

A photograph of an industrial facility, likely a power plant or refinery, silhouetted against a bright sunset. Several tall smokestacks are visible, each emitting thick, dark plumes of smoke that rise into the sky. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong orange and yellow glow that illuminates the smoke and the sky. The foreground shows a dark body of water reflecting the light from the sun and the smokestacks. The overall mood is somber and industrial.

Signs
OF THE TIMES

**ARE THERE ANY GROUNDS
FOR HOPE?**

Charles Getts



S

miles Everywhere!

What kind of magic lies in the simple facial expression we call a smile that, even though it goes a long, long way, is often the shortest distance between two people?

It must be connected with the heart, for it comes only from a heart emotion and is fashioned from some form of happiness. No one can just put on a smile when he wishes to, as he would a hat, for it will always show false. The eyes have been called the windows of the soul; the smile must be a song from the heart.

Some people always wear a slight smile. They are always cheerful and optimistic; they seem to see some invisible beauty in life around them and take a constant delight in even ordinary things. It is truly said of them that a merry heart goes all the way while a sad one grows tired within a mile.

There seems to be a strange force within the heart that draws us to these people who smile and makes us turn away from those whose faces are set in the tight lines of pride, avarice, or hate.

The man with a smile is the self-confident strong man. He walks in tune with his world and in harmony with invisible forces that give him abilities beyond those of other men.

Are all smiles, then, of one nature? No, there are several kinds familiar to everyone; let us mention the most important.

There is the smile of a child. Pure, contented, filled with innocent love, it is given freely to one and all, companion or stranger. Smile at a strange child as you walk down a street and see how quickly and naturally he returns a smile to you.

The smile of the mature person is one of the most lovely of all. Filled with an understanding of

life's joys and sorrows, it is patient and serene, mellow with the wisdom of years. It contains a mixture of all the other kinds of smiles. It is close to the ever-beating heart of Life itself and possesses a radiance all its own.

There is a smile that is given in pure friendship from one man to another. It comes from something deep within the chambers of the human heart and holds an awareness of the eternal unity of all men. It is immediately recognized by men in every land on earth, regardless of race, creed, or social position. It will open the door of a house in Norway, Peru, or Russia, for it proclaims a heart that is free from animosity.

But of all the smiles of mankind, the most beautiful and unforgettable is the smile that is born of a calm, unswerving faith that God still leads and man is His image and likeness. This is a smile filled with spiritual splendor and divine love and carries the power of the Eternal. It must have been on the gentle face of the Man of Galilee when He spoke of faith in God and told a group of people gathered around Him, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John 14:27.

Since we have been given this beautiful thing we call a smile—that is so effortless to form—let us not hoard our smiles for our loved ones and friends; let us pass them around to all we meet. We have been given sufficient for everyone, and as we give them away, we will be given enough in return so that our supply will never run low. □

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God Answers Prayer

In this issue of **SIGNS** we answer the question, Are there any grounds for hope in these trying times? We believe there are. In this article James Joiner shows that God still answers prayer, and often does so much better than we ask or think.

Does God always answer our prayers? If He does answer, does He give us exactly what we ask for? What was the first example of answered prayer? In fact, what was the first prayer?

In the perfect Eden world Adam and Eve had the privilege of talking with God face-to-face. Before their sin marred their perfect life and home, they could communicate freely and directly with their Maker and Master. In this sense they didn't need to pray.

After the tragedy of sin ruined this beautiful situation, Adam and Eve fled from their best Friend. Genesis 3:8 tells about it: "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden."

Essentially this was a prayer to God; in a sense it is the first prayer recorded in the Bible. Adam and Eve were asking God to leave them alone. They knew they had sinned, and they were afraid. They were saying to God, "Stay away."

Did God answer this prayer? No. He came looking for them and calling to them. Verse 9: "The Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?"

This picture of a pursuing God is the same as that portrayed in Francis Thompson's memorable poem, "The Hound of Heaven." Adam and Eve were the first of God's children to flee from Him. To some degree all of us have followed in fleeing from Him, as the poem describes:

"I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;

I fled Him, down the arches of the years."

God knew Adam's heart better than he knew it himself. Even though his outward prayer was, in effect, "Stay away from me; leave me alone," surely his deepest desire was different. Surely the greatest longing of his heart was for something better, for Someone to make things right again and to restore the lost Paradise. And as the poem emphasizes, God pursued His straying children in the hope they would turn and accept His mercy.

In Jeremiah 29:11 God assures us that His thoughts toward us are "thoughts of peace, and not of evil." Instead of answering the prayer of Adam and Eve exactly as they asked, God followed them and brought them good news, the greatest news ever told, the greatest idea ever conceived.

For the Lord came to lift their

minds to eventual deliverance and restoration. In fact, He had already begun to deliver them. Ellen White pictures this tremendous truth in these words: "As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour. . . . As soon as Adam sinned, the Son of God presented Himself as surety for the human race, with just as much power to avert the doom pronounced upon the guilty as when He died upon the cross of Calvary."

And now He had come to tell them about it. A few verses after the calling in Genesis 3:9 we read the first promise of the Redeemer (in verse 15). Adam and Eve began to understand the infinite love and mercy of God in finding a way out for them.

So, did God *really* answer their prayer? He did not give them exactly what they asked for, but did He give them the *deeper* desires of their hearts?

The Lord seems to say it all in Isaiah 65:24: "It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer."

The Discouraged Prophet

A second striking example of how God answers prayer—or doesn't answer—is found in the story of the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings, chapters 18 and 19. First, though, let us re-



CAMERA CLIX

James Joiner

member how Elijah met outstanding success on Mount Carmel in the dramatic encounter with the 850 idolatrous prophets. He put the issue squarely before the people: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." 1 Kings 18:21.

All morning long the false prophets called for their god to hear and to accept their sacrifice, but there was no answer. At noon Elijah taunted them a bit: "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." Verse 27.

It was the same story all afternoon. For how could an idol hear? Finally, at "the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice," Elijah called for the people to come near him. He repaired the altar of the Lord that had been broken down during the period of idol worship. He prepared the sacrifice to God and then had water poured over the whole thing—four barrels, eight, twelve barrels. "The water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water." Verse 35.

In answer to Elijah's simple prayer, "the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice,

and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." Verse 38.

Not only was God greatly exalted; Elijah also, as His true prophet, was honored before all the people.

But Elijah proved to be all too human. He failed to hold his faith in God. As 1 Kings 19 states, when wicked Queen Jezebel retaliated with a threat to kill him, Elijah fled in terror. He kept going on and on and on until he couldn't go a step farther. He was "a day's journey into the wilderness." In utter exhaustion and despondency he "sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life." 1 Kings 19:4.

How far Elijah had sunk in despair! From the heights of Mount Carmel he had gone downward until he prayed to die!

How and when did God answer his prayer?

First He sent an angel (verses 5-7) with food for the weary and hungry man. But before awaking him, the angel cooked his meal and got some water ready for him to drink. Then he touched Elijah. No doubt the poor fugitive jumped in terror and started to flee farther

into the wilderness, thinking an enemy had found him. But it was no enemy; it was a compassionate, tender friend, sent by the best Friend of all.

