

The AND Staff

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

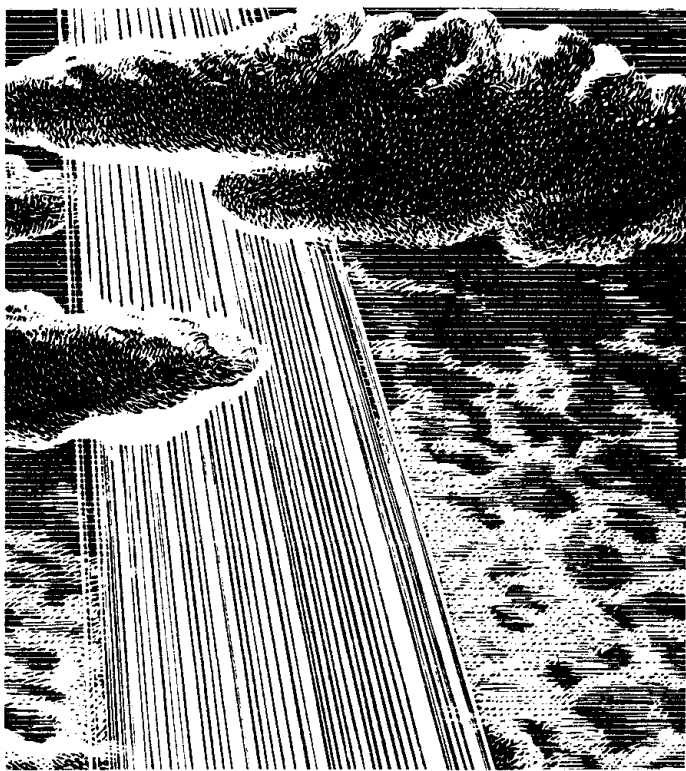
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"Feed the Flock." (I Peter 5:2)

THE PURPOSE OF GOD

(This is the longest article that has ever appeared in this publication. Read it slowly and prayerfully as you have time, and let the Scriptural truths "sink in." They are simple, but profound. The implications are staggering.)

—By **JAMES E. GIBBONS**; 1535 Fairfield Drive; Mt. Airy, N.C. 27030—



SOMETIME AGO an article, which appeared in the newspaper, caught this writer's attention. Man was being praised for his great strides and technological advancements in these modern times. Then the question was seriously asked: Now if we could just find out what man is for? What are human beings for? What is the purpose of it all? Certainly these questions reflect the bankruptcy of the modern mind! So many today seem to have little or no purpose in living (or at least, a superficial one).

A Christian knows that everything has definite pur-

pose. Man has a definite purpose in being alive and living. His purpose is all tied up, or interwoven, with God; Who God is; His attributes—and who we are; the creation, and why God made everything. *And* that covers a lot of territory, yet it is very simple.

Among other things the English dictionary defines *purpose* as: 1. something one intends to get or do; intention, aim; 2. resolution, determination; 3. the object for which something exists or is done; end in view (or, we might say, plan or design—not accident). Perhaps the third definition fits more in line with how the word is used in this article.

The main Greek word translated purpose in the New Testament, *prothesis* (examples: Acts 11:23; Ephesians 3:11), literally means a setting forth (or to lay out before), and the acquired abstract meaning is purpose (that which has been mentally set forth or laid out before). (Of interest is the word translated "shewbread" in the New Testament, having reference to that which was displayed weekly in the holy place of the tabernacle and temple. The word "shew," or show, is used to represent *prothesis*. A question arises as to whether we are to understand this literally or in a secondary abstract sense. Perhaps in both ways).

This word, *prothesis*, is found in Ephesians 1:11 and 3:11 (translated "purpose"). In Ephesians 3:11 God speaks of His "eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Predesination is mentioned in the first chapter of Ephesians, but this can only be properly understood in realizing this was preceded by foreknowledge and not by arbitrary decree). There are other expressions used here that tie in with God's purpose; such words as "good pleasure," "will," and "counsel."

Let us now get right into the heart of this most pro-

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THE SWORD AND STAFF

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INFORMATION:

—We are totally dependent upon your financial backing in the publication of this religious paper. To get on the mailing list, send a contribution. Subsidizing gifts along are definitely needed in order for us to continue this unselfish labor of love for truth. You may use the date affixed beside your address as a reminder and point of reference in sending an offering (perhaps annually). No notices are sent out. Make your checks out to **CHURCH IN MT. AIRY**. Frequency of publication is determined by your financial backing. James E. Gibbons is editor. (Money received for printed material is considered as an offering).

Proverbially **SPEAKING...**

IF GOD is not first in your life, God is not in your life.

"If care is too small to be made into a prayer, it is too small to be made into a burden."

It seems that those who respect the Bible and are trying to follow it closely insist that it be the basis of "CHRISTIAN UNITY," but they who are practicing questionable things are more elastic in their thinking.

"Kindness is one thing you can't give away—it always comes back."

Have you ever heard of a man getting lost on a straight road?

"Those that have so much power over others as to be able to oppress them have seldom so much power over themselves as not to oppress."

Liking others has a lot to do with whether you are liked or not.

"What starts downhill, if not attached, will generally make its way downhill."

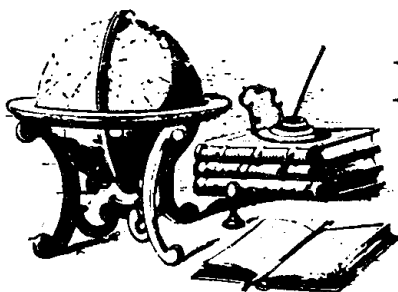
Only fools will fool with sin (and only fools will try to fool God).

"Salvation is by atonement, not attainment; by believing, not achieving."

"Luck" is where preparation and opportunity meet.

"Tenderness comes as a result of having received unconditional love early in life."

The door of happiness opens outward.



EDITORIAL

COMMENTS...

UNWHOLESOME TIMES IN WHICH TO LIVE

WE ARE LIVING in times and a society that are becoming increasingly unwholesome. It is not a very good place to rear children. The devil's big guns are firing away all around us, and so many of us don't even know that a war is going on. So much of the public media (including TV) is controlled by the humanists (as well as educational systems being under their control). Consequently the home, marriage, and religion are being downgraded (that which constitutes the very backbone of this nation). Unprincipled men exploit music, sex, and drugs to fill their greedy pocketbooks. They hide behind "freedom of speech" to continue much of their illicit activity and gain. The Bible correctly says that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (I Timothy 6:10).

Rock music and illicit drugs (which compliment one another) lock children into adolescence, and some never grow up. What fills their heads makes it hard for them to grow up. They are encouraged to be rebels. They get the wrong concept of sex. They are slower in accepting responsibility (and in having a mature outlook on life). Really pornography is "kid stuff" (as well as much of this Rock and Roll garbage). The mature person knows that sex is a normal and wholesome relationship that God has placed in the bounds of marriage (Hebrews 13:4) entered into by responsible people. The mentality behind gazing at pornography magazines is that of a child wanting to see something he shouldn't. It is an immature adolescent mentality.

On page 19 of this paper by permission we have reprinted a page from *Newsweek* magazine. The name of the article is, "Stop Pornographic Rock." Some of the things are explicit as reported here, and not in good taste for this publication (*The Sword and Staff*), but we need to get stirred up about what our society and world is coming to. Something must be done!

Someone needs to "wise up." Surely there is a relationship between our unbridled society and the collapse of the American home. Someone somewhere along the way must accept responsibility. □

THE PURPOSE OF GOD

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found and absorbing study, THE PURPOSE OF GOD. What is the purpose of everything? What is life all about anyway? (And, we might ask, what is your purpose in living?).

I GOD'S PURPOSE IN REFERENCE TO HIMSELF.

God's Purpose is His Glory

Perhaps we can better understand God's purpose in reference to Himself (and consequently human beings) when we take a closer look at God.

Who is God? How do we describe Him? How can the finite really talk about the Infinite? The thought of God as it engulfs our human minds is awesome. A simple consideration of His Reality and Attributes within itself is a profound religious experience. Look at the visible expanse of the heavens (the stars, the Galaxies) and realize that God is greater than that. He is the GREAT "I AM," the eternal self-existent ONE (from everlasting to everlasting). He is Omnipotent—All-powerful, ALMIGHTY. He is Omnipresent (yet existing as definite and composite personality). He is Omniscient (SUPREME INTELLIGENT); He knows everything that is, was, and will be (everything that is to be known). And at the same time, He is the Supreme Essence of Perfection, Orderliness, and Goodness in their TOTALITY. Only one thing is impossible with God, He cannot lie. He is Truth; He is LOVE. He is THE ETERNAL SPIRIT. Although, by His very

Throughout history worship for such a SUPREME BEING (or, many times a corrupted concept of such a being) has been universal, and it seems to be instinctive in the very heart of man. It is not unnatural or forced. As well as being all about us, and inherently a part of us, religion and worship are found from Genesis through Revelation in the Bible. Yes, God is worshipped by man: "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name" (Psalms 86:9; Matthew 4:10; Revelation 7:9-11). God is worshipped by angels (Isaiah 6:2,3; Revelation 22:8). All creation, even inanimate things, are represented as worshipping God in Psalms 148.

Our word "WORSHIP" comes from an old English word, WORTH-SHIP, meaning being worthy of what we call worship. This all goes back to the ALL-ENCOMPASSING ATTRIBUTES of God, making Him worthy of any and all such worship.

