the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and rested upon the Mercy Seat between the cherubim of the ark of the covenant. Later when Moses died, God buried him (Deuteronomy 34:5,6,10). He had a relationship with God like no man had ever experienced.

God made many and varied revelations of Himself to His creatures in ancient times. But we are made to limit ourselves to these few considerations because of the intent and scope of this present article. However, it would seem inappropriate to continue without calling your attention to Isaiah 57:15 and Psalms 23 in passing.

Listen to this majestic Scripture: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one" (Isaiah 57:15). "The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy"—what majestic thought! What a beautiful way to put it! Not only does He inhabit eternity, He dwells with the one who has a "contrite and humble spirit" in the realm of time.

The shepherd boy David found the reality of this earlier in the 23rd Psalm. He said, "THE LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. . ." "THE LORD" (the personal, unspeakable name of God) was personally looked upon by David as his shepherd. The "high and lofty One" who inhabits eternity was with the lowly shepherd boy in every circumstance of life. . . good times, bad times. . . even leading him through the valley of the shadow of death. Therefore, he said, "I will fear no evil."

Thus God made revelation of Himself to man, even to his apostate children, from the most ancient of times. Although the human race was a fallen race, and the Saviour had not yet come, many of God's creatures were able to enter into

a meaningful relationship with their Creator. They found that God was great and glorious.

## II. GOD HAS SPOKEN IN HIS SON.



It baffles our imagination to think of such a Supreme Being (Who is Almighty), Who brought everything into being. Our efforts to tell about Him are about like an ant trying to describe a man; no, like a bacteria trying to describe an elephant. No, really there is nothing to which we can make a comparison. Here we are, a little speck down here on this earth. Our earth is a smaller planet going around the sun. Our sun is the center of the immediate universe, yet our sun is said to be a smaller star going around the outward fringe of the Milky Way—and the expanse goes beyond that. And God made all of it! How can we explain God? But He is! He is real. Everything points to this great truth.

Just by simple observation and cold calculation one must conclude the reality of Supreme Intelligence and the existence of Almighty Power; we cannot deny it (Romans 1:20). The evidence of Supreme Intelligence and Power is everywhere. Someone has said: "If the word GOD were written upon every blowing leaf, embossed on every passing cloud, engraved on every granite rock, the inductive evidence that God is in the world would be no stronger than it is. When the human intellect thinks in terms of finality with the world as its premise, the THEREFORE of every syllogism will be God. The universe is a big advertising poster spelling GOD."

Helen Keller was a blind lady who has died in recent years. She not only was blind, but deaf. In spite of this she learned to communicate, read braille, and even to talk. At that point when her dark and silent world was penetrated someone presented her with the thought of God. Her immediate response was that she already knew it. . . she knew it all of the time! Isn't that something?

It is obvious that God is. Yes, everything points to this great truth. But this is not enough. What is He like? What is the nature of God? Can we actually know Him? Simply to be aware that there is such a SUPREME BEING is not enough. This does not satisfy. Does INFINITY have per-

sonality? Does this old universe have a HEART? Beyond this world (which too many times is heartless, cold and indifferent) is there a Supreme Being of TRUTH and COM-PASSION we can look to? What is the nature of God anyway?

We have a clue as to the nature of the Being of God when we consider the nature of the being of man. We are made in the "image of God" after His "likeness" (Genesis 1:26). As we look at our physical likeness in the mirror we are made to ask if it is this. Then we remember that Jesus said, "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24). Something that Jesus said after His resurrection, stressing the fact that He indeed had been raised from the dead, will help us understand this. He said, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39). Therefore, we conclude that the "image of God" does not refer to this physical body, but to the mind and spirit. Our spirit lives in this physical body. (The fact that God is Spirit was the basis of the condemnation of idolatry, Exodus 20).

This gives us a little deeper insight into the nature of the Being of God, but really nothing tangible. It still leaves us with much that we would like to know; yes, in fact, we would like to know God. Our original parents knew God and were in personal communion with their Creator. And all of us are so constituted that we are like fish out of water until we are right with God (it has been said that man is an incurably religious creature). What David wrote long ago expresses our feelings. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalms 42:1,2). "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Psalms 63:1). And, like Moses, we desire to see God.

Yes, God is INVISIBLE SPIRIT (I Timothy 1:17), existing in another dimension from our human experience, but with the appearance of Jesus Christ on the pages of history our desires have been honored. He has filled the gap. He has given us something concrete and tangible to rest

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**WHAT IS THE LEGIMATE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH AS AN ORGANIZATION?**

WHAT IS THE LEGIMATE purpose and function of the church as an organized entity in the world and human society? We are not asking what individual Christians can and may do while living in this world (who happen to be members of the church). But, we are asking, does the church in the organized sense (as an organized unit) have a distinctive and unique function? Has God spoken on this?

Our humble study and investigation of the New Testament has convinced us that the church as an organization has responsibility and authority in the following areas: (1) worship; (2) evangelism; (3) edification; and (4) benevolence.

However, during this writer's sojourn upon this earth (which has not been long) he has seen and heard of many things done in the name of the supposed church. Only recently in the local MOUNT AIRY NEWS a boxed advertisement got our attention: "Dancercise and Exercise Classes" (held at four different times during the week). What made this ad different was that it was a church ad.

In this writing we are not saying "yea" or "nay" about the following, but these are identified as church functions and activities which have come to our attention at one time or another. Are all of them legitimate church functions? We are giving you something to think about.