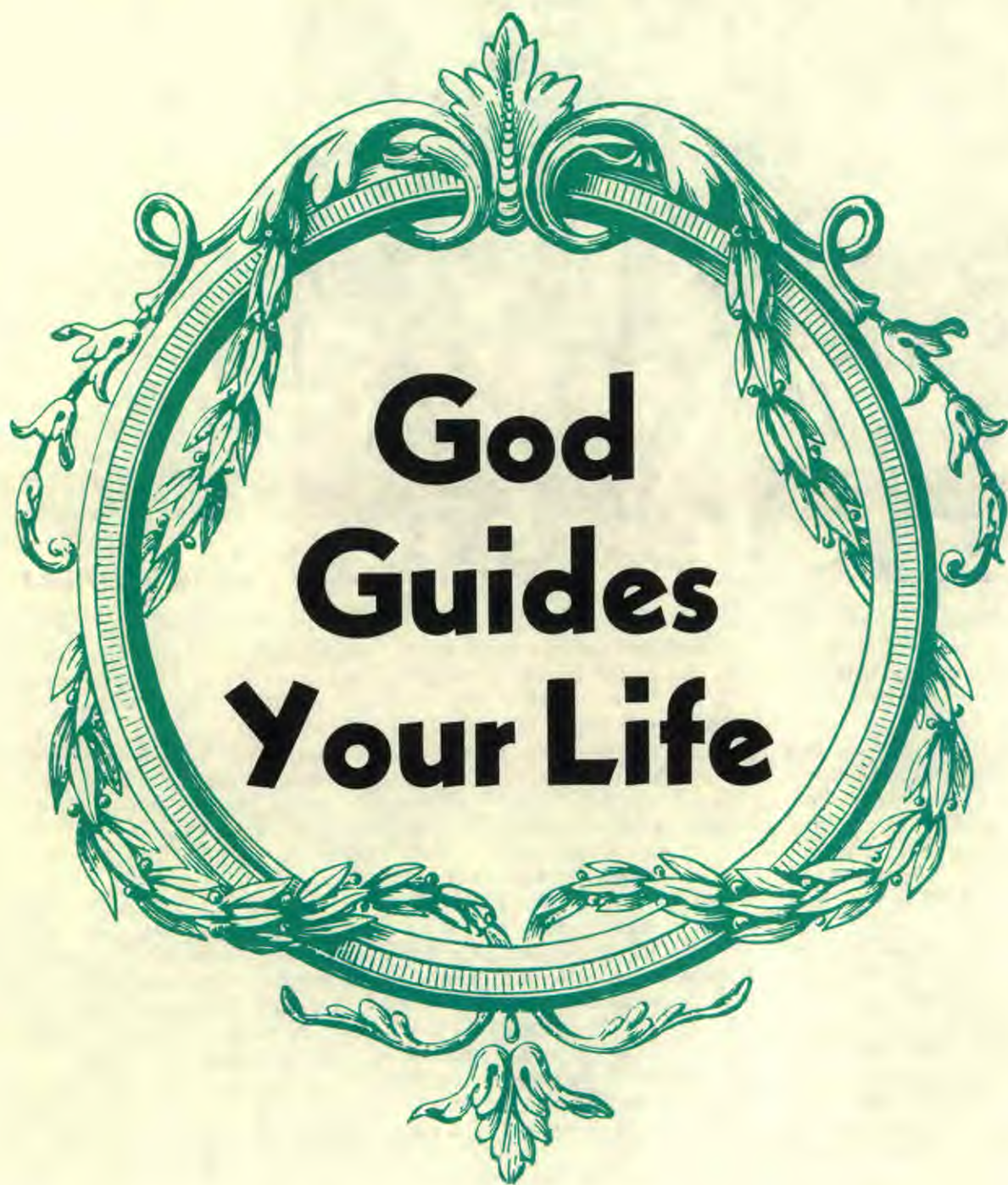
After Elijah had eaten, he fell asleep again; he was so tired. Later the angel touched him a second time, encouraging him to eat more, "because the journey is too great for thee."

On Mount Carmel God had answered every request Elijah had made. But when did He answer the prophet's prayer to die?

Never did He answer it, for Elijah was taken to heaven without dying. See 2 Kings 2. The book *The Desire of Ages* comments on the greatness of the ways of God: "The Lord in His mercy did not take . . . [Elijah] at his word. There was yet a great work for Elijah to do; and when his work was done, he was not to perish in discouragement and solitude in the wilderness. Not for him the descent into the dust of death, but the ascent into glory, with the convoy of celestial chariots, to the throne on high."—Page 301.

Yes, here are two prayers God didn't answer.

Or did He—much, much better than the suppliants ever hoped or dreamed? □



Grounds for Hope

Probably few Americans know that their government maintains a conscience fund at the Treasury Department in Washington. And probably fewer still would give it a second thought if they did.

Established in 1811 when James Madison was president, the fund has existed ever since as an account for monies received from donors who have defrauded the government and want to make restitution. To

T. R. Torkelson

the end of fiscal year 1974 a cumulative total of \$3,196,727.83 had been credited to it. But of late, officials state, receipts are dropping off, although in 1974 a sizable amount was still received—\$5,527.93.

One recent donor signed his name "Conscience Stricken." He confessed to having defrauded the customs officials on some jewelry he had brought into the country. His letter said, "Enclosed please find \$10, which will more than cover what the duty would be, I am sure. My conscience will give me no peace. I am sorry this happened. It won't ever happen again."

Pangs of a guilty conscience provide indisputable evidence of a mysterious power that operates on the human intellect. This force, strong enough to move formerly antagonistic or callous people to decisions in conformity to right standards, defies explanation except as it is recognized to be divine.

A young mother seeking to explain it to her little boy said, "Some men call it conscience, but I prefer to call it the voice of God in the soul of man. If you listen to it and obey it, it will speak clearer and clearer and will always guide you right; but if you turn a deaf ear and disobey, it will fade out little by little and leave you in the dark without a guide."

Even the theologian Augustus Hopkins Strong, DD, LLD, improved little upon this mother's simple definition when he wrote: "Conscience, therefore, with its continual and supreme demand that the right should be done, furnishes the best witness to man of the existence of a personal God, and of the supremacy of holiness in him in whose image we are made."

The Bible says a great deal about conscience; and much of what is said indicates a relationship between it and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It seems that God built into the human mechanism this "alter ego," as someone has called it, which is in us but yet not

a part of us, a faculty of self-awareness capable of receiving and interpreting messages from God to the soul. Thus the apostle Paul could say, "My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit." Romans 9:1, RSV.

Could the awareness awakened by this divine communication to the soul be related to the influence upon the human mind of "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"? John 1:9. Could we be talking here about the same thing Elijah heard—the "still small voice"? 1 Kings 19:12. It would seem so. And it all comes into focus and operation in what Jesus described to be the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-15), "the Counselor" (RSV).

Proof of God's Love

A hope-inspiring and heart-comforting aspect of the gospel is God's unrelenting love for us, which follows us with appeals, warnings, and assurances of companionship as long as He sees any hope that we will listen. "How can I give you up?" He says. Hosea 11:8, RSV. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Jeremiah 31:3.

We think of lovelorn minstrels of the Middle Ages seeking to awaken a response in the heart of some maiden inside a castle by singing and playing lyrics outside her window. Also consider the extravaganza employed occasionally nowadays for the same purpose, such as displaying a love message by billboard along the highway where the sought-after maiden will be driving, or saying it with 10,000 roses. One young man we heard of hired an airplane and had his proposal written in the sky.

Exceeding all such demonstrations, God in His love for us pursues us with total abandon, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9. No price is too great for Him to pay. Christ, the second

Person of the Godhead, "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Philippians 2:7, 8. "Behold," wrote the apostle John, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." 1 John 3:1. It defies description; it has to be experienced.

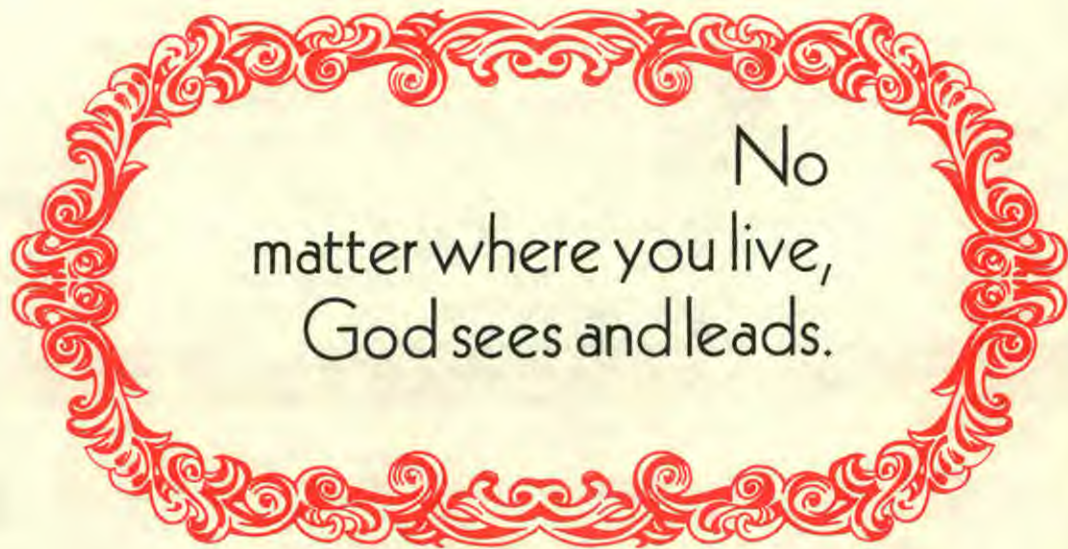
The drawing power of God's love exerts an influence upon men's consciences as real as the gravitational pull of the moon upon the earth which causes tides. It is a divine influence upon the soul, awakening awareness of a lack. It was this that Augustine wrote of when he said, "Thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart is restless till it finds rest in thee." It was this too that a later theologian, John Tulloch, wrote of when he said, "Conscience, like a magnetic needle, indicates the existence of an unknown Power which from afar controls its vibrations and at whose presence it trembles."