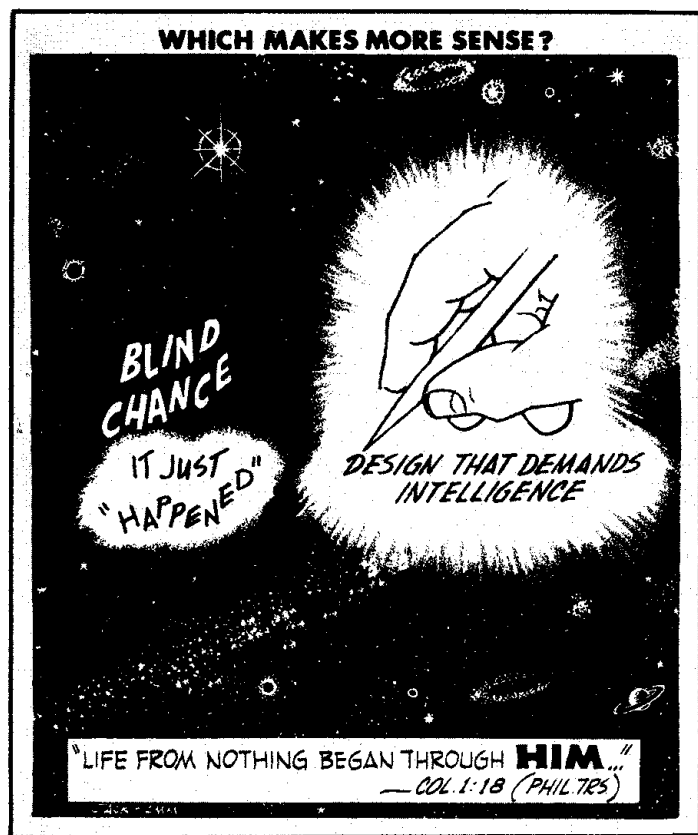
So, God's purpose is HIS GLORY—first, ultimately, always. "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness" (Psalms 29:2). The Bible is "GLORY TO GOD" from cover to cover. God is glorified by having, or making HIMSELF manifest (all His awesome attributes). God is the essence of perfection and orderliness. When we see intelligent orderliness and system, it implies purpose. Purpose is seen and expressed within the framework of systematic order and arrangement. Therefore, to bring these attributes of God into the limelight is to glorify God—that is HIS PURPOSE. (In this context, it is of interest to notice I Corinthians 14:33 and 40. God is said to not be the "author of confusion," and they are commanded, "Let all things be done decently and in order.").

God is Glorified in His Creation

When we look at the natural world around us, there is constant and manifest evidence of design, law, and orderliness. (Everything just didn't happen; it did not come about by accident. Blind chance, as implied by evolution, is not even worthy of intelligent consideration). To use the word creation is to imply a Creator. Where there is law (in this case, physical laws), there of necessity must be a lawgiver. Behind all plan and design there is a planner and a designer. And in the natural world everything serves its systematic purpose, and all of this points to a higher purpose, to the ONE Who made it, and GLORY TO THE ALMIGHTY GOD OF PERFECTION AND ORDERLINESS. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Psalms 19:1). Psalms 104:30, also considering the mighty works of God, says, "Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created," and the next verse declares, "The glory of the Lord shall endure forever."

The first few chapters of Genesis point to the God of system and order. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the

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nature He is beyond our physical sight, everything points to His Reality. It is as Paul said, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28b). We surely and assuredly believe in God.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD

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waters" (Genesis 1:1,2). The creation is brought to its completion as order is brought out of chaos. The days, the logical sequence of creation presented here, all suggest orderliness. Things were not created until there was a purpose and place for them. God called everything upon its completion "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Everything served its immediate purpose for which it had been created—the sun, the moon, the heavenly bodies, everything (as well as its ultimate purpose).

In Acts 17:24 Paul spoke of the "God that made the world and all things therein. . ." The Greek word rendered "world" is *kosmos*. *Kosmos* literally means that which has been arranged, set in order. (*Kosmos* has the very opposite meaning of *chaos*). This word (*kosmos*) is translated "adorning" in I Peter 3:3 (KJV), having reference to how a Christian woman should properly arrange herself (attire). This very word emphasizes the design and orderly arrangement of the world and the universe, and it points to the perfect and Almighty God in His orderliness.

God is glorified in His orderly creation.

The Creation of Man

In showing man special favor, all was created before man and seemingly for man. Then man was called into being to make his home in Eden (paradise on earth) and to enjoy all of God's creation (that which had already been made before he arrived on the scene). God, speaking in the capacity of His triune personality, said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . ." (Genesis 1:26). The 8th Psalm is not only beautiful, in it we see God in His glory and man in his (Read all of Psalms 8). "O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. . . What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou has made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet. . . O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth." Isaiah represents God as saying, "Even every one that is called by my name: For I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him" (Isaiah 43:7). Paul in his special application says that man is "the image and glory of God" (I Corinthians 11:7). Man was not just another animal, as a spiritual being he was made in the very image of the eternal God (and for God's glory). The Psalmist declared, "I will praise thee: for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (Psalms 139:14). Then again, "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name" (Psalms 103:1).

Modern men have scoffed at the idea of the earth being the center of the universe. They point at the sun, and the earth and other planets revolving around our solar star—and then to the rest of the Galaxy. The earth is a very small planet. Look at the massive size of the sun and the supposed size of the other stars. Surely,

we are told, man would be very egocentric to think that he and the earth are the center of it all. Yet, no other life has been found outside of the earth. We can say on the basis of what we now know, literally speaking, the rest of the universe is a desert; our earth is a uniquely beautiful, resplendent, emerald oasis. The mass of the sun, we are told, is 332,000 times that of the earth. Surely the earth could not be thought of as the center of our universe. How much greater the sun is (and the earth and planets revolve around it in what seems to be subservient proximity)! But that has nothing to do with it from the angle we are considering, that of purpose and that which really matters to intelligent life. Which is greater (and the most important), the street lights that light your neighborhood or the houses (and homes) that make up the neighborhood? Which is the most important? you, or the light that illuminates your room so that you can see? Very decidedly, you know the answer. Likewise with the sun. It is just a big light that God has put out there to serve us, His favored creatures, on this uniquely favored planet (although under the curse of sin). All of the evidence (as far as we know) points to the fact that we are the center of the universe and Galaxies (as far as importance, sense, and purpose is concerned). And everything is for the purpose of God's glory, and we, being made in His very image, are the crowning feature of His glory in the present order of the physical creation.

Since man was created in God's image, God wanted him and expected him (in the capacity of a free-moral agent) to embody and reflect His attributes, living a good harmonious and orderly life (thus glorifying the Creator). But we know the sad and tragic story of sin coming into the world. Adam and Eve sinned and failed to accomplish God's glory as He wanted. It was (and is) even as Paul later stated, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Creation in Disarray

When man sinned and fell from God's glory, not only did death and hardships come for mankind, the whole creation was thrown into disarray (Genesis 3). Everything else had been created before man arrived on the scene for man's personal enjoyment and well-being, and man himself was the final and crowning act of God's creation. Now that man had sinned and rebelled against his God and Benevolent Creator, it was not fitting and proper for imperfect man to have a perfect dwelling place. He was driven from the beautiful Garden Home, the first law of thermodynamics seems to have come into being, and the creation itself began the process of deterioration. Paul would later declare, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans 8:22).

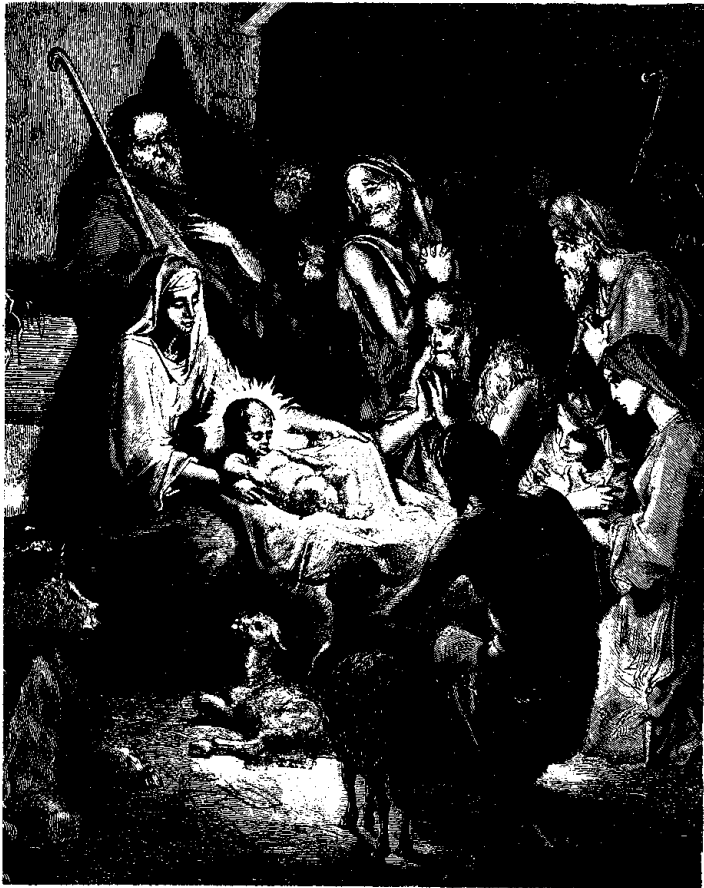
II. GOD'S PURPOSE IN REFERENCE TO MAN.

As we turn the pages of sacred history to the New Testament Scriptures, God's purpose is still the same. Here He takes bold and extraordinary measures to accomplish His purpose in reference to man. Adam and Eve had sinned and come short of God's glory. The ensuing generations had very much repeated the same old story. A few at times, very much in the relative

sense, had somewhat accomplished God's purpose. But really when the final word was said, it read like this: "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10); "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

In His Purpose God Became Man

We read of a most amazing thing in the prologue of the gospel of John. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.