Some of the supposed church functions and activities we know about:

1. The worship of God (as in singing, praying and the Lord's supper).
2. Preaching and teaching the Word of God publicly and privately.
3. Taking up the offering.
4. Benevolence—helping the needy.
5. Visitation of the sick and shut-in.
6. Bible college training programs.
7. Publishing religious literature.
8. Church camps and rallies.
9. Counseling services.
10. Gospel music concerts.
11. Schools for the education of children academically.
12. Ownership of property and the paying of utility bills.
13. Business meetings involving the function of the church.
14. Having church parties and picnics.
15. Recreational programs and centers (even owning and running gymnasiums).
16. Having church ball teams (with the names of the church on the uniforms).
17. Supposed healing services.
18. Foot-washing services.
19. Dedication services (for people, buildings, objects, etc.).
20. Public begging and solicitation of money.
21. Suppers and banquets.
22. Talent shows.
23. Functioning as a restaurant (selling and getting gain).
24. Selling of anything and everything.
25. Public auctions of farm products.
26. Cattle and horse shows.
27. Fashion shows with live models (even brought in from New York).
28. Puppet shows.
29. Real estate and office rentals.
30. Car washes.
31. Community civic centers.
32. Rock music concerts.
33. Teenage (and adult) dances.
34. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.
35. Kindergarten and day care programs.
36. Soil conversation programs.
37. Promotion of patriotism.
38. Platform for expressing political views and supporting political candidates.
39. Supporting political revolutionaries (even engaged in carnal warfare).
40. Lobbying the government on matters of special interest.
41. Weddings.
42. Funerals. Etc.

NOW, what do you think?—J. Gibbons □

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## OUR GREAT AND GLORIOUS GOD

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our minds upon when we think of God. Hebrews 1:1-3 reads, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Amazing truth! Isaiah 7:14 had prophesied in anticipation of the birth of Jesus, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." And what does "Immanuel" mean? God with us! Then listen to Isaiah 9:6, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." With the approach of this incredible event, the angel told Mary, "The Holy Ghost (Spirit) shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). The apostle John gives us an even more breathtaking view of what God has done. Listen: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth... No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:1,14,18). What profound truths!

When we see the Lord Jesus Christ, we see God. Paul spoke of Jesus as "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature" (Colossians 1:15). "For it pleased the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell" (1:19). "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (2:9). In other words, the fulness of deity was embodied in Jesus. The essence of God is seen in him. Jesus had the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). And in him we see all the perfect character and attributes of the eternal God. One time Jesus was talking to his disciples about God the Father, and Philip asked him to show them the Father. The Lord replied, "Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father..." (John 14:9). Peter made the great confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16). However, Thomas was the first one to call him God. He had missed out on seeing Jesus the day of his resurrection, and he expressed doubt. He must see the nail prints, actually put his fingers into the prints, and thrust his hand into the side of Jesus before he would believe. But a week later when Jesus came into their midst and personally invited Thomas to do this, he didn't esteem it necessary. With unrestrained emotion he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:24-28).

Jesus is the Jehovah (the "LORD") of the Old Testament. He said to the Jews of His day, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and has thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:56-59). They got the message. Hardened and un-

believing, they took up stones to cast at Him. They well knew the expression "I AM" had reference to the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob (Exodus 3:14). Jesus claimed to be God. And, as deity, Jesus forgave sins and accepted worship, which no man is allowed to do.

On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 the apostle Peter quotes a Psalm which the Jews regarded as Messianic. He said, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool." His conclusion and application follow, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:34-36; Psalms 110:1). Jesus baffled and silenced the Pharisees with this Scripture (Psalms 110:1) in Matthew 22:41-46. They had tried to trip Jesus with their "loaded" questions so Jesus had one of his own for them. "What think ye of David? Whose son is he?" They replied that he would be the son of David. Jesus quotes Psalms 110:1 then said, "If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" They couldn't get hold of that. Why would David call him Lord? They shut up. But Jesus was God and man

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## "SOUL SALVAGE"

We pine for those good ol' days  
for a world less schooled in sin  
for quieter times and simpler ways  
for things now, as then.

O, for young folk a bit less brazen  
and in worldly ways less bold  
Before they can live their childhood  
They've hardened and grown too old.

Yes, things are getting out of hand,  
though some would say, all's well,  
Choosing not to believe God's Word,  
nor His name and story tell.

Some would say that ignorance  
is the worst sin of all;  
Naivety is not such a shameful thing,  
if innocence and truth stand tall.

For education in the ways of the world  
is not always a wholesome thing—  
O, that we all knew a little less  
of the heartache such can bring.

...Now, we cannot close out the world,  
nor deny their souls' deep need.  
For if we neglect to offer His hope,  
from sin's bondage they'll ne'er be freed.

Pray, may we share His love with them,  
though they'd deny His power.  
Salvaging as many as we can  
before that eternal final hour.

—By **BOB WICKLINE**

5204 U.S. 50

HILLSBORO, OHIO 45133

# THE ESSENCE OF



## THE REAL THING

● **“RELIGION PURE AND UNDEFILED before God, even the Father, is this: (1) to visit orphans and widows in their affliction; (2) unspotted to keep oneself from the world”—JAMES 1:27.**

THIS INDEED is a marvelous verse. In one majestic effort James “nails down” the essence of real religion. It doesn’t have to do with empty forms, rituals and ceremonies. It has to do with everyday life. His definition is illustrated by the concrete, and there is no question mark about what he means. Earlier in this chapter he had said, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (1:22). (May we listen).

Actually the word translated “religion” means, “The worship of God, religion; esp. as it expresses itself in religious service...” (ARNDT AND GINGRICH). Too many times we confine our concept of worship to the church building, but worship fully expressed is a way of life. Remember Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). The prophet Micah, prodding the prodigal Jews, asked whether God was really pleased with their ceremonial worship or not; then he emphasized the same thing that James has done. “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doeth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:8). Pure religion, the unadulterated worship of God, must express itself in compassionate and conscientious everyday living or it is not the real thing.