And surely, above all, it was this that Jesus made reference to when He said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John 12:32.

In that statement Christ embodied the same concepts and terminology as found in the Old Testament story of Moses and the brazen serpent. See Numbers 21:4-9. There in microcosm can be seen sinful man's peril and hopelessness and God's solution to his problem through Christ. So simple and so definitive, and, above all, so adequate.

Commenting on the parallel between the snake-bitten Israelite refugees crossing the Sinai desert and the human race in its lost condition, Jesus said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:14, 15.

Ted Torkelson is well-known to SIGNS readers for his homey, helpful articles.



A Change in Us

In making the application Jesus focused on what happens in our lives in the beginning stages of the redemptive process.

First, the Holy Spirit exerts the drawing power of God's love through His awakening influence on the human conscience. This goes on all the time, everywhere. He does it for everyone, through agencies seen and unseen, persisting even when ignored or repulsed, pressing the attentions of the divine Lover upon every son and daughter of Adam with an intensity of desire beyond anything familiar to us.

Eventually, however, in cases of obdurate and repeated rejection there comes a time when with painful reluctance God acknowledges defeat and gives up. See Romans 1:24, 26, 28. As with spurners of His overtures before the Flood, He then ceases to "strive with man." Genesis 6:3. But He never gives up easily.

It is this wooing, this drawing by the cords of infinite love, this virtue that constantly goes forth

from Christ, that leads to repentance. Thus the Bible speaks of repentance as a gift from God. See Acts 5:31. It was this divine influence at work that the apostle Paul referred to in his admonition: "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Ephesians 4:30.

Second in the process, our response to this drawing influence constitutes the very first step toward salvation. Here again, how simple! Just look, He says, even as He said to those dying Israelites in the desert. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Isaiah 45:22. Compare Numbers 21:8, 9.

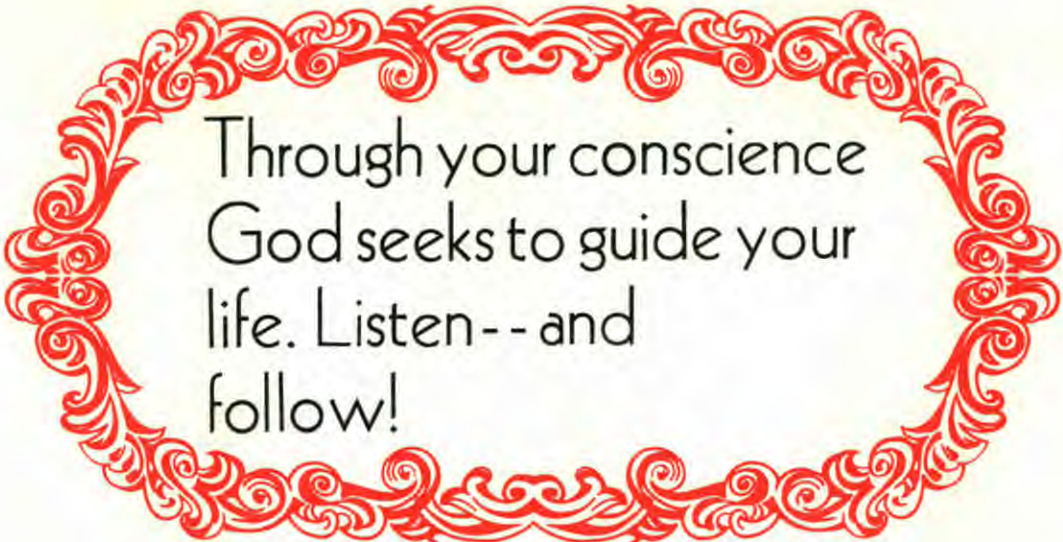
If we respond in faith, accepting His offer of healing and life, if we yield our hearts to His grace, He will work a miracle of renewal in us, inspiring contrition and leading to repentance. Then, invigorated with new Heaven-imparted capabilities, we go on step by step to a full knowledge and acceptance of God's will as found in the Bible,

which adds up to new life and maturity in Christ—the gift God longs to bestow.

When we thus boil the theology of conversion and forgiveness down to its operational basics, we find God doing it all, except the responding and cooperating. That, of course, we have to do. God doesn't force anyone to respond. But, oh, how longingly He looks for some little promising sign that we're listening at least. And as long as He detects even a glimmer of hope that we'll reciprocate His love, He keeps plying us with His ardent attentions.

Something Wonderful Happens!

And one by one people keep responding. What a wonderful thing happens when they do! The miracle change takes place—they are born again. A new strain of life in their moral fiber transforms attitudes and behavior. Inclinations toward the right replace propensities to evil. Kindness and love characterize re-



Through your conscience
God seeks to guide your
life. Listen - - and
follow!

relationships with others, making the converted into desirable neighbors and upright citizens. Friends and relatives who knew them before marvel at the change, hardly believing them to be the same people.

It's happening to men and women everywhere, confirming the universal operation of this divine influence. In the experience of the Biswas family, rice farmers in Bangladesh, we see a typical example of how the Holy Spirit works—how He appeals to the conscience, awakening an interest and drawing people to Christ.

"Go to Gopalganj!"

The Biswases lived in that area of Bangladesh where it rains a lot and people travel between towns by riverboat. Better off than most of their countrymen, the Biswases had a comfortable home with a separate pavilion for their 13 gods and goddesses.

One day during harvest, when her husband was busy in the field, Mrs. Biswas went alone to the pavilion to perform *pūja* (devotions).

To her astonishment she heard (or thought she heard) the goddess speak to her in the Bengali language, telling her to go to the mission hospital at Gopalganj, a day and a night away, and inquire for the lady doctor in charge.

Her husband thought his wife was imagining things and kept on harvesting. But next day it happened again. The voice said exactly the same thing, and no mistake: "Go to the mission hospital at Gopalganj and call the doctor in charge 'Mother.'"

So they went—this Hindu couple. Like Abraham of old, they "went out, not knowing whither" or why, except that a voice had told them to go.

But when they related their story to the Christian doctor the following day, and especially when they found that the doctor in charge was indeed a *memsahib* (lady), they and she both knew that the God of heaven had spoken to them, awakening in their conscience in this unusual way an interest in His love and salvation.

This compelling force acting upon the conscience and moving people of every nation and language to seek after God constitutes real, though intangible, evidence of the existence and love of a personal God. Like the ocean tides, it witnesses to the presence of another power apart from and beyond us that acts upon our faculties with telling force.

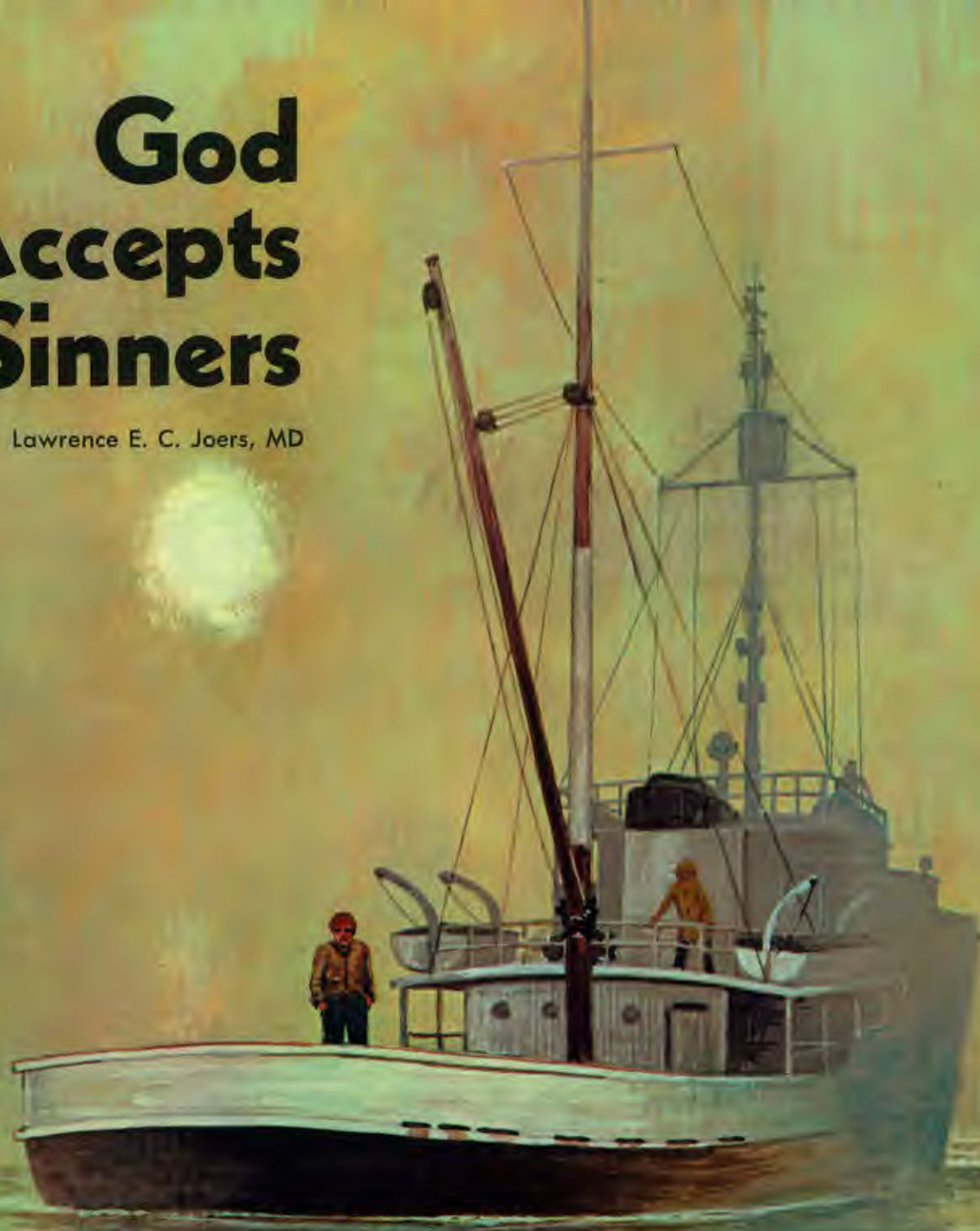
And like the tide, it is a drawing force—the tug of God on the human soul, drawing us to Himself.