The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3). Then listen: "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" (John 1:14). Centuries before the New Testament era the prophet Isaiah had written, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). (This had first been intimated in Genesis 3:15). Then Isaiah continued, "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" (Isaiah 9:6). Before the birth of Jesus Christ the angel of the Lord had said to Joseph (in reference to Mary), "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). He goes on to refer to the prophecy of Isaiah about the virgin birth and him being called "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (1:23). With the actual birth of Jesus, how fittingly the angels offered up praise, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on

earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

The second Adam, the Son of God, accomplished the glory of God. Whether looking at this from the viewpoint of what Adam and Eve failed to do, or looking at it from the viewpoint of His Divinity, this is true. God's purpose was fully realized in Jesus.

As Jesus grew, and upon reaching the age of twelve, Luke favorably states that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). As Jesus went into adulthood he rendered perfect obedience (which the first Adam had not done). The Heavenly Father was so pleased with Jesus that on three different occasions he actually spoke from heaven to let it be known. When Jesus was baptized, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Thereupon Jesus fully entered into His public ministry as the Son of God. In the midst of this ministry when he had withdrawn to the northern mountains, and was transfigured before Peter, James and John, "a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud...said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). And when Jesus was in Jerusalem as the days of his ministry were fast drawing to a close, he publicly prayed, "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:28). Yes, God was glorified throughout the life of Jesus.

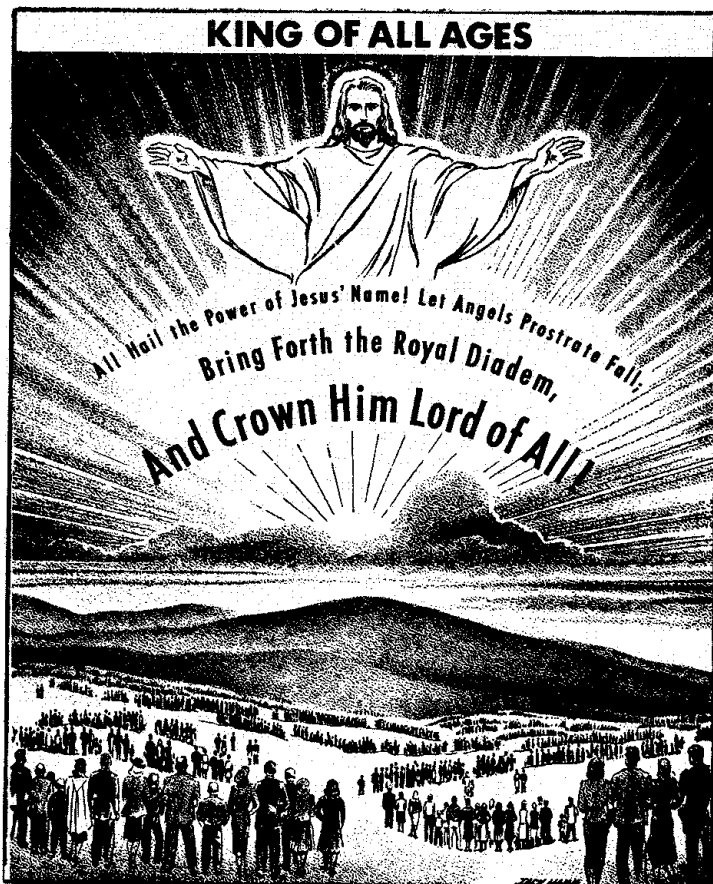
Peter said that he "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). That now brings us to the miraculous aspect of his earthly ministry (and herein was the power and glory of God strongly manifested). His first miracle was the turning of water into wine. John wrote, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him" (John 2:11). (Aside from the element of mercy in healing, herein we see the twofold purpose of miracles performed by Jesus: to glorify God and to produce faith). "And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus feet; and he healed them: Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and *they glorified the God of Israel*" (Matthew 15:30,31). Jesus said that the use of his power in raising Lazarus from the dead was for "the glory of God" (John 11:3,4,40).

The ultimate glorification was yet to come. In the light of this glorification all else falls into the background. In different places it says "that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39) and speaks of "when Jesus was glorified" (John 12:16). That night of the betrayal Jesus prayed, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee" (John 17:1). From the beginning of his ministry (as well as his life on earth), Jesus lived under the shadow of that "hour" which was to come (John 2:4). As he came down to the last week it was more in the forefront. Its closeness was

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near: "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified" (John 12:23). The night of the last supper, as Judas went out to betray him, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him" (John 13:31,32). Again back to the prayer in John 17; Jesus prayed, "I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:4,5). After experiencing the most awful ordeal of the cross and such a death, the ultimate glory followed: **THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD AND RETURN TO HEAVEN.** Then on the day of Pentecost Peter preached, "This Jesus hath God raised up. . . Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted. . ." (Acts 2:33; also notice John 7:39). Paul later declared, "And being found in the fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, *to the glory of God the Father*" (Philippians 2:8-11).

To sum it up, we again point you to John 1:14, "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." God's eternal purpose

was accomplished in Jesus, and the theme of the gospel of John was fully realized: *beholding the glory of God in and through Christ.* Truly he was "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" (1:19). "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (2:9).

And Jesus accomplished what the first man (and everyone thereafter) did not accomplish. As Paul said, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:18,19). "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Corinthians 5:21). God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Timothy 1:9,10). All of this Jesus did by becoming flesh and not falling short of God's glory. Behold the empty tomb! The sinless one became our Saviour. Amen!

God's Eternal Purpose in Christ and the Church

The eternal purpose of God (HIS GLORY) in reference to man is to be accomplished today through Christ and His church. God's glory is fully accomplished; all of His attributes have been made and are made manifest in Christ; law and orderliness, plus love and

REPUTATION or CHARACTER

THE CIRCUMSTANCES amid which you live determine your reputation; the truth you believe determines your character.

Reputation is what you are supposed to be; character is what you are.

Reputation is the photograph; character is the face.

Reputation comes over one from without; character grows up from within.

Reputation is what you have when you come to a new community; character is what you have when you leave.

Your reputation is learned in an hour; your character does not come to light for a year/years.

Reputation is made in a moment; character is built in a lifetime.

Reputation grows like a mushroom; character grows like the oak.

A single newspaper gives you reputation; a life of toil gives you character.

Reputation makes you rich or makes you poor; character makes you happy or makes you miserable.

Reputation is what men say about you on your tombstone; character is what the angels say about you around the throne of God.—**Selected** □

grace, are combined. Man is forgiven by God's grace through the perfect one who became man (GOD IS GLORIFIED), and man is brought into a context (the church) where he can accomplish the glory of God in orderly obedience as he grows in the grace and knowledge of God. It is by "the church the manifold wisdom of God" is made known, and this is "According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:10,11). "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end" (3:21). (Note also Colossians 1:18,19). It is Christ's purpose to "present...to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). Consider John 16:14; Colossians 3:1-15; Galatians 5:22-26; I Corinthians 3:16. Glory comes to the eternal God in this way.

God is not glorified through grace when we continue in our sins. The Scriptures come through loud and clear on this. Some might say our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God (in contrast God is glorified) (Read Romans 3:4-7). In that case it wouldn't seem right (humanly speaking) for God to take vengeance on our sins. Paul say, "For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just" (Romans 3:7,8; notice Joshua 7:19). In other words, we cannot continue in our sins and bring glory to God. Our "damnation is just" if we do this. To sin is to "come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Paul was afraid that he might be misunderstood when he said, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). Therefore he continued in chapter 6, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Contrariwise God's grace teaches us to live godly lives (Titus 2:11-14). Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). He came to save us from our sins not in our sins (Matthew 1:21). We are to produce the image of Christ in our lives and reflect the attributes of God.

As we have stated, God's eternal purpose involving man is accomplished through Christ and the church. Therefore Paul was moved to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). This word "blessed" here is not the word which means happy and fortunate, it represents another Greek word that is translated blessed. Our English word "eulogize" comes directly from this word. O, how God is to be eulogized for His great and glorious dealings with man! Praise the Lord! To God be the glory!

(And, we might add, this is called "eternal purpose," Ephesians 3:11, because it was in the mind of God before time began and will reach throughout eternity after time has ended. It is eternal life for man and

eternal glory for God).

The World is Not Accomplishing God's Purpose

The world is not accomplishing God's purpose. The people of the world have a different set of values (short term values and purposes). John wrote in I John 2:15-17, "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. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Of special interest are the words "love" and "world" found here. "World" (Greek: *kosmos*) means order and arrangement (and implies purpose). "Love" is a translation of *agapao* (noun: *agape*). It is the love of esteem and respect, and it suggests a value system. There must be purpose to have a value system. And the value system of the world involves the flesh, short term things (some inherently wrong and others not, but all made wrong because God is left out of the picture). Our Lord in Luke 12:16-21 vividly illustrates this. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." How foolish for man to pursue his own selfish aspirations and goals (and leave God out). "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever" (I Peter 2:24,25b). "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:17).



Paul wrote (and how descriptive of those who "love" this present world and are controlled by the flesh), "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Philippians 3:18,19). In Romans 1:21-32 Paul shows what happens when God is

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left out of the picture, and man's is in the driver's seat. "They glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God . . . into a lie." Thereupon he tells of the depravity of their fallen nature as they stooped to all kinds of homosexual and subhuman perversion. Then he continues, "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); Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whispers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable (unforgiving); unmerciful. . ."

Humanism and communism are systems of this world. Believing in evolution, and godless man in the driver's seat (inflated with the idea of his own worth), it is no wonder things are as they are today. Evolution has everything coming into existence by blind chance and accident. World systems with this underlying philosophy can offer little purpose in living. Life supposedly came into being by accident, so what purpose in living does that afford? No long range goals. Just the law of the jungle, the survival of the fittest (only to bite the dust in a few short years). Man is controlled by pride and arrogance (to a greater or lesser degree). And it is very much like the Psalmist said, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts" (Psalms 10:4).

How does God look upon all of this in view of Who He is and His purpose for everything? "Everyone that is proud of heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished" (Proverbs 16:5). God hates the "proud look" (Proverbs 6:17). Both James 4:6 and I Peter 5:5 tell us that "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." The prophet Isaiah spoke it very well when he said, "The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth" (Isaiah 23:9).