### I. TO VISIT THE ORPHANS and WIDOWS IN THEIR AFFLICTION

The word “visit” is an interesting word in the original language here. It carries the idea of to look upon, to look over with the view to helping, to look out for, to care for.

The word translated “bishop” (overseer) in the King James is very closely related to this word “visit.” The elders are overseers in reference to all the needs of the congregation (Acts 20:28; Acts 11:27-30), but they are not the only ones to be concerned. Pure religion prompts every Christian to to want to go see, “visit,” and to help.

James tells us that faith without works is dead and especially as it relates to helping the needy (James 2:15-17). And it is John who tells us that love without works is dead (or rather, there just isn’t any love there). “But whoso hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him (is not compassionate), how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:17,18).

In that great day of Judgment it will be the Lord Jesus Christ who says to those on his right, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I am an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:34-46). And why did he say to them on his left hand, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”? They had not done these simple, yet great, acts of benevolence.

Too many professing Christians, who have been richly blessed in this life, are selfish. They are all wrapped up in themselves. They have no tender feelings and could care less about the needs and hardships of others. It was in the context of such counterfeit religion that communism spawned. Perhaps the Marxists have grounds for their original grudge against religion. They failed to see the real thing. Apostate religion with an empty spirituality and insensitive to the social ills of society has expedited the rapid spread of atheistic communism. We are not advocating that the church as such become involved in politically tainted issues, but individual Christians must be compassionate and let their light shine wherever they are. Well-to-do Christians in positions of responsibility *will* pay good and honest wages, will not oppress anyone, but contrariwise try to improve the lot of those whom their lives touch (James 5:1-6).

Do you personally know what it is to be involved with the needy, the suffering, the unfortunate? Do you know what it is to work with delinquents, the drug abusers, to visit the prisons? Have you ever opened the doors of your home to anyone? Most people are afraid to get their hands dirty. Like in the story of the good Samaritan, they had rather pass by on the other side (Luke 10:29-37). The world in desperation is crying out for love, for help. There are so many shipwrecked lives today. Be a real Christian, practice your religion, and you will let God accomplish His wonderful purpose through your life.

(Continued on Page 10)



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JOHN 3:16

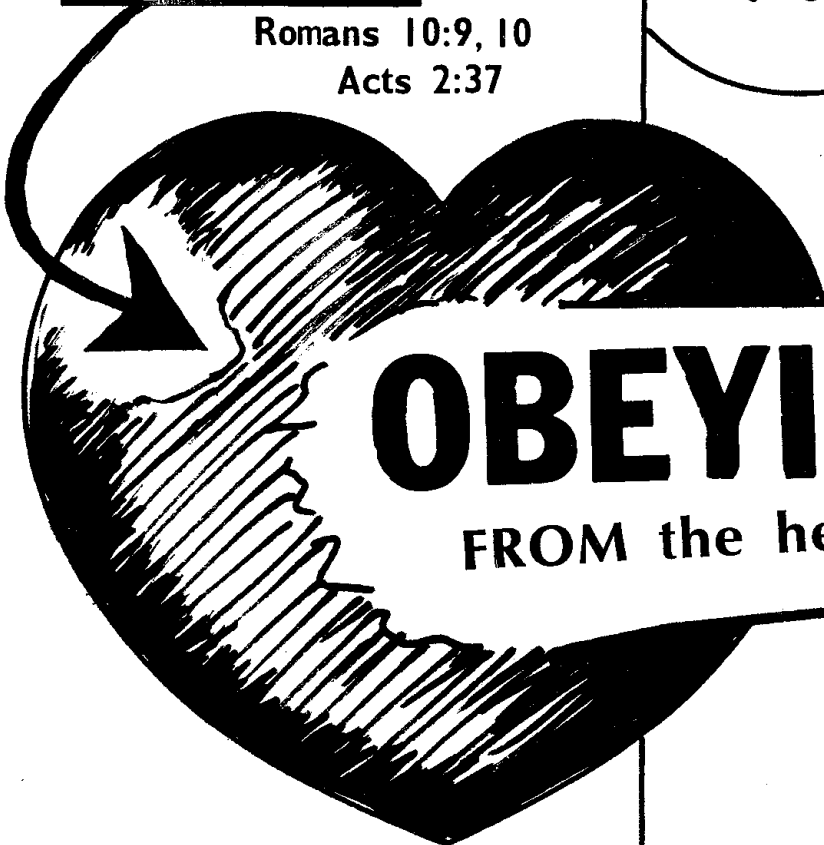
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IN the heart

Romans 10:9, 10  
Acts 2:37

**Death**  
(OF CHRIST)

**Bur**



**OBEYING THE G**  
FROM the heart (ROMANS 6:17)

ROMANS 6:6

ROI  
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ACTS 8:37

**Repentance**  
(DEATH)

**Ba**

BY JAMES E GIBBONS  
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POST OFFICE BOX 147  
MT AIRY NC 27030

ROMANS 10:16; II TI  
(Acts 6:7;

EPHESIANS 2:8

**OBEYING**



**GOSPEL...**

(Romans 1:16)

**ACTS 2:38**

**ROMANS 15:1-4 --**

**DEATH**  
(OF CHRIST)

**Resurrection**  
(OF CHRIST)

MARK 16:15, 16  
JOHN 3:3-5  
ACTS 2:38-40  
ACTS 8:35-38

**GOSPEL**

**1 Peter 1:22, 23**

**DEATH**  
(BURIAL)

ROMANS 6:4, 5  
COLOSSIANS 3:1-14

ACTS 22:16  
ROMANS 6:1-8  
1 CORINTHIANS 6:11  
1 CORINTHIANS 12:13  
GALATIANS 3:26-28  
EPHESIANS 5:25-27  
TITUS 3:5  
HEBREWS 10:22  
1 PETER 3:21

**DEATH**  
(BURIAL)

**New Life**  
(RESURRECTION)

**ROMANS 1:8; 1 PETER 4:17**  
(Romans 1:5; 16:26)

**HEBREWS 5:9**

**THE GOSPEL**

# THE ESSENCE OF THE REAL THING

(Continued from Page 7)

## II. TO KEEP ONESELF UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD

The emphasis on the second facet of pure religion (the unadulterated worship of God) takes its place in the opposite category of the first. The first involved reaching out to others in compassion. The second has to do with keeping "oneself" unspotted from the world.