When you hear the voice of conscience, then, even if it troubles you, thank God. It means more than pangs of conviction; it means that Somebody big and powerful and compassionate loves you and is drawing you. It means that God is not only up there or out there somewhere but very near.

It means that in the lostness of our times, you are not alone. God is guiding you. And that assurance, amidst deepening pessimism and bewilderment, provides a secure basis for a world of hope. □

God Accepts Sinners

Lawrence E. C. Joers, MD



Grounds for Hope

"Please, help me!"

He was a large handsome young blond, and he seized my arm as I was hurrying from the church. He appeared distressed, and his eyes were full of tears.

I am a doctor but I like to preach. I had just spoken at the Sabbath morning service in a small church, and because of an emergency call was hurrying to my car. My office and practice were lo-

cated in a large city a few miles from this smaller town, and I had been coming out each evening to speak for an evangelistic series. This was the first Sabbath of the series, and I had intended to take

Illustration by H. Larkin

Warren Haase wandered away from God and then tried to come back. God accepted him—and gave him two miracles to prove it!

part in the Communion services to follow, but the call came and prevented it. Although I was in a hurry, the urgent appeal of the young stranger stopped me.

"Are you ill?" I questioned.

"No," he said, "I'm not ill."

"Well, what's troubling you then?" I asked.

"I'm lost!" came the choked reply. "Please, help me."

I studied him for a moment; then I said, "I can't help you, but I know Someone who can. Come with me."

Together we went to an empty room in the church basement. After a few words of encouragement, I invited him to kneel with me. We both prayed earnestly for the power of God to bring this man comfort and hope. When we arose, his tears told how sincere he was. I took his hand and said, "You really meant that, didn't you?"

He nodded and wiped his cheeks.

"Now what is the next thing you need to do?" I asked.

He patted his shirt pocket and explained, "I smoked my last cigarette on the way to church."

"Is there anything else?"

He thought for a moment. "Yes, there's half a bottle of whiskey in my car. I've got to get rid of that."

Several weeks passed. The young man attended the evangelistic meetings regularly. Again I spoke for the eleven o'clock Sabbath service, and just when I concluded the sermon, my new friend stood up and asked to say a few words. Receiving permission, he commenced.

"I was reared a member of the church, but have gotten far away from it. There were little things at first. I was careless about Sabbath and tithes and wrong associations. Before long I was hooked on cigarettes, and then came liquor. I married a fine girl; but she wasn't interested in my church, so she didn't help me live close to Christ. I got far away from the Lord, but now I'm coming back. I've put away all those bad habits. At times it's been very hard, but I'm going to go through with it. I have found that I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

When he sat down, there were many moist eyes and numerous amens from members who had seen him grow up and away.

Later at the conclusion of the evangelistic series I was on the platform when the pastor invited those who wanted to be baptized to come forward. I watched to see if my young friend would respond. Sure enough, he did! And not only he, but also his wife. And along with them came another young couple, a younger brother and his wife.

The Sequel

And now it is 35 eventful years later. Time and space have separated us widely, but the Holy Spirit has been in contact with each of us. That's why a recent letter brought a thrill and a very pleasant surprise to me. A few excerpts will show the hope and peace that comes to one who finds Jesus and stays with Him.

"Dear Doctor: As I read a recent article you wrote, my thoughts turned back to that eventful day so many years ago at the old Puyallup church that changed the course of my life and the destiny of my soul. As I listened to your sermon that morning, my heart was touched. I stopped you at the door and asked you to pray for me. In the furnace room of the church we had a season of prayer with our God. I thought you would like to know just what that prayer has accomplished for me.

"Doctor, as a logger and a deep-sea fisherman I can give straight testimony to the power and the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. On one occasion I hired on a tuna clipper, assured by the captain that he did not fish on weekends. I neglected to tell him that I was a Seventh-day Adventist and could not fish on Saturday. This was a mistake. I should have told him. On the third week circumstances found us on Friday on the tuna banks 110 miles from shore. I

had made a big mistake, and in my prayers that lasted all night, I told my Saviour so and asked His help.

"The next morning the skipper called down that the fog was so thick we could not fish. At noon we heard the sound of a boat approaching. It came alongside and greetings were exchanged. The other captain said he saw us on his radar and came to see if we needed help. Our captain said that he could not fish in that kind of weather. We were then informed that a few miles seaward it was bright and clear and that we were in a fog bank.

"Our skipper began to warm up the motor, and in about 10 minutes we began to follow the other boat. After a long time we were still in the fog. Finally curiosity got the better of me, and I climbed the ladder to the crow's nest. From there I could see over the fog. As fast as we traveled, the fog went before us, and finally we hove to. As I looked out over the fog bank and saw many boats fishing in the beautiful sunshine, I had to acknowledge that there is no God like unto our God. True to His promise He came to my rescue, as He will to everyone who calls upon His wonderful name in faith.

"Doctor, in 1948, in a logging accident, my back was seriously broken. The doctor said I would never walk or work again. After special prayer on a Wednesday night God saw fit to heal me. Two weeks later I was back at my old job as high climber and tree topper. And at 65 I am still at it. Praise God! Satan has tried in his artful way to get possession of my soul, but in each case Jesus has had something better, and in the end a home with Him in heaven. I have my own little company, and my partner is Jesus Christ. Everything I have He has given me, so I have it all on the altar.

"Someday soon I plan to shake your hand on the streets of gold in the earth made new. It was your prayers and your faith in a living God that helped me shape my life.

"Your friend in Christ,

"[Signed] Warren R. Haase." □

Warren Haase working as a logger.



GOD

Grounds for Hope

Louis F. Cunningham



CAMERA CLIX

Five thousand converts in one day! Three thousand in another! By any standard the church's growth was phenomenal. And that was nearly 20 centuries ago. Conditions then were so different from those of our day. The best in travel then was no faster than a galloping horse. And communication? It was no better. But despite all that the church lacked then of present-day advantages, Christianity was in a thriving state of health.

The success of that beginning inspired the hopes of later Christians for the church to become great and prosperous. Those hopes have been more than realized. Today even small-town congregations are large. They boast of modern buildings, elaborate local organizations, and well-planned financial programs. In every material sense the Christian church prospers in the modern world.

But this picture does not tell the whole story. All too many observing churchmen are conscious of a serious problem.

Some in prominent places see the trouble as a structural fault. They are alarmed most of all at the division of Christianity into hundreds of denominational camps. Toward a remedy, these men minimize the place of doctrine and lay great stress upon organizational unity. Unity, they say, is more than all else. It was for this, they remind us, that Jesus prayed so earnestly.

But equally eminent men do not agree. To them, doctrine is important. It is not to be dispensed with for the sake of more unity. They are not at all sure that the resulting monopoly of a church union would

MAKES YOU USEFUL

If you feel you aren't worth much, God stands ready to make you useful beyond your fondest dreams.

restore that blessed wholeness peculiar to the apostles' day.