And these are not just idle words—this is the very WORD OF GOD. A day of universal, individual, and final judgment is coming. If man will not glorify God now, but vaunt himself, look out! He is going against the grain of God. Even in the here and now God has dealt with a heavy hand in such cases. To the self-centered rich man who was living the self-indulgent life, God said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou has provided?" (Luke 16:20). (And who is in a position to know how many times this has been repeated, or not repeated, in the history of mankind?). In Acts 12 look what happened to Herod: "And upon a set day

Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." Nebuchadnezzar (in his world empire) was brought low: "But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was desposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him" (Daniel 5:20). For a season he was "driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws" (Daniel 4:33). He was humbled, and later restored, said, "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (Daniel 4:37).

III. THE ACCOMPLISHING OF THIS PURPOSE.

In Preaching and Forgiveness

Before God can actually get His purpose accomplished in man, man must be dethroned. God has to deflate man's inflated balloon of fleshly pride and arrogance and get him to see things as they really are. Mankind is spiritually bankrupt, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). But few see the situation as it really is. Man must be brought face to face with the Almighty and All Holy God of Eternity. When this happens, he is made to realize just what a sinner he really is. This has always been the case. Even back in the Old Testament Scriptures when

The Final Decision Rests With Man

"CHOOSE LIFE" DEUT. 30:19 "REPENT" MATT. 4:17 "YIELD TO GOD" ROM. 6:13-16



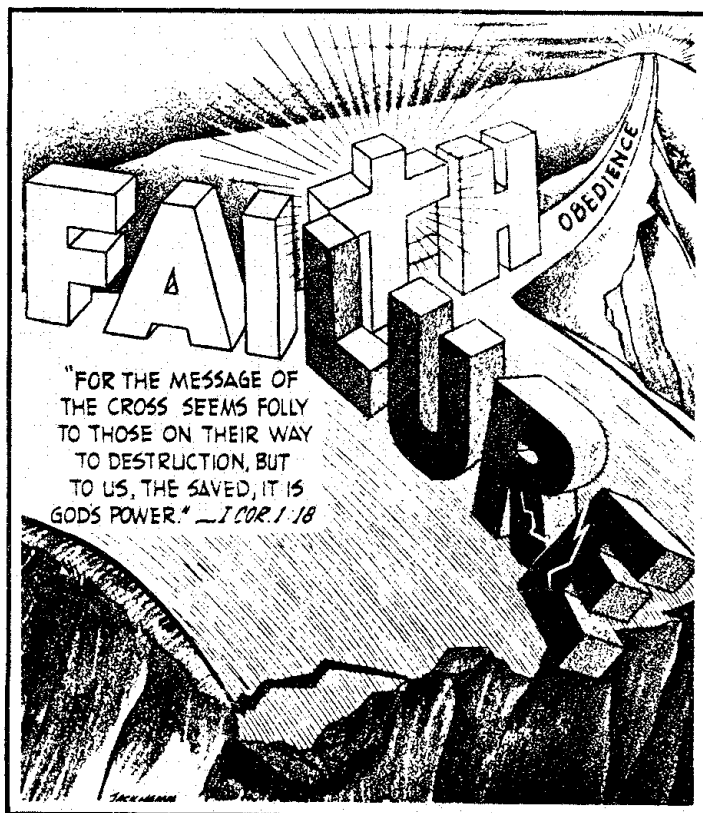
IGNORE GOD DEUT. 8:11 NEGLECT SALVATION HEB. 2:3 YIELD TO SIN ROM. 6:16

Isaiah had this vision of God in the temple, and the seraphim cried out, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6), he was made to cry out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." In view of the soon coming New Testament period Jesus said, "And when he (THE HOLY SPIRIT) is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). When the Word of God is preached, it is the "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12,13). It accomplishes all of these things. In preaching that great message on the day of Pentecost, Peter accused them of crucifying the Lord of glory and declared that Jesus was "both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were *pricked in their heart*, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:36,37). They were brought face to face with their sins, their God, and the Saviour. This is the only way we can begin to get God's purpose accomplished in our lives. We cannot soft-pedal sin and "ease" people into the church. Revelation 16:9b says, "They repented not to give him glory."

The message of salvation was calculated by God to humble man. That over-all message is grace. This has already been touched upon, but listen to Ephesians 2:8 and 9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, lest any man should boast." And: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5; Acts 2:38). Of course grace means unmerited favor. Mankind didn't deserve salvation nor could ever deserve it. Then mercy is seen when punishment has been withheld when it should have been carried out. Punishment withheld (we deserved it) and merit bestowed (we didn't deserve it)—what a picture! But this is the story of salvation as God brings us into the experience of His love whereby we may "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and as Peter concluded, "To him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen" (II Peter 3:18). (To make a New Testament application of an Old Testament Scripture: "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake," Psalms 115:1).

This calculation is brought home to us emphatically when we look at the cross of Calvary. Read I Corinthians 1:18-31. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to



nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Everything about the message of the cross is calculated to make us humble. What the Christians believed and preached was stupidity to the highminded of that day (and of this world). Keep in mind that the cross was the means of capital punishment reserved by the Romans for only traitors, slaves, and the most depraved criminal rejects of society. The preaching of the cross was equally foolish to Jews and Greeks. To the Jews, who expected a glorious earthly and political Messiah backed by the Mighty God of Israel, it was unthinkable that he would be so weak as to die at the hands of men on a Roman cross (and that his kingdom would be otherwise than expected). To the Greeks, who prided themselves in their great intellectual systems of human philosophy (still respected around the world), how foolish and stupid to think that the Supreme Intellect and Being of the universe would identify himself with humanity by means of an old rugged

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cross (how ignoble!). This was an affront to their mentality. Let us forget our feelings of respect and programmed religious emotions that come with the thought of the cross and project ourselves into their situation. Suppose someone started preaching about the hangman's noose or the electric chair (means of capital punishment for criminals), then offered eternal life in connection with accepting the facts surrounding a certain execution. It is not a very glamorous thought, is it? Paul tells us why God used such means to procure our salvation: "That no flesh should glory in His presence," and "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Later Paul would write, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). Then in reference to his work as a gospel preacher, he wrote, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled" (II Corinthians 10:4-7).

Even the preachers in their person should convey the concept of humility (or the stripping away of arrogance). God could have used the angels of heaven to proclaim salvation, but He didn't. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us," Paul said (II Corinthians 4:7). This thought is carried a step further when Paul told of his "thorn in the flesh" (and God's refusal to remove it). As a messenger of Christ, in Paul God's strength was made perfect in weakness; it would help him to remain humble as God received the glory (II Corinthians 12:7-10). There is no room for "holy fathers" and "right reverends" (Matthew 23) in preaching the gospel of Christ. When preachers seek to exalt themselves (so common today), look out! God's glory is what He has in mind, not man's.

Man must be dethroned. There is no room for arrogance and worldly pride in preaching Christ, accepting Christ, getting our sins forgiven, and in living the Christian life. To God be the glory. That is the purpose of it all.

In Living for God

Man was originally created in the image and glory of God. He was to reflect that glory in righteous living. We know that man sinned and fell short of God's glory. Now (as Christians) we have the renewed image of Christ in us (Colossians 2:12; 3:1,10). We are to live accordingly. Our lives are to be lived in the context of the glory of God. All is to be done for the glory of God. And God is glorified when His attributes are made manifest in His creation.

Consider these great Scriptures:

—"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, *do all to the glory of God*" (I Corinthians 10:31).

—"For ye are bought with a price: therefore *glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*"

(I Corinthians 6:20).

—"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

—"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8).

—"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17).

—"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23).

Beloved, the great truths and principles of these verses are overwhelming. They are all-inclusive. They have a bearing on every facet of our lives. There is nothing we think, do, or say that does not have a religious implication. *What about your life's work?* Is it consistent with Christian ideals? Do you have to compromise Christian principles on your job? Do you do an honest day's work? *What about all of your relationships?* Is God honored and glorified here? *What about your recreation and entertainment?* There are so many God-dishonoring things in this category today. This is not only man's playground, it has become the devil's. Beware! *What about the way your dress? What about your personal habits?* Etc. A very important question a Christian can ask in determining whether a

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MY HEART IS IN THE HARVEST

*How I love to help with the harvest,
What glory to gather good golden grain;
To share the hope of the husbandman
That his labors have not been in vain.*

*'Tis satisfaction in seasons of sowing,
Watching with wonder the seed's new birth;
Yea, but my heart is in the harvest,
When seedtime finds its full worth.*

*... O, how I love to preach the Gospel,
Sowing God's good seed in souls;
What blessing to bear fruit for Jesus,
His harvest is o'er all earthly goals.*

*Pray, may we always "Go therefore!"
Into all earth's faithless fields,
Preaching, baptizing, and teaching the more,
For Heaven harvesting eternal yields.*

*O, what joy when Jesus comes again;
Our faithful labors shall be blessed.
"Well done my servants," He will say,
"Enter ye My harvest home and rest."*

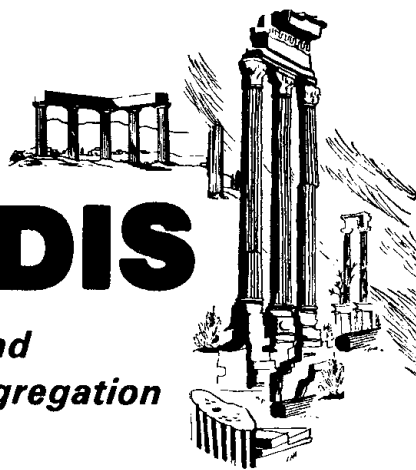
"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

—Matthew 9:38—

—By Bob Wickline

SARDIS

The City and Its Congregation



LOOKING AT A MAP of modern Turkey, it would be next to impossible to pinpoint the location of Sardis (for no city remains). But fifty miles east and inland from modern Izmir (ancient Smyrna) at the edge of a table-level and productive valley can be found a scant village. Behind it on a higher elevation are to be found the even more scant remains of the ruins of ancient Sardis (and its acropolis which was surrounded by three walls). And, bringing everything into closer aperture, one will see standing two giant columns graced with the beauty and simplicity of the Ionic architectural style. Parts of other columns are standing, but most are to be seen as huge fallen and broken fragments scattered around the green grass-carpeted ground. (This in ancient times was the temple Cybele—or as later dubbed, Artemis. She was worshipped as the primary goddess of the city. Not only was the temple used as a place of worship, it served somewhat as a bank. Evidence points to Sardis as the earliest producer of coins). And there (likely as not), as if to remind us of the past, is seen the tranquil scene of grazing sheep with their Turkish attendant. (The process of dyeing wool is said to have been invented and introduced first at Sardis).