And as the first involved the eyes in the word "to visit" (to look upon with the view to helping), so the second involves the eyes in the word "keep" (to "keep" oneself unspotted from the world). The word "keep" (in the original) has reference to looking, to being watchful, to guard (as a prisoner). We are living in a polluted world. It is too much with us, and we are to be continually on guard that we do not become blemished or stained by it.

In line with this overall thought, Paul admonishes in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." The word "service" here means service as an act of worship (like we say "worship service"). We do not offer the animal sacrifice as worship today. Christ has taken the place of that, and now we are to present (deliberately, intentionally) our own bodies as a living sacrifice. They must be holy to be acceptable unto God as an act of worship. Before an animal could be presented for sacrifice it had to be without spot or blemish physically. Christ was a "lamb without blemish and without spot" spiritually (I Peter 1:19, same word as "unspotted" in James 1:27).

In other words, like James, Paul is telling us that Christian worship is a way of life, the life of man lived in its right relationship to God. It is not confined to mere verbal acts of homage to God. The worship of God in a church building has little meaning unless it is carried out everyday in our lives by conscientious and godly living. It must be this way or it is not the real thing.

We are told, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (I John 2:15,16). James likewise said, "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). In reference to the world, Paul gives this charge to the Christians: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (II Corinthians 6:17). And, furthermore, he said, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

How we need to take these things to heart! The unregenerate people of this world, to greater and lesser degrees, are controlled by the "god of this world" (the devil). As such we know their values, their concepts, are different from those that govern Christians. As evil men wax worse and worse, and the standards of society sink lower and lower, it takes real courage, vigilance, and a decided effort to "keep" oneself unspotted from the world. Materialism, sensuality, and the pursuit of pleasure dominate those about us. Whether at work, in school, or at home, we must

keep our guard up in reference to our associates. Pollution that spews out of your television set and spills over into your living room and into the lives of you and your children is best gotten rid of by getting rid of your television. If we drink from the polluted waters of this life, it is impossible to remain uncontaminated. We will imbibe loose attitudes, resulting in loose living in reference to sex, dress, habits, honesty, etc. Beware! Let us have more than a "form of godliness...denying the power thereof" (II Timothy 3:1-5).

Remember the Lord said, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). The thought of this verse is echoed in Hebrews 12:14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." And then the concluding book of the Bible states, "And there shall in no wise enter into it (the heavenly city) any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27).

YES, James 1:27 is one of the great verses of the Bible. Let us translate the beauty and truth of it from the printed page into our lives. It is essential that we do this if our religion is to be the real thing. —By James E. Gibbons □

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## OUR GREAT AND GLORIOUS GOD

(Continued from Page 6)

at the same time. The Jehovah of the Old Testament took the form of man and walked upon this earth...and to become our Saviour!

We are truly thankful that God has spoken to us in His Son. And with Paul we say, "...Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (I Timothy 3:16). Praise be to God!

## III. THE PRESENT REALITY OF GOD.

God is Alive and Real

God is still alive today. He is real. He is not just SOMEONE we have read about from the pages of a very ancient book. He is not just the GREAT SOMEONE off in the great somewhere. Psalms 90:2 reads, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." The heavens still "declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Psalms 19:1). Men are still made in the image of God; God still animates our bodies with life...in HIM we live, and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Evidence of His reality and goodness are manifest daily to all. As Jesus said, "...He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). Paul and Barnabas amplified this truth by saying God "in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:16,17). This is still true today. God is alive.

Jesus is still LORD. Hebrews 13:8 declares, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and for ever." He still is "upholding all things by the word of his power" (1:3). Men still need a Saviour. We still find men lost, and

the Great Commission was to be carried out “unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20). The fact that Jesus has not returned from heaven compliments this truth. II Peter 3:9 reads, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Yes, God is still in the business of saving souls and changing lives. Jesus still lives, thus Hebrews 7:25 declares, “Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” And men still find that the Lord is gracious and precious (I Peter 2:3). Amen.

**The Indwelling of God**

God is real to the real Christian. When we become Christians, we are born again; we become children of God. Jesus told Nicodemus that a man had to be “born of water and of the Spirit” (John 3:5). According to Acts 2:38, when we repent and are baptized (immersed) for the remission of sins, this takes place. Then we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit into our lives. Acts 5:32 also tells us that the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God. This happens when we obey God initially as we become Christians, and we increasingly receive him into our lives as we continue to obey God thereafter. The reality of this great truth is expanded in a wonderful way in Galatians 4:6, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” The word “Abba” actually means the same thing as “Father,” but it is Aramaic and the other represents the Greek word for father. Aramaic was the everyday language spoken by the Jews in Palestine. Therefore, “Abba” is more of a personal word for father. It is very much like our word “Daddy.” In it we can hear the babbling of a baby or a small child. We are indeed children of God now. We have experienced the new birth, and because we are children of God (the Holy Spirit is within us) we cry out as babes in Christ, “Abba, Father.” God is very personal and real to us. And as we grow and stay surrendered to God, the Holy Spirit produces all the beautiful Christ-like traits of character in our lives (Galatians 5: 22, 23).