The need for genuine unity was recognized in the beginning of the church. With that, the apostles stressed the importance of sound doctrine. But they emphasized something else as well—something our limited application of the Scriptures often overlooks. Think how much may be included in the simple principle Jesus gave: "The life is more than meat." Luke 12:23. May not His comparison be broadened to take in all that is external or material? Is not the *life* of the Christian more than all besides? How easy it is to become absorbed in ways and means to the neglect of the one thing that transcends all else—the life!

Though the church in its infancy had few, if any, of the outward refinements of modern Christianity, it excelled in its reputation. Paul could approvingly say, "Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." Romans 1:8. Who can estimate the value of such a good report toward the advancement of the gospel?

The leaders of that time knew that the future of the church did not depend on the astuteness of their planning nor in the psychology of their promotion. These would do for the religious busy-ness of human success, but that was not their aim. Instead, they insisted, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Acts 6:4.

Modern Christianity needs the same emphasis. It needs that primitive virtue of personal piety which the apostles so earnestly sought. To

those men whole-souled consecration was no less than a way of life. They walked in the steps of the One of whom John wrote, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." John 1:4.

Now, as then, living Christianity is the only guarantee of spiritual unity and sound doctrine. Unity for its own sake is not unity. Of what value would religious organization be to one whose life is estranged from his Maker? As for the place and purity of church doctrine, Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." John 7:17. The way to the kingdom is made clearer and still clearer to the faithful follower of God. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Proverbs 4:18.

Even with the simplest methods the most humble believers may through living faith become "the light of the world." Matthew 5:14. Such a one was the woman who talked with Jesus at Jacob's well. She was not a theologian. But she proved to be a successful witness for the Master by recounting to others what she herself knew—out of the warmth of a renewed heart. The result? "Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did." John 4:39.

We cannot determine the success of the man who was born blind, whom Jesus healed. As he faced the irate Pharisees, he was no match for them in learning, but he was an unanswerable witness for Christ. He was an authority on the subject of what Jesus could do for

blind eyes. He did not talk about lepers, or dumb people, or cripples. He held to one topic, the cure of blindness. None could gainsay his testimony, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." John 9:25.

So it was. Men and women met the Master. They lived the life and told their story. It was as if each had been directly commissioned, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Mark 5:19. Out of such an experience the gospel increased in power and scope until the apostle spoke of it as being "preached to every creature which is under heaven." Colossians 1:23.

In her pointed style Ellen G. White wrote of such a ministry of the believers, "The humblest and poorest of the disciples of Jesus can be a blessing to others. They may not realize that they are doing any special good, but by their unconscious influence they may start waves of blessing that will widen and deepen, and the blessed results they may never know until the day of final reward."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 83.

What more "blessed results" could come to the church than this? For the ranks of the believers to live and witness for Christ with all their hearts is the greatest need of Christianity today. Such a spirit of surrender would bring with it a revival and a reformation that would move the world. For in this God-given grace may be found the cure for the ills of the church and the means for the finishing of the gospel in all the earth. □

SICK BUT UNAFRAID

Harold Shryock, MD

CANCER! What does the word do to you? It does more than most words do. It makes you feel uncomfortable. It startles you. It makes you want to ask, Who has it now?

Why do you react differently to this word than to ordinary words? Is it because of some pitiful mental pictures the word brings to your mind: pictures of uncertainty, suffering, deformity, and sometimes death—pictures with real people in them, people you know or have known?

This article is not a treatise on cancer as a disease. We will not be giving primary attention to the types of cancer, to the possible causes of cancer, to the present methods of treatment, or to the statistical prospects of five-year survival. We are concerned, rather, with the human reactions of the person who has cancer and has to wrestle with the uncertainties of outcome, with thwartings of personal hopes, and with persisting handicaps if he survives.

The discussion will revolve around three patients with cancer. The cases are actual and involve persons known to me. Their identity has been disguised by using assumed names. They were not my patients but were friends with whom I have been closely associated.

The Hazard of Delay

CASE 1.

Bill Townsend had a husky voice. I advised him to go to a specialist to find out why he was hoarse. But he contended that his voice had sounded that way for a long time. "I quit smoking about a year ago," he explained. "The hoarse voice is the result of those many years of

smoking before I quit."

So he waited a few more weeks. And when I saw him next, something had happened. He had been to the specialist. No longer did he excuse his hoarseness. No longer did he brush aside the advice that he needed to care for himself. No longer did he talk courageously about the future. His spirit was broken.

What had changed Bill? It was the word the specialist had used—"cancer." Then he added, "Advanced stage."

Why had Bill delayed? It was because he had allowed his feelings to overrule his better judgment. And that is so easy for a person to do!

Bill had read about the seven warning signals of cancer. He could just about recite them from memory—even that seventh one:

1. Change in bowel or bladder habits.
2. A sore throat that does not heal.
3. Unusual bleeding or discharge.
4. Thickening or lump in breast or elsewhere.
5. Indigestion or difficulty in swallowing.
6. Obvious change in a wart or mole.
7. Nagging cough or hoarseness.

Then why did he delay? He even knew that smoking commonly causes cancer of the larynx (that's what the specialist found when he examined Bill).

Delay in seeking professional help is one of the biggest problems in the fight against cancer. All forms of treatment for any kind of

There is cause for courage even for victims of cancer.



CLYDE PROVONSHA, ARTIST, © PPA

cancer are more successful when applied early in the course of the disease. People know this, and still they procrastinate.

It is fear that accounts for the delay—fear of learning something unpleasant, fear of having to face an unpleasant reality. But fear is an emotion and can and should be overruled by one's awareness of what is best. People have a subconscious urge to delay what may be bad news. Thousands of cancer deaths could be prevented if people would only rise above this urge to delay.

Delay can cause tragedy in other phases of life too. The Bible warns

against this, first in the Old Testament and then with examples in the New Testament. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found," admonishes the prophet Isaiah, "call ye upon him while he is near." Isaiah 55:6.

The author of the book of Acts tells how the apostle Paul came before the governor Felix to give a defense of Christianity. Paul must have given a convincing account, for the Scripture says: "As he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for

thee." Acts 24:25. Thus Felix delayed, with the result that he forfeited the opportunity to save his soul.

In the same book of the Bible we find the account of Paul's presentation before King Agrippa. Similarly, in this case, Agrippa was convinced of the correctness of Paul's theology, for he finally admitted, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Acts 26:28. But he also delayed and thus ignored the dictates of his conscience.

The Lesson of Trust

CASE 2.

Sarah Brown had a breast re-

moved on account of cancer. She had gone to the doctor as soon as she noticed the lump in her breast, and the operation had been performed promptly. Some of the lymph nodes were already involved, so the surgeon performed a "radical" operation, removing part of the pectoral muscles and a great deal of tissue from the armpit.

The arm swelled after the operation. It was weak and unsightly. There was a large scar which was uncomfortable as it contracted. Also, there was the haunting thought of being "one sided." Many times Sarah looked in the mirror to see if she were really leaning to one side as it seemed to her she was.

But she had courage and determination. She kept telling herself that her husband needed her and the grandchildren needed their grandmother. She did all the things the doctor told her to do to keep the scar from becoming too tight. She wore a padded bra and chose clothes that were attractive and that revealed nothing of her "deformity."

Each time she went for a checkup, she had a struggle with her emotions. "What if the cancer has returned?" The thought haunted her time after time. But her personal assets outweighed her liabilities. Her husband was understanding of her anxiety and gave her much encouragement. Her doctor had done the best he knew how. She had cooperated well. And she had a most valuable religious faith. "If there is reason for me to live, then God will see to it," was her attitude in the matter.

And now six years have passed, and there has been no recurrence of the cancer. Sarah doesn't call it good luck. She says humbly, "The Lord spared me for a purpose. The way for me to thank Him is to use my continuing health and strength in service to other people." She even has an answer to the question, Why did this happen to me in the first place? She says, "The experi-

ence was not easy, but now that I have lived through it, I can see that it was good for me. It removed a lot of conceit. It made me realize how uncertain life really is. It prompted me to work out a new set of values. Money and things don't mean as much as they used to. Qualities of character and the importance of influence have taken on new dimensions. My religious experience is much more real."

The kind of philosophy that Sarah developed requires a person to really accept the teaching of the Bible that God plans and directs each person's life. Just as He selected Joseph to become the prime minister in Egypt and spare its people as well as Jacob's family from starvation during a famine, just as He spared the life of the baby Moses and later directed him in demonstrating to the atheistic pharaoh that the God in heaven rules the universe, just as He chose Daniel as His spokesman to the proud Nebuchadnezzar, and just as He commissioned John the Baptist to announce the coming of the Messiah, so God has a plan for each person who acknowledges God as his heavenly Father. Of course each person has a choice, and this choice consists of his answer to the question, Will I follow God's providential leading in my life?