If the information of some is correct, the antiquity of Sardis would go all the way back to about 1200 B.C. (making it one of the oldest and most important cities of Asia Minor). It exercised independence and was the capital of the kingdom of Lydia until 549 B.C. The famed and proverbial king Croesus of Sardis, celebrated for his wealth and misfortune, took on too much when he tried to forestall (and abort) the Persians in their ascendancy to empire. Cyprus brought the golden age of Sardis as a respected seat of independent rule to an end. Then with the defeat of the Persians by Alexander the Great in 334 B.C., Sardis was first controlled by one power and then another. In 133 B.C. as a part of the Pergamum kingdom it fell into the hands of Rome. (King Attalus III of Pergamum saw the hand writing on the wall, and to make for a smoother transition bequeathed his kingdom to the Romans in his will). Then in A.D. 17 Sardis was destroyed by an earthquake. The emperor Tiberius was generous in helping them rebuild, but the city never seemed to regain the prominence it had once known. This brings us to New Testament times with Sardis as part of the Roman Empire, incorporated into the parochial province of Asia.

The book of Revelation, written toward the end of the first century A.D., was addressed to the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia. (We know there were other churches in Asia, but for His purposes the Lord singled out these seven). Sardis was one of these churches (Revelation 3:1-6). The New Testament is silent concerning the circumstances of the establishment of this church. We can only guess the particulars and read between the lines. Very likely it came into existence through the influence of the apostle Paul many years before. During Paul's protracted stay in Ephesus (which is situated a little over fifty miles southwest of Sardis), he used the lecture halls of a man named Tyrannus daily for two years. Of this period it is said that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). Ephesus was the capital and commercial hub of the province. Likely people from Sardis heard Paul (or heard about him) in their visits to Ephesus. Other ties besides political and commercial would have brought them there too, since both cities had the same patron goddess (and Ephesus annually attracted pilgrims). It would only be natural for Paul's lieutenants to follow up on converts and contacts in getting the church going in Sardis. So, this is a good guess.

But years later when John wrote the book of Revelation, things weren't going well with the church at Sardis. Along with the church at Laodicea it was blamed most of all of the seven churches. The Lord said, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 3:1-6).

The church at Sardis did not seem to be troubled by outside persecution; nor was orthodoxy a problem. Theirs was a spiritual problem. Although they had a reputation of being alive, they were dead. Just like the city in which they lived was of repute, but now had been eclipsed and was in decline, these Christians were decidedly nominal (even to the point of the Lord calling them dead). Only a few in their number had any spiritual life left.

Jesus said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (3:6). There is a lesson here for us. We have dead churches today. This can be seen in the formal ones and in ones not so formal. Worldliness has come in. Spiritual corps are everywhere. Then some present a name that they are alive, and vaunt themselves in what they are doing, but God

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THE PURPOSE OF GOD

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thing is right or wrong is: CAN I REALLY DO THIS FOR THE GLORY OF GOD?

Barnabas exhorted the new Christians at Antioch "that with *purpose of heart* they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11:23b). The Christian's life is now filled with unsurpassed purpose. His value system transcends this world and blends with God's. He knows what it is to "*love* the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37;6:24). (Again this is the "love" of esteem and respect, suggesting a value system and consequent purpose). We can really begin to live as we are right with our Maker. We glorify Him, live the good and harmonious life, and know that things are well with us for time and eternity. Like the apostle Peter wrote, "For he that will *love* life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (I Peter 3:10-12).

And there can be no hypocrisy or self-righteousness in living for God. This only draws attention to man and does not accomplish the purpose of God. Jesus dealt with this in the sermon on the Mount. He taught, "Take heed that ye do not your alms (righteousness) before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. . ." (Matthew 6). He talks about almsgiving, praying, and fasting to "have glory of men." The purpose of good works is to glorify God, not man. Religion should never be used to draw attention to oneself. The "righteousness" of the scribes and Pharisees was a self-seeking righteousness (very superficial) to glorify man, not God. Jesus plainly declared (and may we listen), "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). Remember Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). There are no phonies before God.

In the Worship of God

Another way that God's purpose is accomplished is through worship.

Worship in its broadest and most complete sense is the Christian life itself. James tells us, "Pure *religion* and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). This word translated "religion" is also rendered "worshipping" in Colossians 2:18. Paul, urging the Christians at Rome onward in their Christian lives, said, "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*" (Romans 12:1). This word rendered "service" is likewise translated "service" in Hebrews 9:6 (KJV), having reference to the priests serving God in the tabernacle. It is very much like we would say "worship

services." Giving our bodies a living sacrifice to God is an act of spiritual worship. We noticed that we are to "do all to the glory of God" (I Corinthians 10:31). The Greek word for glory is *doxa*. Our English word doxology comes directly from this word. A doxology is a hymn of praise (of glory) to God. How each Christian's life is to be a doxology to the glory of God! Amen!

When professed religious people are not genuine in their religion, they do not bring glory to God (and they nullify any formal acts of worship that follow). Read Romans 2:17-24. The Jews made their boast of God, but did not back it with their lives. Their lives were just the opposite of what they taught. Even the pagan Gentiles could see right through this. Because of this the name of God came to be used as a curse word, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written." Different prophets of old made it plain that unless the public worship was backed by righteous lives (private worship), God wanted no part of it. God even called it "iniquity" and that He "hated" it. Notice Isaiah 1:10-15; Amos 5:21-25. The Lord Jesus called the scribes and Pharisees "hypocrites," then said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:7-9). God is to be worshipped "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

God is to be glorified in the public assembly of the church. Nothing is to detract from this glory. James 2:1ff presents an interesting situation. These Jewish Christians were giving preferential treatment to a rich visitor (who was dressed accordingly), while at the same time treating the poor in a very shabby manner. How they would "bow and scrape" to the rich. It is in this context he writes, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." We understand the admonition, but why say, "Lord of glory" here? Perhaps this is the answer: the Lord Jesus Christ is the "Lord of glory" (and as such, he is to receive the glory). The purpose of the assembly of Christians is to glorify him (he is to get the attention), not some vainglorious rich man. Human thoughts should be on a higher plane in the assembly. Paul emphasizes the same thought in I Corinthians 14:26. Although part of this verse involves supernatural-

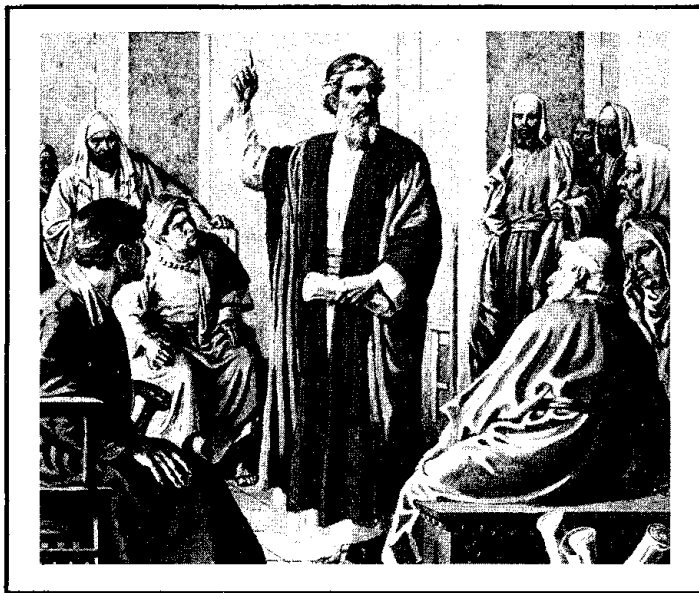
SARDIS, THE CITY AND ITS CONGREGATION

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says they are likewise dead. To get a larger crowd some have neglected the spiritual life of the church and replaced it with activity. They have watered down the gospel and exchanged it for gimmicks and social programs. Promotion has replaced power. A circus takes the place of the Christ. Too many times we have activity, but not necessarily life. Where is true spirituality and devotion? Where is the evidence of it in holy living? (And nothing works like work in getting the Lord's work done).

Jesus said (and may we listen), "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent" (3:3a)—**James E. Gibbons** □

al gifts that the early church experienced, the principle is still true today. Listen. "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. *Let all things be done unto edifying.*" We repeat (in connection with the public assembly), "LET ALL THINGS BE DONE UNTO EDIFYING." And furthermore: "*Let all things be done decent-*



ly and in order." (I Corinthians 14:40). Paul said earlier in I Corinthians 2:2, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The very center of the worship on the Lord's day is the Lord's supper (and consequently, the Lord Jesus Christ) (Acts 20:7).