The New Testament continually talks about the Holy Spirit dwelling in Christians. He dwells in us. The word translated “dwell” means to dwell as in a house. Sometimes the word has a prefix which signifies *down* and at other times *in*. Paul wanted the Ephesians “to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man,” then he continued, “That Christ may DWELL in your hearts by faith...” (Ephesians 3:16,17). The word “dwell” here means to settle down in a house. The Holy Spirit dwells in us according to our faith. Again listen to Paul: “That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost (Spirit) which DWELLETH in us” (II Timothy 2:14). This means to be in a house. “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God DWELL in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9). Here it means to use or have a house. The Holy Spirit has taken His abode in a Christian as a house. So this makes the words of Jesus even more significant when he said, “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).

And what a great truth this is! The God of heaven has so honored us that he has taken His abode in us. We make

a mistake when we try to explain, to dissect, every aspect of this great subject. We are dealing with the Supreme Being of Eternity, and how can we expect to know everything about so great a thing? (Who can even explain how his own spirit dwells in him, let alone the Holy Spirit?) The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not a matter of human feeling or emotion, but a matter of faith. We do not necessarily feel the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but because we have the Holy Spirit we feel (are alive spiritually). In one sense we do not feel physical life in our bodies, but because we have life in our bodies we feel (we are alive; we are able to feel). In a sense this is true with the Holy Spirit.

**Romans 8:26-39**

Romans 8:26-39 is a great section of Scripture. It fits in with our over-all theme, and the immediate consideration of the present reality of God, in a wonderful way. If you have a tendency to worry and let the cares of this world dominate your life, you need to examine this Scripture a little more carefully. When you study this great Scripture and began to fathom its depths, you will find that most of your worries and anxieties will simply vanish away. You will conclude that there is no way (and we repeat, no way) that a Christian can lose.

Verse 26: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (also read the next verse). What a tremendous truth! There are so many times we feel inadequate when we pray. We just don’t know what we should pray for or how we should say it. Rest assured God knows. The Holy Spirit takes our feelings, our needs, and carries the right message through Christ to the Throne of Grace. Isn’t it wonderful that He would do a thing like that.

Verse 28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Underline this Scripture in your Bible, underline it in your mind, and engraft it in your soul. He didn’t say that everything would work together for our pampered pleasure, but for our good. The providence of God is involved here. Such is a reality in the lives of real Christians. Believe it, do your part, and trust God for the rest.

God is a personal God, and He is personally involved in the lives of all true Christians. We are taught to say that we will do such and such a thing “if the Lord will” (James 4:13-15). Paul, over and over again, speaks of doing something “if the Lord will” (I Corinthians 4:19). God has a purpose and plan for our lives, and we need to pray that we will fit into it. Prayer is to be made according to the Lord’s will (I John 5:14). Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane: “Not my will, but thine, be done.” And having prayed this, he was ready to face anything. Good, and that which may not seem so good to us, can be used of God for our good and His glory. James says to “count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations (various trials); knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:2,3). Peter speaks of the trying of our faith as gold tried by fire (I Peter 1:7). It takes a lot of ore to be melted, and processed, to make a few ounces of gold. Most of us are like the ore—we have a lot of rough edges which needs to be knocked off. Our natures need to be refined. Corn in the garden, or the field, will put down

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## OUR GREAT AND GLORIOUS GOD

(Continued from Last Page)

roots in a dry season and the wind will have a hard time blowing it down. But if the season is too good, having a lot of rain, the roots are on the surface of the soil. The least little wind will blow it over. So it is with us. If everything went "our" way all of the time we would be spoiled brats. Remember, God is behind the scenes. Our disappointment may be His appointment. And the worst thing that ever happened to us may be the best thing that ever happened to us if we don't let it get the best of us. Character is being developed (if we keep the right attitude). God may be (and is) preparing us for bigger and better things.

Verses 29 and 30: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Now what about that? This is really some Scripture. Here we have the doctrine of predestination. Predestination and the free will of man are both taught in the Bible. Notice we didn't say Calvinistic predestination, but simply predestination.

To understand the Biblical doctrine of predestination we need to be aware of the sequence of things here. God first foreknew, then he predestinated. Later he called, He justified, and He glorified. Calvinism has it the other way around. They would have us believe that God first decreed and predestinated, irrespective of the free will of man. In other words, when God decided from eternity to make man, he also decided then and there who would go to heaven and who would go to hell. Destinies were individually and irrevocably set. But according to our Scripture in Romans, God first foreknew, and then He did the predestinating.

The question is, what did God foreknow? Of course, God foreknew everything. Acts 15:18 reads, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." God is Supreme Intelligence. Being Omniscient, there is nothing that He does not know. He can look down through eternity and see everything that will ever happen, and know everything that is, or that will be. To say the least, that is mind-boggling to us. We can't understand it, but we can believe it, and accept it. As human beings we have a hard time remembering what has happened in the past, let alone seeing into the future. It has been established that the devil has certain powers along this line, and through the influence of demons men have been able to foretell certain things that will happen. But God is ALL-KNOWING: He knows the end from the beginning. He knows every detail. There is no way we can begin to comprehend this (so we need not try)—just believe it, and accept it.

The foreknowledge of knowing who the saved were from eternity would of necessity have to be preceded by other foreknowledge. God would have to foreknow that man would sin. Having foreknown this, He would have to foreknow and formulate His plan for Jesus to be the Saviour from sin. Then He would be in a position to foreknow who the saved would be, and consequently to predestinate. Biblical predestination is to be understood in the light of foreknowledge with the foreknowledge always preceding it.