"A man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?" Proverbs 20:24. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Jeremiah 10:23. "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.

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus when he was on his way to Damascus was a dramatic revelation to him that God had a plan for his life. In response to his question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" the Lord responded, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee

what thou must do." Acts 9:6.

A few hours later, after Saul had arrived in Damascus, the Lord appeared in a vision to a disciple by the name of Ananias who lived in Damascus. The Lord instructed Ananias to find Saul and lay his hands on him that he might receive his sight. And in the vision the Lord explained that Saul "is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Acts 9:15. Thus it was made clear that the Lord had a definite plan for Saul of Tarsus as he now became Paul the apostle.

But the pertinent part of the story does not end here. Paul had some sort of physical disability. Many Bible scholars think that it was persisting poor eyesight. At any rate, it was a handicap to Paul as he became active in promoting the development of the Christian church and he prayed that the Lord would heal him of this affliction which he called "a thorn in the flesh."

Let Paul tell the story in his own words: "I will say this: because these experiences I had were so tremendous, God was afraid I might be puffed up by them; so I was given a physical condition which has been a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to hurt and bother me, and prick my pride. Three different times I begged God to make me well again.

"Each time he said, 'No. But I am with you; that is all you need. My power shows up best in weak people.' Now I am glad to boast about how weak I am; I am glad to be a living demonstration of Christ's power, instead of showing off my own power and abilities. Since I know it is all for Christ's good, I am quite happy about 'the thorn,' and about insults and hardships, persecutions and difficulties; for when I am weak, then I am strong—the less I have, the more I depend on Him." 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. L.B.*

Read about Mary Lukens' triumph

The Prospect of Death CASE 3.

The expression on the surgeon's face changed suddenly as he examined Mary Lukens three years after she had had an operation for cancer. Mary knew at that moment that something was wrong. The doctor didn't tell her anything yet, but ordered tests and said he would see her again in two weeks.

During the two weeks Mary tried to convince herself that things would be all right. She kept reasoning, "It can't happen to me."

But the surgeon's face was serious when she returned for the report. "There are evidences that the cancer has recurred and that it has spread to some of the vital organs," he reported. "There are some metastases in your liver," he continued, "and of course we can't remove your liver."

"Does it mean I will die?" Mary asked in anguish.

The surgeon talked kindly, but he dealt truthfully, and Mary began to realize that she must face the inevitable. That is, she realized it as much as possible at this phase of the experience. She still kept telling herself, "There is some mistake. What he told me just can't be true."

Next came the second of the five stages people normally pass through when they face some "impossible" situation. Now she became resentful: resentful of her doctor, even resentful of God's allowing this to happen to her.

The third stage is an attempt to bargain: "If I can only be cured, I will live the rest of my life unselfishly." Mary pledged that she would use her spare time in soliciting funds for cancer research and doing other worthy things.

But as time passed Mary's symptoms became more definitive. She was losing ground. Her progress was consistently in the wrong direction. And so came the fourth stage, the stage of depression. She had become convinced that there was no release from the incurable

illness; convinced but not reconciled. It was not easy to give up her cherished hopes for the future. It was hard to realize that her ambitions would remain incomplete. She felt sorry for herself and for those who would be deprived of her love and companionship.

And then as her strength and vitality continued to wane and as day by day she was confronted with the mounting evidence that she was fighting a hopeless battle, she entered the fifth phase, the phase of reluctant acceptance. "As long as I can do nothing to change things, I might as well make the best of it," now became her theme. And with this came a peace and an equanimity that everyone admired. One of her close friends remarked, "It does me more good to visit Mary than it does her to have me visit."

Mary Lukens experienced in a few months the five sequences of attitude that some people take a lifetime to experience. Every person needs to become reconciled, eventually, to the inevitable. Not everyone passes through all five phases. Some persons skip one or two phases. For some, life ends abruptly, before there has been time to reach the fifth phase.

In this world as we know it, death comes to every person. The Scriptures say, "It is appointed unto men once to die." Hebrews 9:27. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war." Ecclesiastes 8:8.

But death, as such, need not be the ultimate tragedy that, at first, it appears to be. There is a divine provision for release from death as life's conclusion. This hope of the Christian is the foundation on which you or any other believing person may enter quickly into the fifth phase of personal attitude—the phase of acceptance. Again, note the words of Scripture: "Since we, God's children, are human beings—made of flesh and blood—he became flesh and blood too by be-

ing born in human form; for only as a human being could he die and in dying break the power of the devil who had the power of death. Only in that way could he deliver those who through fear of death have been living all their lives as slaves to constant dread." Hebrews 2:14, 15, LB.

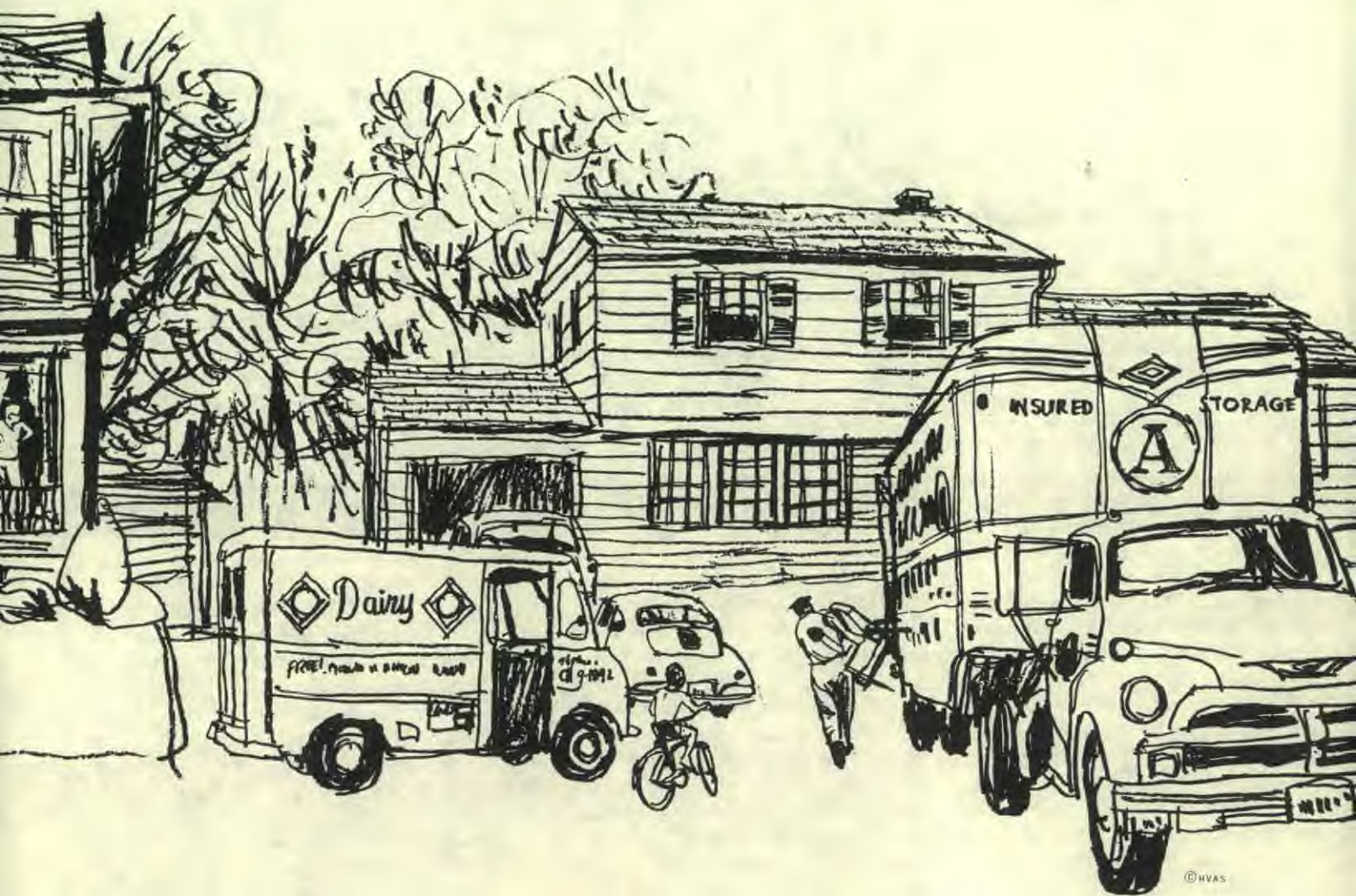
By any chance have you been living as a slave to constant dread? Don't do it. Notice one of the conclusions drawn by the apostle Paul later in his life: "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Timothy 1:12.

Death is not the worst thing that can happen to a person. The Master commented on this: "Don't be afraid of those who can kill only your bodies—but can't touch your souls!" Matthew 10:28, LB.