We are living in a society that is entertainment oriented. Television is almost universal. And entertainment trends can be seen in many churches. Some of the less spiritual ones are bringing this over from the world. Too many times worship is entertainment oriented and man-centered. Singing groups, who like to mimic the entertainment world, seem to be the vanguard of this. Too much attention is drawn to groups (to human beings) as they seek to build up a name for themselves. Read the preceding paragraph again, letting the truths of the Scriptures "sink in." TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

In the Proper Adornment

New Testament writers realized there was a conflict of interest in this matter of adornment. What God wants embellished in our lives and what the world wants many times are two different things. The world is proud, vainglorious, and wants to glorify the flesh. God wants His attributes to adorn our inner person, thus accomplishing His glorification (not ours). He does not want sinful flesh to vaunt itself before Him. (Note: there is a difference in being glamorous, showy, and sexy in our dress and in being decent, neat, and well-groomed).

A Bible principle is that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is to be established (II Corinthians 13:1; Deuteronomy 19:15). This was in human relations. When God speaks, one time would

(and should) be enough. However, He has chosen to speak in the New Testament more than once on this matter of adornment. The apostle Paul and Peter explicitly write on this subject. There is no room for misunderstanding. This is God's Word.

The apostle Paul: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (I Timothy 2:9,10).

The apostle Peter: "Whose adornment let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands" (I Peter 3:3-5).

The Old Testament is an inferior system to the New Testament, God's final revelation to mankind. But even here God's purpose shines through. He declared, "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). Isaiah tells us of God's intentions in Isaiah 23:9, "The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth." A study of the first several chapters of Isaiah shows God's resolve to do this—"to stain the pride of all glory." "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low" (Isaiah 2:10-12; also notice the immediate verses that follow). Like sentiment may be found in many other chapters and verses here.

In this section, in His resolve "to stain the pride of all glory," God dealt with adornment. Listen. "Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, The bonnets, and ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, The rings, and nose jewels, The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the vails. And it shall come to pass, that instead of a sweet smell there shall be a stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead

(Continued on Next Page)

THE PURPOSE OF GOD

(Continued from Last Page)

of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty" (Isaiah 3:16-24).

In Being Committed to His Will

The only way we can accomplish God's purpose (and will) in our lives is by being surrendered (or committed) to His will. When we are totally committed to the glory of God, there is a decided difference in our outlook and lifestyle. God is taken into consideration in every circumstance. We are admonished to say, "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (Read James 4:13-17). Even in the Old Testament Scriptures the writer of Proverbs said, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5,6). Then we are made to "know 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). It didn't say that all things worked together for our immediate pleasure, but for good. It will be according to God's will and God's purpose (ultimately His glory). Things just don't "happen" in the lives of real Christians.

Realizing that we are part of a higher and eternal plan, we seek to glorify God in every circumstance of this life. If "good" times come, glorify God for it. If "bad" times come, glorify God in it. Paul told Titus to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus 2:10). No, we cannot make the teachings of God any more beautiful than they are, but we can let the radiance of this beauty shine forth by being a real Christian in every circumstance of life. Don't be embittered by hard times. This is all part of God's plan. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (trials). . ." (James 1:2ff). We grow through trials, and God may be bringing you to maturity. Then by being a real Christian you let the world see how beautiful Christianity is under the most adverse of circumstances. You do not become embittered. (Remember Paul, II Corinthians 12:7-10). The world sees your sweet and gentle spirit. God is glorified.

A most interesting Scripture is found in John 21:18,19. Jesus is speaking to Peter, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying *by what death he should glorify God*. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me." In life, and even in death, we are to glorify God. Some glorified God by dying the martyr's death; others by living a long and faithful life, their death being an amen to something beautiful. Still others must endure prolonged illness and suffering before their life is terminated in death. Yet their faith sustains them through it all. They believe in eternity they will be one unending doxology to the glory of the eternal God. "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalms 116:15).

Yes, if we live by plan, we will die by plan. Our lives

are filled with purpose. If we live by chance, we will die by chance. What a blessed assurance the real Christian has!

GOD IS. The fact that the ETERNAL GOD is a reality fills this universe with purpose. It makes everything else make sense. We have noticed His purpose in reference to Himself and to man. God's purpose is His glory. This truth is very simple, yet most profound in its implications. God is glorified as His attributes are made manifest. In the very center of this is Christ and the church. By becoming one with His purpose our lives are filled with purpose. This purpose transcends this world into eternity. Everlasting life is ours.

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (I Timothy 1:17). □



"WONDERFULLY MADE"

(Psalms 139:14)

According to recently published statistics regarding the human body, the brain has the ability to record more than 86 million bits of information each day. Human memory can retain 100 trillion bits of information in a lifetime.

One square inch of skin contains about 645 sweat glands, 75 oil glands, 65 hair follicles, 77 feet of nerves, and 19 feet of blood vessels.

May the Designer and Maker be praised!

READERS'

... Response



VIRGINIA:

—“THANKS AGAIN for the bound volumes of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. They are definitely an asset to any library. Keep up the good work you’re doing. It’s needed more now than ever before.”

KENTUCKY:

—Thank you for your dedicated work through the years, and praise God for His blessings on your efforts! I could never express to you the help and reassurance *THE SWORD AND STAFF* has been to me and I’m sure, to countless others. No one, I’m sure, will ever know this side of eternity what good you have done for the Lord and His church in this world.
“Please, keep up the good work. May God continue to bless.”

OHIO:

—“I wanted to write and tell you how disappointed I was to see you publish the article on ‘Mystery Organizations versus Christ’s Body the Church’ that Mr. Richard Snell wrote. He asks a question ‘Should a Christian be a member of this order?’ I have been a member since 1965 and a dedicated... Christian since 1968. The Church of Christ has never spoken out against the Masons, why should Mr. Snell want to publish something that he doesn’t know about or maybe he doesn’t want to know. You can’t possibly know unless you get it from the inside which Mr. Snell’s comments were from books don’t always relate to true facts. Masonry teaches Unity, Love, Fellowship with mankind which doesn’t always the Bible teach the same thing. This old world needs all of this that we can get. I may add that Masonry does tell you that you should become a Christian. I’m very proud to be a Mason and also a Christian. All Masons do not become Christians and also some people that go to church do not become Christians. I would like to have an answer on why you published it.”

(Editor’s Note: I am sure that brother Snell would have no objection to your directing your questions to him at P. O. Box 172, Lexington, Nebraska 68850. If you think his source material on the Masons is wrong, be explicit to him about it, not just speaking in generalities. I can only speak for myself. I believe what Jesus taught in Matthew 5:33-37. I believe salvation, religion, and glory to God come through and are to be directed through Christ and His church—Acts 4:12; Ephesians 1:3; 3:10,11,21; 5:23ff. As a young inexperienced preacher years ago I had my first experience with the Lodge.

I noticed “religious” people had a greater attachment to the Lodge than to the church and would gladly miss church to attend the Lodge. My first experience with a Masonic funeral made me resolve that it would be my last. They took over at the graveside with their quaint ceremonies, and the implication was that since the deceased had been a member of their Lodge down here, he would be ushered into that great Lodge in the sky. I know of preachers who have advanced to very high degrees in the Lodge, then became convicted of the error of their way and left it. They say the same thing I have said. This “reprint” article following may be of interest to you.)

WHY CHRISTIANS MUST NOT BE LODGE MEMBERS

by
William E. Paul

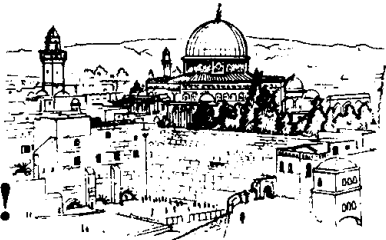
A LODGE is a secret fraternal organization entered by mystic rites of the strictest order. It binds its members into a brotherhood whose ties take precedence over nearly every other allegiance. It requires the taking of oaths of secrecy which may not be broken under the penalty of the most gruesome kind. The Masonic Lodge is an example of the type lodge under discussion. There are a number of lesser known ones which may differ in name and ritualistic detail but all are secret orders requiring allegiance to the most binding oaths.
We are advocating that it is unchristian and therefore wrong for a Christian to be a member of such a lodge. Here is why.

I. THE LODGE IS A FALSE RELIGION.

The Masons make the claim of being a religion and of observing the rites and teaching the doctrines characteristic of a religion. In the official Encyclopedia of Freemasonry we read: “I contend without any sort of hesitation that Masonry is, in every sense of the word, except one, and that its least philosophical, an eminently religious institution. . . Look at its ancient landmarks, its sublime ceremonies, its profound

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READERS' RESPONSE...

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symbols and allegories—all inculcating religious doctrine, commanding religious observance, and teaching religious truth, and who can deny that it is eminently a religious institution?" Vol. II, page 618.

The religion of Masonry claims its authority from a source outside that of the Christian's Bible. "Its religion is that general one of nature and primitive revelation—handed down to us from some ancient and patriarchal priesthood..." Page 619.

The Masonic religion does not require belief in the divine authority of the Old and New Testament. "Although in Christendom very few Masons deny the Divine authority of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, yet to require, as a preliminary to initiation, the declaration of such a belief, is directly in opposition to the express regulations of the order. . ." Page 672.

To the Mason, any book he recognizes as the Word of God is considered the Bible. "The Bible is used among Masons as a symbol of the will of God, however it may be expressed. And, therefore, whatever to any people expresses that will may be used as a substitute for the Holy Bible in a Masonic Lodge... Whether it be the Gospels to the Christian, the Pentateuch to the Israelites, the Koran to the Mussulman, or the Vedas to the Brahman, it Masonically everywhere conveys the same idea—that of the symbolism of the Divine will revealed to man." Vol. I, page 104.

So you see, the lodge, by accepting other writings than the Bible as expressive of God's will, immediately brands itself as a false religion. No Christian can be a part of such an anti-Christian religion and still be pleasing to God.

II. THE LODGE VIOLATES BIBLE DOCTRINE.

The Masonic Lodge teaches that baptism, a Bible ordinance which brings one into Christ (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27), actually is designed to make one a perfect Mason. Part of the instructions to Masons taking the 26th degree includes the following: "Question: What are the symbols of the purification necessary to make us perfect Masons? Answer: Lavation with pure water or BAPTISM because to cleanse the body is emblematical of purifying the soul. . ."