God's plan from eternity called for Jesus to be the Saviour of sinful humanity. Peter later writing in the realm of

time said that Christians had been redeemed by "the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (I Peter 1:19,20). John the Baptist had introduced Christ by saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The extent of God's purpose and plan is seen in John 3:16, "For God so loved THE WORLD, that he gave his only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I Timothy 2:4 declares the mind and will of God on this matter: "Who (God) WILL have ALL MEN to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." This continued thought is brought out in II Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise (of his second coming and the end of the world), as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us-ward, NOT WILLING that any should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance." The "WHOSOEVER WILL" aspect of it is again emphasized in Revelation 22:17. So, God's WILL is that WHOSOEVER WILL can and may be saved through Jesus Christ. God has made man a responsible, free moral agent. God's grace must be accepted.

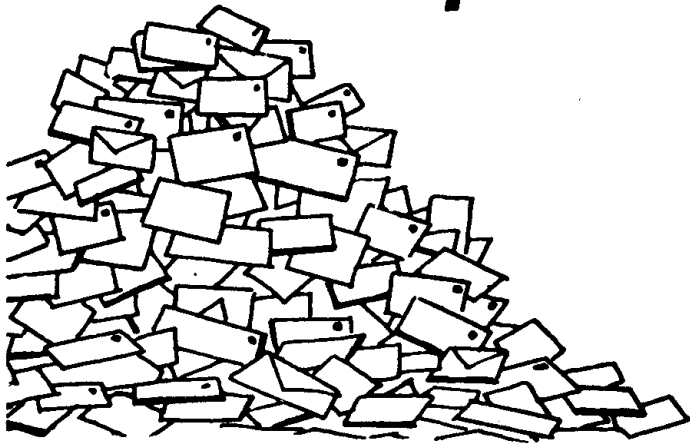
Keep all of this in mind as we get back to our former question: WHAT DID GOD FOREKNOW? To be more specific, what He foreknew in Romans 8:9 involved "whom he foreknew." Those predestinated by God were first known by God. In other words, God looked down through eternity and saw them. What did He see? He saw (foreknew) who would have good and honest hearts and of their own free will accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Then, in essence, He said, "THEY ARE THE ONES: THEY ARE MY ELECT." Not because He decreed it before He looked in eternity, but afterward. What He saw determined the decree. Omniscience does not mean imposing over-riding DIVINE WILL on them, and thus taking away man's own volition, but simply knowing them in advance and recognizing them as His own. From God's viewpoint they were chosen "in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3-5). In Christ "WHOSOEVER WILL" may be saved, and God foreknew who they were. And, as Paul said, they were later "called." How were they called? By some mysterious working, letting them know they were already saved from eternity? Not at all. They were not already saved, and no such teaching is found in the Scriptures. Paul told the Thesalonians, "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thesalonians 2:14; Romans 1:16). The gospel was commissioned to be preached to "all nations," "all the world," so that whosoever would come could be saved. Man's freedom of choice must be exercised. Then he continues to exercise it after he becomes a Christian: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE: for if you do these things you will never fall" (II Peter 1:10).

Therefore, beloved, if God knows all these things about us from eternity that puts our human situation (especially as Christians) in an entirely different light, doesn't it? And what a different perspective it is! We are not just down here "batting the breeze." God knows all. Rest assured He does. He knows if we really love Him and want to do His will. Everything has purpose and plan behind it. Jesus said that even the hairs of your head are all numbered (Matthew 10:30). A sparrow doesn't fall to the ground without God knowing

(Continued on Page 14)

# READERS'

## ... Response



### VIRGINIA:

■ "I have thoroughly enjoyed the paper for about 15 years. I am glad someone subscribed for me, for it really helps my spiritual life. Thank you for the continuance of this good work."

### WEST VIRGINIA:

■ "...Recently I have been successful (by God's grace) to get the local body to recognize the error in observing Christmas as a religious ceremony in the church..."

"To help shed more light on this topic, tonight (Wednesday) I will be teaching on the subject of Christmas (its origin, etc.) in contrast of what is spoken in the Word of God concerning our authority (lack of) to do so. During my studies today I have, of course, been 'zero-ing' in on Galatians 4, Colossians 2, and Romans 14. Romans 14 and Galatians 2 have always given me problems in trying to reconcile an apparent inconsistency...especially Galatians 4:10-11 and Romans 14:5-6. While studying I remembered you wrote an article ("Two Important and Related Bible Studies," Vol. 19, No. 4). Having not read it (my reading time is horribly limited) I pulled it out, read it, and plan to read the first part of it to the assembly this evening. It's a wonderful article, Jim, and I thank God for you being led to write it. It has really helped me. Since we who publish materials very seldom hear good things about our efforts I just thought you would want to know that that particular issue is worth every penny spent to get it out. If it helped me I know it will help (and has helped) others..."

"May God continue to bless you as you live and labor for His cause."

### TENNESSEE:

■ "I have received THE SWORD AND STAFF for several years and am grateful. I don't know who gave you my name, but I would like to thank them in person if I could. Please continue to send my copy each time it is published. Also send copies to the following names..."

### MICHIGAN:

■ "Sorry to hear about the rising costs...I'm certainly glad you have that never-give-up attitude because your far-reaching messages are badly needed in this world today. Enclos-

ed is a small check to help with some of the expenses... Keep up the wonderful messages if at all possible. Our prayers are with you."

### NEW YORK:

■ "It was a pleasure meeting you at the rally in Massachusetts. I appreciated the sermons you preached. THE SWORD AND STAFF is also a blessing to us. Keep up the good work."

### INDIANA:

■ "Your publication has been a blessing to me and has helped to give me basic Scriptural guidance in these times when many winds of doctrine are floating around..."

### ILLINOIS:

■ "Here is a little offering to help with your paper. I sure do enjoy reading it from cover to cover. Keep up the good work. I praise God for men like you."