The person who accepts God's providential plan for his life can be reconciled to death or life, whichever God wills. For the child of God death is only a temporary condition. Again we quote from the apostle Paul: "I am telling you this strange and wonderful secret: we shall not all die, but we shall all be given new bodies! It will happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For there will be a trumpet blast from the sky and all the Christians who have died will suddenly become alive with new bodies that will never, never die; and then we who are still alive shall suddenly have new bodies too. For our earthly bodies, the ones we have now that can die, must be transformed into heavenly bodies that cannot perish but will live forever."

"When this happens, then at last this Scripture will come true—'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" 1 Corinthians 15:51-54, LB. □

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AT HOME

Do you feel at home where you are? Probably your family has made a major move sometime in the past five years. In some large cities people are moving as often as once every three years.

What's the moving all about? Jobs, climate, family attraction and family conflict, increasing or decreasing income—all these play their part.

Many a school-age child finds himself in a different school every year or two. Roots don't develop, because the child or his parents are afraid of personal interdependence

or involvement with neighbors.

Of course, the grass-is-greener-on-the-other-side-of-the-fence complex plays more than a small part in keeping people moving. And there's a little bit of the pioneer, or the competitor in most of us that makes us want to try something better or different.

A great sense of unease continually bubbles up through the magma of twentieth-century society, keeping us questing for new horizons.

It's so much easier now, too, for people to get up and go. Smaller families, rental vans, superhighways play their part. Worry about

Walter R. L. Scragg



FOREVER

the security of aged parents or other relatives has sunk to a minimum in our social-service states.

But a people on the move may also be a very unhappy people. Our chase after the lure of a better life may reflect a more basic dissatisfaction. Could it be that we are simply not at home in this world? Will we feel completely and finally at home only when God takes us home with Him?

God's Home for Us

Let me tell you this about God's home for His people. When we arrive there, we will feel that it is where we should have been all along. A great sigh of content and

Grounds for Hope

W. R. L. Scragg is a tall Australian who has traveled extensively in the islands of the Pacific and lives—for the moment—outside Washington, DC.

arrival will ascend: "Ahl Home at last!" Heaven is a place to feel instantly, completely, and perfectly at home. It's a place for the saved to take off their shoes, shuck their coats, and push back the reclining chair.

God has something to say to this uptight, dissatisfied, searching generation. He wants us to see the world as He sees it—a poor, distorted, even hateful substitute for what it should be.

Those who possess spiritual understanding have always recognized that earth as we now know it can never approach the real and true.

The Bible invites us to join those of spiritual perception who in the past "freely admitted that they lived on this earth as exiles and foreigners." Hebrews 11:13, Phillips.*

Why did they feel this way? "Men who say that mean, of course, that their eyes are fixed upon their true homeland." Verse 14.

Perhaps the past lived on as a racial memory. Perhaps there stirred within them the memory of a perfect paradise, the ancestral home of the human race. For the Bible says, "The Lord God planted a garden in Eden away to the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. The Lord God made trees spring from the ground, all trees pleasant to look at and good for food. . . . There was a river flowing from Eden to water the garden." Genesis 2:8-10, NEB.†

Does Eden ghost in your memory? You can recognize in it a longing for peace, for contentment, for a better character, a better life. All the utopias of our racial dreams are stirrings of ancient Eden.

A Dream That Failed

A huge millstone for grinding wheat stands in the main street of Rabaul in tropical New Guinea.

Its plaque reads: "This millstone was landed at Port Breton, New Ireland, by settlers brought out by the Marquis de Rays expedition of 1880."

What must these colonists have thought as they disembarked into the steamy jungle of New Ireland? Did they wait hopefully for cooler, drier weather for their crops? Did they curse the mildew that instantly fastened on their seed grain? Within months they had abandoned their hopes, but not before some had given their lives in a foolish quest.

Tragically, their dreams were nothing but a hoax fed on a mixture of greed, nationalism, and skillful promotion.

Can we really expect heaven to happen? Will there actually be a new earth? And when it happens, will it be real and satisfying?

Just as surely as God sent His Son to reveal Himself and His love, heaven awaits God's people.

Jesus staked His word on it. "Set your troubled hearts at rest. Trust in God always; trust also in me. There are many dwelling-places in my Father's house; if it were not so I should have told you; for I am going there on purpose to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I shall come again and receive you to myself." John 14:1-3, NEB.

The logic of a future perfect home rests securely on a personal and loving heavenly Father. If that is what God is, then He will bring

**Are
you
tired of
forever
moving,
sick of the
uncertainties
of life? God
promises a
home you
will never
have to
leave.**

His people together to be with Him. Divine love longs to be united with His children forever.

A Real Place

A favorite brand of washing powder proclaims itself, "NEW! IMPROVED! LEMON-FRESHENED!" Yet basically it is nothing more than the same old detergent with a few drops of artificial lemon essence and a slightly different formula.

God promises far more than a "new improved lemon-freshened" approach to the human disaster. It won't be the same old formula of sin and sorrow-scented, glossed over, repackaged.

Man's true home will be a complete departure from present cultures and societies. God will start from scratch again, making a new home for His people that will operate at a totally different level with concepts entirely different from anything we have ever known.

Popular theology pictures heaven as a place of wispy spirits, sirupy harps, and spun-sugar clouds. Nothing could be farther from the truth. God's new home is real, down-to-earth—never "plastic," never a "put-on."

We glimpse the reality of God's paradise in Old Testament predictions of the perfected world offered to Israel. Earth still soils the hands, vines bear grapes, lions walk the forests, God still calls His people to worship Him.

"Men shall build houses and live to inhabit them, plant vineyards and eat their fruit." "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together and the lion shall eat straw like cattle." Isaiah 65:21, 25, NEB.

The New Testament adds to the reality of it. You can take a measuring tape and compute the size of the capital of the new earth; human measurements apply. The city has foundations, gates, walls, streets.

Man's future home has its own perfected technology. Its citizens plant vines and grow fruit on them, they create walks by the riverside. They construct houses. They travel each Sabbath to the heart of the city.

In the flawless ecology of the new earth, carnivorous animals will return to the original herbivorous diet of Eden. Plants will provide sustenance and balanced nutrition for all who live there.

All too often we equate material prosperity with happiness. Heaven will define forever what happiness is.

Happiness Forever

In July 1971, New Guinea's Cargo Cult underwent a sudden revival. Four thousand natives joined their leader, Yeliwan Matthias, in a muddy trek down the humid slopes of Mount Turu. They lugged with them handfuls of mud and their most valued prize, World War II survey markers taken from the summit.

Yeliwan, a former Christian teacher, told his followers that at the conclusion of their pilgrimage a cornucopia of miracles would flood them with bountiful crops, numerous animals to hunt, birds of paradise in the jungle. As a fitting climax to their hard work 500 jet transports would roar in from America and unload crates of axes, mirrors, rifles, knives, and assorted goodies.

Of course it didn't happen. Yeliwan's promises failed as did the dreams of the New Ireland settlers. Even if it had happened, all of us know that a mountain of mirrors, a warehouse of computers, or a square mile of autos cannot manufacture happiness. Possessions don't bridge the gaps between people, or change hate to love, or eliminate war, or wipe out disease. Riches don't span the gaps between us and God.

The Bible would be a fake if it proposed blatant materialism as an answer to the human dilemma. God drives clear through to the very basics. He promises to change human nature. "For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will rise immortal, and we shall be changed." 1 Corinthians 15:52, NEB. This change leaves us with real personalities, recognizable and distinct, and with real bodies. But it removes sin and all the horrors that scabble in its train.

"See! The home of God is with men, and he will live among them. They shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death shall be no more, and never again shall there be sorrow or crying or pain. For all those former things are past and gone." Revelation 21:3, 4, Phillips.

There you have it! A complete change. A new home. A place to be at home forever.

Home at Last!

On the plains of ancient Mesopotamia a small city housed some of God's people. But Ur was not a place for them to be at home. So God led them out to far-away Canaan. Yet, even though they called it the Land of Promise, they were still not completely at home.

"We find them longing for a better country—I mean, the heavenly one. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he has a city ready for them." Hebrews 11:16, NEB.

You see, the new earth is also a place where God is perfectly at home. There He will make His home with His people. We are not the only pilgrims and strangers in the world. Jesus, the Son of God, came here and found it alien and dangerous. The world with its sin and hatred put Him on the cross.

If man is not at home here, and God is not at home here, then no wonder the whole creation groans

together. We wait with God and for God. The Christian's faith is in the One who longs as deeply as we do for the new home that is the true destiny of His people.