In referring to what they call the fraternal supper, they say, "And thus the bread we eat, and the wine we drink tonight may enter into and form part of us the identical particles of matter that once formed parts of the material bodies called Moses, Confucius, Plato, Socrates or Jesus of Nazareth." (Morals and Dogma by Pike, pp. 538,539). From this it is clear that the Lodge corrupts the very heart and significance of both baptism and the Lord's supper. Notice that they place Christ on an equality with such non-Christian religious leaders as Confucius and with such Greek philosophers as Plato and Socrates. The Bible teaches that communion is to be with "the blood of Christ" and "the body of Christ" (I Corinthians 10:16) and not with fallible, sinful men regardless of how scholarly they may have been.

Furthermore, the Masons refer to one of their higher leaders as "Worshipful Master" when Jesus said, "Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, even the Christ" (Matthew 23:10). "Worshipful" indicates an exalted, venerable position, one that is "full of worship." Certainly this title of distinction is not to be used of any man, and yet the lodges use it freely. Other terms include "Potentate" (which you will see on the Shriner's fez). The Bible says that Christ is "the only Potentate" (I Timothy 6:15).

III. THE LODGE REQUIRES UNCHRISTIAN OATHS.

The Bible clearly forbides a Christian to swear by heaven, by earth, by his own body or any other thing (Matthew 5:34-37; James 5:12). But part of the Masonic ritual requires a person to swear to some of the most gory and hideous things.

In order to become a Fellow-Craft Mason the candidate must take an oath which includes the following: "I solemnly and sincerely promise and swear with a firm and steadfast resolution to keep and perform the same without any equivocation, mental reservation or secret evasion of mind whatever, binding myself under a no less penalty than if having my left breast torn open, my heart plucked out and given as a prey to the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air should I ever knowingly violate this, my solemn obligation of a Fellow-Craft Mason" (Handbook of Freemasonry by Edmond Ronayne, page 123).

A similar oath is sworn by a candidate for the degree of Master Mason in the following words: "Binding myself under a no less penalty than that of having my body severed in twain, my bowels taken from thence, and burned to ashes, and the ashes scattered to the four winds of heaven, that no trace of remembrance may be had of so vile and perjured a wretch as I." (Handbook, page 173).

Since the Bible teaches that a Christian's body belongs to the Lord (I Corinthians 6:19,20), how repulsive it is to even think of solemnly and seriously pledging one's body to such terrible mutilation over the foolish "secrets" of a false religion.

IV. THE LODGE INVOLVES UNSCRIPTURAL ASSOCIATIONS.

The Bible forbids the Christian from being "unequally yoked" together with unbelievers (II Corinthians 6:14-17). The Masonic Lodge has fraternal ties of brotherhood of the strongest type. Since the Masons accept people of all the world's false religions, besides atheists, into one fellowship, this is definitely an unequal yoke. In fact, the tie is so close that Lodge members pledge themselves to loyalty even to the extent of shielding each other in crime. By the time one becomes a "Royal Arch" Mason, he takes this oath: "I do promise and swear that a companion Royal Arch Mason's secrets, given to me in charge as such, and I knowing them to be such, shall remain as secure and inviolable in my breast as in his own, MURDER and TREASON NOT EXCEPTED." More than that, he even pledges himself as a Royal Arch Mason (7th degree) to aid and abet a fellow Mason, even if it involves a known wrong. Listen to this: "I furthermore promise and swear, that I will assist a companion Royal Arch Mason when I see him engaged in any difficulty, and will espouse his cause so far as to extricate him (get him out of the trouble, W.P.) from the same, whether he be right or wrong." The Bible says not to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather to reprove them (Ephesians 5:11). But the brotherhood of lodge members participates in and even shields one from wrong doing. Certainly it is sinful to be bound by such an ungodly tie.

Therefore, lodge membership (whether the Masons or any other similar lodge) is contrary to the Scriptures for the Christian. It is a false religion. It teaches doctrine different from the Bible. It places one into fellowship with evil. No Christian can be faithful to Christ and retain membership in the lodge.

PENNSYLVANIA:

—"Please discontinue sending *THE SWORD AND STAFF*."

INDIANA:

—"Thank you for scripturally sound materials. We save and value all our copies of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* through

the years.”

IOWA:

—“That little story about the snake and the road runner is a bunch of baloney. No reptile is susceptible to his own or another’s venom. A big rattlesnake can bite an alligator on the tongue, and it will not affect him in the least. The alligator will kill and eat the rattlesnake. The roadrunner will attack and kill the smaller snakes and eat them. No snake will bite itself, and if it did no harm whatever would result. Whoever told this yarn to Mr. Adams was pulling his leg. . .”

(Editor’s Note: Do we have any other reader out there who is an authority on this? We would be pleased to hear from you. We ran the little article because we thought it had a good spiritual application.)

CALIFORNIA:

—“Each time I read THE SWORD AND STAFF with a prayer. I wish it could be read by all Christians.

“In the church of Christ it is beginning to look and act like a denominational church. I was baptized into Christ at the age of 13. If am now 74. Maybe I am wrong, but I do know what the Scriptures read, and they sure haven’t changed since I have been reading them.

“In THE SWORD AND STAFF for July page 6, I wish every elder could read it and take heed to what it says and means. . .

“I thank God for true men of the faith and am not afraid to say so.

“God bless your efforts for Christ.”

OREGON:

—“Just a note of appreciation for your fine periodical. Your last publication was as good as the first one we received several years ago when Larry Jonas introduced it to our church. . . Changes are many these days. We thank God THE SWORD AND STAFF hasn’t changed.”

★★★★★★



**A PRACTICAL LESSON
from**

DEALING WITH A SKUNK

AT A YOUTH CAMP a man was awakened one night by a scratching on his tent floor. The moon was shining brightly as only a full moon can in the clear brisk atmosphere of the mountains. As the beams streamed through the open door, the man could see all too plainly that his visitor and the producer of the noises was a full grown skunk!

Lying within arm’s reach was the man’s sling shot and a handful of marbles that he had been using in target practice with his boys. It would have been a simple matter for him to have dispatched that skunk then and there. He possessed the skill, had the equipment and was in plenty close range. But, on second thought, the man lay very still. Suppose, thought he, I do shoot his head half off, and kill him instantly. He will in the very act of dying ruin my clothing, my tent, my bed, and my books that I have been long in acquiring, and, in addition, he will make me deathly sick.

So, it appeared to the man that he had all to gain and nothing to lose by just being quiet and still. In a few

minutes Mr. Skunk walked slowly out of the tent and away, having done positively no harm at all. And the man returned to his slumbers, peaceful and happy that he had not created a “stink” by foolishly defending himself.

A most useful lesson had been brought by this lowly creature of the night. It is not always wise, even though you can, to try to answer every challenge, every dare that is thrown at you. It is the part of wisdom to let some matters and some people completely along! □

★★★★★★

STRONG AS THE AXE HANDLE

AN ELDERLY GENTLEMAN asked a young boy to accompany him to the woods to cut down some hickory trees to make axe handles. They soon came to a cluster of young timber and the boy suggested they start chopping. “These trees will make good axe handles, won’t they?” he asked excitedly.

The old man said, “These trees in the lowlands have been sheltered from the storms which rage higher up. Let’s go to the heights where the saplings have been rocked back and forth by fierce winds. Those trees have been hardened by the tempest and they will make much stronger axe handles!”

The winds of testing and trial in this life are not meant to make us sin; they are designed to enable us to conquer sin. They are not intended to make us bad, but rather good. They are not for the purpose of weakening us, but that we might emerge stronger and finer and purer from the ordeal. Temptation is not the penalty of being a man, it is the glory of being a man. It is the test which comes to a man whom GOD wishes to use.

The attitude that we manifest toward the temptations that come our way makes all the difference in the world. If we view these testing periods as challenges rather than depressants, we can face them more militantly. We can see the great working of God seeking to lift us to greater heights.—Kerry Knight □

★★★★★★

THE POWER OF PATIENCE

WHEN ADMIRAL BYRD made his first trip to the Antarctic, his ship was locked in the ice for eight months. When his officers had become every impatient with the situation, Byrd reminded them that it was necessary to “give wind and tide a chance to change.” The quality of patience contributed to Byrd’s success as a leader of men.

The realization of life’s goal is as dependent upon our willingness to wait patiently as to act decisively. Great blessings are often lost because we are not willing to wait. We all stand before closed doors. We knock and often turn away impatiently before they open. A small child will plant a seed and return a few hours later to see why it has been loafing on the job. No one likes to wait.

The cultivation of patience is one of life’s most important disciplines. A successful attorney and busi-

(Continued on Next Page)

THE POWER OF PATIENCE

(Continued from Last Page)

nessman now nearing the age of eighty recently said, "If I have learned anything helpful that might be passed along to those who are younger in years, it is that they must master the art of patience. In career, family life and investments it is an essential ingredient."

The Psalmist said, "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: Wait, I say, on the Lord" (Psalms 27:14). The apostle Paul counseled Christians to be patient. "But if we hope for what we do not see, wait for it with patience" (Romans 8:25). Peter included patience in the list of graces to be cultivated by the Christian (II Peter 1:6).

Abraham, Joseph, Moses and others were providentially enrolled in God's school where through circumstances they learned patience. Abraham waited many long years for the son of promise. Joseph spent years in Egypt, and Moses was schooled by years of obscurity in the desert. Delay in the achievement of our goals is often God's way of equipping us for the job that is to be done.

Like the apostolic fishermen, we may have "toiled all night and taken nothing" (Luke 5:5), but the moment when God is ready to crown our efforts with success may be very near if we do not give up.

"I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope" (Psalms 130:5).