### MISSOURI:

■ "I admire the courage and conviction you have in printing the nice article 'The Priesthood of Believers and Mutual Ministry.' Everything you wrote were things that have needed to be said for a long time. I am continually appalled that Protestant ministers would even want to use the title 'Reverend' before their names. It's a shame that 'so called' men of God, who supposedly study the Scriptures, expect their fellowman to stand back in awe and veneration, when even the most unlearned men realize that God is no respecter of persons."

### NEBRASKA:

■ "Just a note to tell you how much both my wife and I enjoy your writing along with the 'down to the WORD' reasoning you put forth to your readers. It is a pleasure to read and then be able to understand the points that you want to put across to us. Of course this comes through knowing what you are writing about, and that being God's message through His Word."

"Keep up the truth in all your work; don't give an inch from your firm belief, for that is why we see so many 'riding the fence' churches today—they pretend to want to do right, but bend with the slightest breeze."

"When your other correspondents mention that they read every word, it must be the contention of all 'Spirited' Christians to want to explore and utilize the messages that your paper contains. It is needless to say that we, too, enjoy it all very much. We notice that you also have a few critics..."

"Thanks again for faithfully sending the paper to us, it means so much to both of us."

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### CALIFORNIA:

■ "THE SWORD AND STAFF is greatly appreciated by men who understand the message intended. Don't be too discouraged by those who don't take the Bible as their guide and espouse some religious views that God has never set forth for anyone to live by. They wouldn't appreciate THE SWORD AND STAFF any more than a hog would appreciate pearls if they were set before him."

"May the Lord bless the work you are doing and make your life long that the work may so continue. It fills a great need." □

## OUR GREAT AND GLORIOUS GOD

(Continued from Page 12)

about it. God is Almighty. God is ALL-WONDERFUL.

**Verse 31:** "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" If the ALMIGHTY GOD of eternity is for us, who can be against us? God and one righteous person make a majority. The rest of the world may be on the other side, but God and one person make a majority. With Him for us, really who *can* be against us? Who can ultimately prevail against us? The answer: NO ONE!

**Verse 33:** "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Don't worry about what people may say about you if you are a real Christian. It matters very little. God will have the last say. He is the judge of the universe. Let us be concerned about what He thinks about us.

**Verses 35-39.** "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Amen and amen!

As we said, there is no way that a Christian can lose. We have already been told that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (verse 28). Now Paul tells us that through Christ we are "more than conquerors." II Corinthians 1:20 assuredly reads, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Listen again, this time to I Corinthians 3:21-23, "Therefore let no man glory in man. For all things are your's; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all things are your's; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." The Corinthians were glorying in men (the preachers). Paul says this is ridiculous. The preachers were merely their "ministers" (KJV)—or more expressly, servants or slaves. People just don't glory in slaves. Paul enlarges the thought to show that everything is servant to the Christian. Even death itself. We should never consider ourselves to be the victim of circumstances, but surrender ourselves to God, and use the situation for the glory of God. Even death itself is servant to the Christian. It will serve to remove us from this vail of wrath and tears and usher us into the very presence of the ALMIGHTY GOD OF HEAVEN. So even in losing we win. There is no way that we can lose. Whether we live or whether we die, we are the winner.

Beloved, with an attitude like this we can face anything. We know that regardless how "bad" things get, they are going to get better. God works all things together for our good. He is the author of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). We should never grumble. We should be the most optimistic people in the world. Praise HIS NAME!

### God Can Be Trusted

God can be trusted. His character is the law of the universe. Paul speaks of our "hope of eternal life, which God,

that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2). Then in Hebrews 6:18 and 19, we read, "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast..." We have hope as a Christian, and the basis of our hope is that God does not lie. God says what He means, and He means what He says. Truth is not determined by popular vote, nor by what we think about it, or anyone else thinks about it—but by what God says about it. It is not determined by how many are following it, or whether anyone is following it. Truth is still the truth because it is God's character and is the law of the universe. What is right is always right. Right is right if nobody is right, and wrong is wrong if everybody is wrong.

We need men today who will trust God and take Him at His Word...*regardless*. Even if it means you will be standing alone, and many times you will be. We need to have the same spirit the prophets had of old. Sometimes they had to stand against the tide of corrupt humanity, and it seemed like they alone were standing there. One brother prophet over there thought he was standing alone, but God let him know that He had 7,000 men who had not bowed the knee to Baal yet (Romans 11:3-5; I Kings 19). And, no doubt, there are more people today who love God and want to do right than we realize. But, regardless, we must take our stand for God.

Oh, God means what He says, and says what He means! We can believe it. We can trust it. We can go to the Day of Judgment trusting it. He has said it in His Word. We need not worry. If we believe His Word, and obey it, we know that we are right with Him.

Men may not believe in God, nor trust His Word, but His Word is still the truth. We find these words in II Timothy 2:13, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." God cannot lie. We may not believe what He says, but it is still the truth. He cannot deny Himself. His character is the law of the universe. And, even as Paul said in Romans 3:4, "Let God be true, but every man a liar..."

We can take God at His Word. Let us never become discouraged, or give up, or say that we need something different. Let us never think that we need to give in a little here or give in a little there. Never think in terms of modifying God's message to fit unregenerate man. When we come to the Day of Judgment, what's in the Bible will still be in the Bible. God does not lie. We can take Him at His Word.

Let us never give up, but press on. The book of Hebrews was written to people converted from the Jewish religion to Christianity. Some of them were getting discouraged and ready to give up. The writer shows how that everything in Christianity is superior to the Old Testament; what a great religion we have. They were encouraged to press on. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that everyone of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:10-12). "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:35, 36).

We say to you who have taken your stand on God's Word, never give up. Don't become discouraged, or despair, and change your message. God is "not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love" for His Name's sake. What was true twenty years ago is still true today. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." And because of this truth he says in the next verse, "Be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines." God does not change, nor does He lie. Continue to take Him at His Word. When the Day of Judgment comes, you will be eternally glad that you did.

We have a GREAT AND GLORIOUS GOD. Let us love Him and serve Him with all of our hearts. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**ULTIMATE VICTORY**

(Improvised by C.W. Diehl)

"And upon this rock (Peter's confession) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18.

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I live forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Revelation 1:18.

*Right may hang upon the scaffold;  
Wrong may sit upon the throne;  
But the Cross controls the Future,  
And behind the dim Unknown  
Sitteth God among the shadows  
Keeping watch above His own!*

*Right may now seem dead and buried;  
Wrong may conquer and be free;  
But the grave-gates still are open,  
And, like Christ, His own shall be  
Raised again, and crowned immortal;  
Right shall have the victory!*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**BY WICKED HANDS**

"HIM BEING delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and BY WICKED HANDS have crucified and slain" (ACTS 2:23).

LIKE THEY got their wicked hands on Christ's physical body and crucified him, men have gotten their wicked hands on Christ's spiritual body, the church, and have literally torn it asunder with their man-made doctrines and divisions. And like it was prophesied that Christ would be taken by wicked hands and put to death, so also was it prophesied that men would get their wicked hands on the church and draw away disciples (Acts 20:28-30; I Timothy 4:1-3; etc.); trying to destroy the unity that Christ prayed for (John 17) thereby causing men to be carnal rather than spiritual (I Cor. 3:3,4). And yet they claim to be following Jesus, obeying His Word, and serving Him. Surely this is more bitter than vinegar to drink (John 19:28-30) while they are well on their way to crucifying him afresh and putting him to an open shame. And as they "cast lots" for his ordinances and claim them for their man-made churches, they set up their own times of observance and their own ways of observing them.

Surely the scourging he suffered could hurt him no more than the deceitful lies and false doctrines these people use to lure sincere seekers from the New Testament pattern and concept of the church.

Where unity would cause some to believe, their disunity will cause many to disbelieve (John 17:21).

The Scriptures are clear on the way of salvation and the New Testament church. But religious people as it were, are crying, "Away with it! Crucify it! We'll do it our way! We'll set up the church to our liking" little realizing that they are also rejecting Christ and are in a sense saying, "Away with him! We'll not have this man to rule over us!"

But one day Jesus can say, "It is finished." He will come to receive his true church, a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, those who have stayed faithful to him and his Word. Then wicked men will no longer be able to get their hands on the church of the living God, because where he is, there shall the church be also. There with majesty supreme and eager anticipation of a joyous eternity. No sin can ever enter in; no wickedness and no filthiness in that city built by God...no more drawing away disciples, speaking perverse things. Then, like it was said of Jesus, "He is risen..." (Mark 16:6), it can be said of the church, "She is risen!" "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:16,17).

—By LOWELL GREEN; Rt. 3, Box 118; Rockwood, Tn.37854

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**EDITORIAL COMMENTS...**

(Continued from Page 2)

There may be some of you who really love the Lord and His truth and at the same time have been richly blessed from the material viewpoint. God might put it upon your heart to help us on a regular basis or with a large endowment. One thing is for sure, you can't take it with you in death, but you can use it for eternal good right now. We don't want money in excess to be left after we are gone, but it would be wonderful if we could get God's message out in a great and emphatic way the remaining years of our life. There are many things that need to be said, and I have a burden to "say" them. Being fifty years of age, humanly speaking, the time is running out. They need to be said NOW.

I hope that I have not been too personal about the situation, but that is the way it is. Please pray for the future of our humble efforts, especially in these difficult times. Thanks to all those who are helping. It means so much to the cause.

JAMES E. GIBBONS

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**THE GRACE OF FORGETFULNESS**

CLARA BARTON, founder of the American Red Cross, suffered criticism, but bore it bravely. One day a friend reminded her of a particular mean thing that had been done to her.

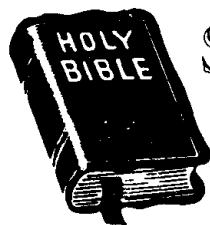
"Surely you remember that, Clara," she cried.

"No, I distinctly remember forgetting that," was her reply.

—The Christian Newsletter

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★





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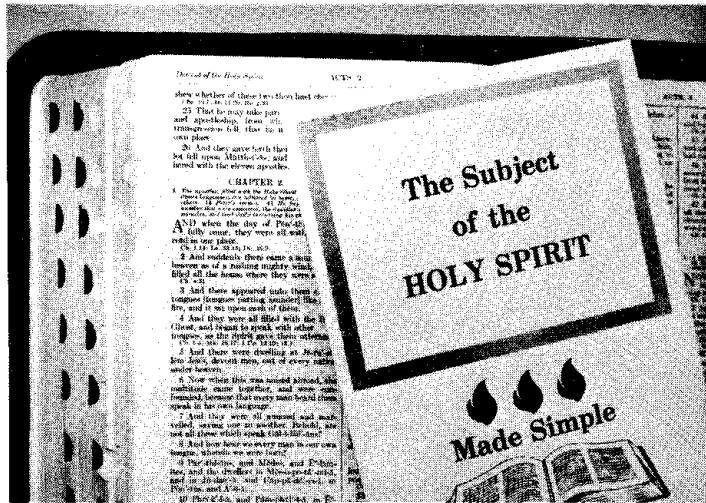
THE MESSAGE on the center-fold of this issue is self-evident. It is at the same time simple and true. Such a presentation of it makes it even more forceful. It is a shame that the denominational world cannot see it, as they teach "faith only" (excluding the necessity of baptism). We are making this chart available on a handy 11-inch sheet at 5¢ a copy. Order a supply and put to immediate use.

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