There is power in patience. Any great task is at times discouraging. It is easy to reach a small goal, but rising above mediocrity requires a bit of stretching. God has given us the tools of prayer and faith with which to sharpen our patience. "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness" (James 1:2-3). According to a Chinese proverb, "Patience is power; with time and patience the mulberry leaf becomes silk."

Impatience in business or in the work of the church can prematurely frustrate good plans and prove disastrous. One does not plant an acorn and sit in the shade of a towering oak the next day. Time and patience are required, but good results will follow the right kind of effort just as the harvest follows the planting. There is a time to work furiously and a time to wait patiently. "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength..." (Isaiah 40:31)—A. Chapman

★★★★★★

Rich, But Living Like A Pauper

IN 1835, HETTY GREEN of New Bedford, Massachusetts, inherited a sizeable fortune at the death of her father. She managed her inheritance well and built her estate to over 100 million dollars.

One would think that she surely must have lived will. Nothing could be farther from the truth. She lived like a pauper.

On one occasion, her son Edward broke his leg at their Bellows Falls Vermont home. Hetty did not call a doctor; that was too expensive. She took him to a chari-

ty hospital where she pretended to be a beggar. The leg failed to heal properly and amputation was the only way to save his life. She had the operation performed in her rooming house to save on the fee for a hospital room.

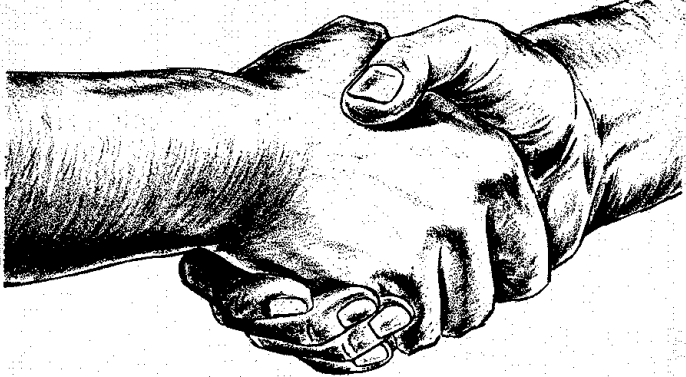
In the last days of her life, she lived in an unheated house and ate only cold eggs and onions. All the time her fortune grew. At the time of her death in 1916, Hetty's estate was 125 million dollars.

"What a waste," you say. Yes, it's a real tragedy to see someone with a fortune live like a pauper. Just think of all she could have done with those millions.

What's even more tragic than the story of Hetty Green of Vermont is the story of Mennie A. Christian, Anytown, USA. Many a Christian lives as if they were spiritual paupers. They are heirs of the kingdom of heaven (Galatians 4:7). They are heirs by God's grace (Titus 3:7). They have the riches of God's grace which He has lavishly poured out upon them (Ephesians 1:3). They have been seated with Christ in heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6).

All of these things and more are theirs for their benefit. Yet, they live spiritually the most impoverished lives imaginable. Let's enjoy the blessings of a spiritually rich life. That's the challenge. *The Challenge* □

Blest be the tie that binds. . .



. . . our hearts in Christian love!

Preacher, Are You Up to It?

STUDY UP to be intellectually prepared and mentally alert, assuredly knowing the Word of God and your subject.

PRAY UP to be spiritually prepared, made strong by the Spirit of God.

STAND UP (humbly, yet confidentially and boldly) so as to be seen as God's spokesman for the hour.

SPEAK UP so you can be heard (audibly and to the point—don't beat around the bush; yet with love).

SHUT UP to be appreciated, as well as effective, when you have finished preaching (don't drag out your conclusion).

FOLLOW UP on those who respond to the preaching (don't leave them orphans) and those who appear to be prospects.

LIVE UP to what you have preached to be respected, effective, and acceptable in the sight of God (don't make the name of God a curse word). —J.E.G. □



The article on this page appeared in the May 6, 1985 edition of the secular magazine *Newsweek*. As a devout Christian you will be offended when you read it. We need to be offended! The woman who wrote this obviously is not a N.T. Christian, and her conclusions about Rock music as such are not necessarily what we would make. However, the world, aside from the context of the church, is getting disturbed about this kind of music. May be this article will help "shake up" us too! Why not order a supply of "Getting Informed about Rock Music" (3¢ each) by the editor of *The Sword and Staff* and combat this repulsive evil?

Stop Pornographic Rock

MY TURN/KANDY STROUD

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My 15-year-old daughter unwittingly alerted me to the increasingly explicit nature of rock music. "You've got to hear this, Mom!" she insisted one afternoon, fast-forwarding Prince's "Purple Rain" to the song "Darling Nikki." "But don't listen to the words," she added, an instant tip-off to pay attention. The beat was hard and pulsating, the music burlesque in feeling, as Prince, who has sold more than 9 million copies of "Purple Rain," began:

*I knew a girl named Nikki
I guess u could say she was a sex
fiend
I met her in a hotel lobby
masturbating with a magazine*

Unabashedly sexual lyrics like these, augmented by orgasmic moans and howls, compose the musical diet millions of children are now being fed at concerts, on albums, on radio and MTV. Rock stations may play Sheena Easton's latest hit, "Sugar Walls," as many as a dozen times a day. "I hate this song," my 13-year-old, rock-crazed son muttered on the way from school one day as he inadvertently tuned in Easton's lewd and crude song about genital arousal. My own Mr. Cool was visibly embarrassed? Embarrassed? I almost drove off the road.

I confess to being something of a rock freak. I may be a singer of sacred music, but I've collected rock since its birth in the '50s. I've danced to it and now I do aerobics to it; I love the beat and the sound. But as both parent and musician I am concerned about the number of hit tunes that can only be called porn rock, and about the tasteless, graphic and gratuitous sexuality saturating the airwaves and filtering into our homes.

Which is not to say rock took an erotic turn overnight. Elvis Presley was bumping and grinding his way through "Heartbreak Hotel" 30 years ago. "I Can't Get No Satisfaction," by the Rolling Stones, was no innocent ditty. But

innuendo has given way to the overt. And vulgar lyrics supported by uncomfortably provocative sound effects result in musical pornography.

"Feels so good inside," squeals Madonna on her triple-platinum album, "Like a Virgin." Rock's latest "it" girl hardly touts virginal innocence, as one can gather from her gyrations and undulations on Friday-night video shows.

"Relax when you want to come," the English group Frankie Goes To Hollywood wails on "Relax," now the fourth-best-selling record in British history, a lofty position that being banned by the BBC did much to ensure. On the album "Defenders of the Faith," the group

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Judas Priest sings "Eat Me Alive," which deals with a girl being forced to commit oral sex at gunpoint. In "Ten Seconds to Love," Mötley Crüe croons about intercourse on an elevator. In concert, W.A.S.P.'s lead singer, Blackie Lawless, has appeared onstage wearing a codpiece with a buzz-saw blade between his thighs. During "The Torture Never Stops," Lawless pretends to pummel a woman dressed in a G-string and black hood, and, as fake blood cascades from the hood, he attacks her with the blade.

Aristotle said music has the power to form character. The Bach B-Minor Mass can be a link with the eternal. But while music can ennoble and inspire, it can also degrade. Some drug programs forbid teen-age patients to attend rock concerts or even to sport the T shirts of rock groups. Some schools where smok-

ing and drinking are prohibited have added rock music to the list of taboos. "At the very least," says Father James Connor, the pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Washington, D.C., "rock is turning sex into something casual. It's as if society is encouraging its youngsters to get sexually involved."

Dr. Joseph Novello, director of a drug program in Washington, says one of the questions he asks his teen-age patients is what kind of music they listen to. Whether it's satanic, sexual or drug-oriented—it tells him something about the child's state of mind. In like manner, he says, parents have an obligation to be aware of their children's musical tastes and "if you take exception to the words, don't allow them to listen."

Surprisingly, the majority of parents I've spoken to have expressed partial or total ignorance of the music their children are dancing to, doing homework to, falling asleep to. Most claim they don't listen to rock or can't understand the words if they do. They also admit that they don't want to add another item to the laundry list of things they already monitor—movies, books, magazines, parties, friends, homework.

Dollars: Legislative action may be needed, or better yet, a measure of self-restraint. If distillers can voluntarily keep their products off the public airwaves, then the record industry can also curb porn rock—or, at the very least, make sure that kids under 17 are not allowed into sexually explicit concerts.

And what about the musicians themselves? If 46 pop superstars can cooperate to raise millions of dollars for African famine relief with their hit "We Are the World," why can't musicians also ensure that America's own youth will be fed a diet of rock music that is not only good to dance to but healthy for their hearts and minds and souls as well?

A free-lance journalist, Stroud sings with Washington's Choral Arts Society.

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BACK TO THE ORIGINAL CHURCH

THE CHURCH of the first century as established by Christ through His apostles was not a denomination—but simply and purely the church and spiritual body of Christ upon the earth. On this most all will agree. But on the necessity of returning to that status, and on the means of doing this, few will agree. Divesting ourselves of denominationalism does not come easy. But, if we really want to be acceptable with the Lord, it is a necessity (John 17:20-22; Romans 16:17; I Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-4,17; Ephesians 4:1-6; Galatians 1:6-8). Let us stop trying to justify our denominational organizations and traditions not found in the New Testament. God does not give us the right to believe one thing and our neighbors to believe another. In that Great Day all of us are going to be judged by the same Book, and we know what that Book is. We have no authority from God to form a denomination or invite anyone to join such a denomination (no one has such authority, for it has not been divinely given). In fact, when we truly obey God, we are made one, not a part of any or many denominations (Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 3:15; I Corinthians 12:13). Let us search out the old “landmarks.” Let us humbly return; yes, let us get back to that one church which has already been established in the first century (against such Jesus said the gates of hell would not prevail, Matthew 16). There is much divesting and returning that needs to be done. AMEN?!!!

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