Memories of Eden tell us of God walking with the man and woman He loved, talking with them, finding communion with them. And in the new earth we shall find this companionship once more. The prayers, the praise, the songs that we offer our Father will then be tendered face-to-face.

When John wrote the Revelation, he was an old man; yet he had never forgotten his wonderful Lord who had loved him and died for him. When God let him see the future home his Lord had spoken of so many times, he saw Jesus everywhere.

Jesus pervades the visions of heaven. His light fills its city. His justice rules the nations. His presence gives peace. But for John the most wonderful thing of all was that we shall see His face. See Revelation 22:4.

What can we say more than John? He saw the new heaven. He saw the new earth. And there he found Jesus, the Lamb of God. He knew that no sin stood between him and that eternal home. All he had to do now was to wait faithfully for the reunion he had tasted in vision.

Listen. The Jesus of your new home is speaking: "Trust in God always; trust also in me. . . I shall come again and receive you to myself, so that where I am you may be also." John 14:1-3, NEB. □

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**Heaven
will be
real. Its
earth will
soil your
hands. The
juice of
its fruits
will run
down your
cheeks.**

GENESIS IS UNIQUE

Gerhard F. Hasel, PhD

The Bible does not teach a three-tiered universe.

The opening chapters of the Bible contain the history of beginnings (Genesis 1 to 11), focusing on natural and historical beginnings and the ensuing history of the world and mankind.

The first two chapters present the Biblical cosmology in a most comprehensive manner. Nowhere else in Scripture do we again find such a comprehensive and detailed narration of the origin of earth and man. While this is important in itself, it receives greater significance when one recognizes that the Genesis cosmology and the Genesis Creation account come to us without a rival. They are a unique production from the ancient world. Nowhere in the ancient Near East has anything similar been recorded.

The so-called Babylonian story of Creation, *Enuma elish*, is in reality a hymn in praise of Marduk by which the priest extolled his god and has only incidental references to creation through battle. The unique words about Creator, Creation, and creature—or God, world, and man in Genesis 1 and 2—set the entire tone for the wonderful and unique saving message of the Bi-

ble. We can say without hesitation that the world and man were in the beginning and remain now in the hands of the Creator. Scripture is able to speak about an end of the world and man only because God is the Creator of that world and man.

I

Before we attempt to speak of some significant aspects of the Genesis cosmology, let us refer to another unique feature of the Genesis Creation story.

In this sublime and elevated presentation of Creation we have the first conception of the world and mankind as totalities from their beginning. No man experiences and "knows" mankind as a whole, in its totality. These realities are not empirically knowable in their totalities. But in the Biblical Creation story these realities have come to expression in their totalities as originating from the Creator. This presentation of the totalities of God's created world and what is in it

depicts how the origin and continuing existence of the world and life is expressed in categories of time and space.

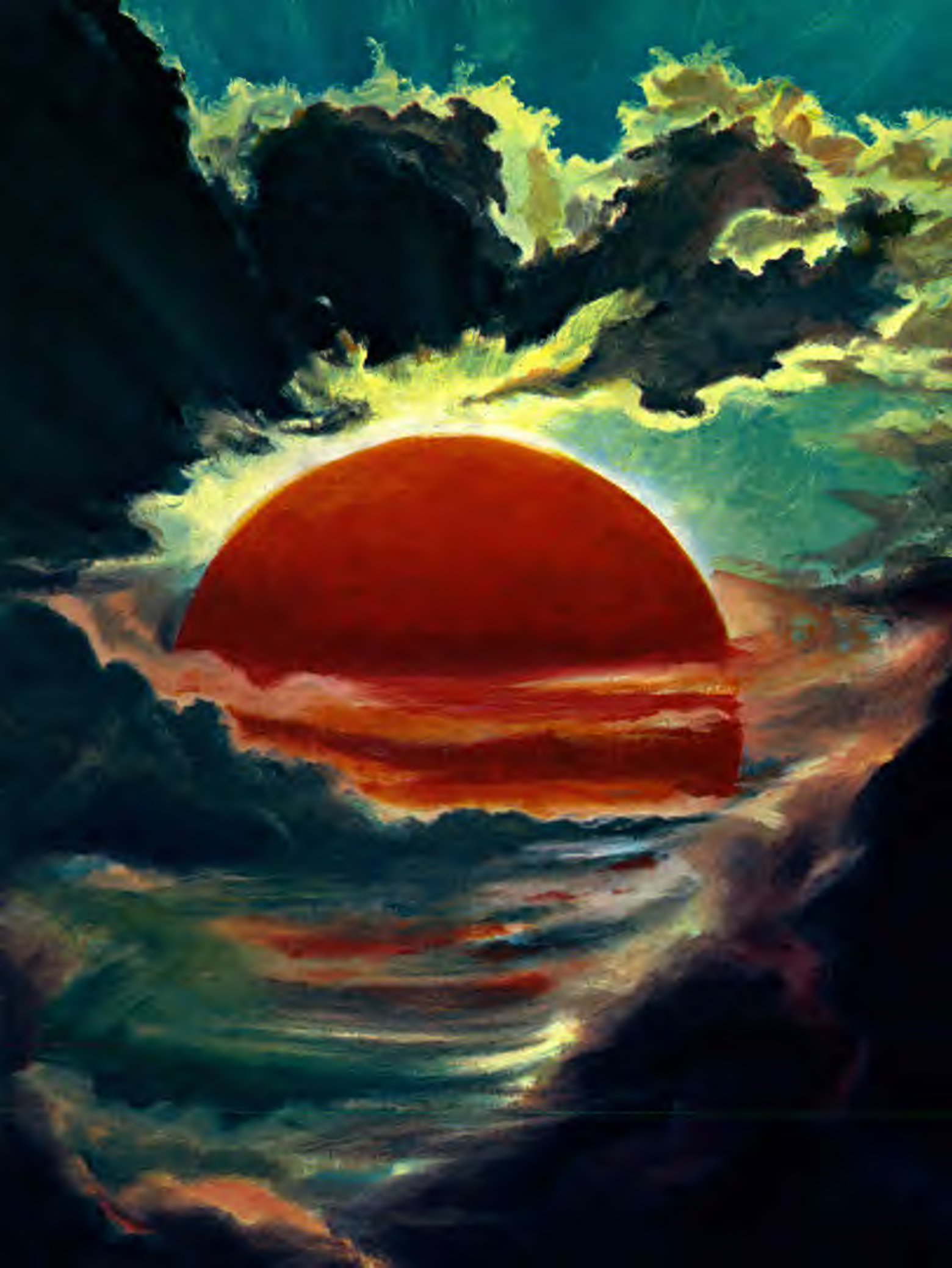
Against the widespread notion that it is unnecessary to engage in a dialogue between the Biblical presentation of Creation and creature and the scientific quest for understanding world and man, it is our contention that dialogue and interaction are not only desirable but essentially necessary. The sciences can deal only with partial spheres of knowledge but not of totalities. The Genesis cosmology and the Biblical account of Creation on the other hand deal with totalities.

II

The aim of presenting and describing the world in its totality is already revealed in the first verse of the Bible:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Genesis 1:1. This compact sentence makes four basic affirmations that are completely new in man's quest for an understanding of the world's origin and himself.

Dr. Hasel is professor of Old Testament at Andrews University.



**Dr. Hasel proves with brilliant scholarship
that contrary to many false charges, Moses did not borrow
the Creation story from other religions.**

The first affirmation claims that God made the heaven and the earth "in the beginning." There was, then, a time when this globe and its surrounding atmospheric heavens did not exist. Contrary to ancient Near Eastern mythologies, in which the earth had no beginning,¹ and in contrast to Greek philosophical thought in which the existence of the world from eternity is a basic presupposition,² the Genesis cosmology fixes by the use of the words "in the beginning" (*bereshith*), an absolute beginning for creation.³ The pregnant expression, "in the beginning," separates the conception of the world once and for all from the cyclical rhythm of pagan mythology and the speculation of ancient metaphysics. This world, its life and history, is not dependent upon nature's cyclical rhythm but is brought into existence as the act of creation of a transcendent God.

The second affirmation is that God is the Creator. As God and as Creator He is completely separate from and independent of nature. God and nature are two totally separate entities. Indeed, God continues to act upon nature, but God and nature are separate and can never be equated in some form of emanationism or pantheism.

The third affirmation is that God has acted in *fact* creation. The special verb "create" (*bara*) has in the Bible only the living God as its subject. It emphasizes that God alone is Creator and that nobody else has a share in this special activity. Any analogy to the idea of

"creation" in the spheres of human endeavor is totally removed from God's activity of creation. In the Bible, creation is an activity of God and of no one else.

Inasmuch as this verb is never employed with an accusative of matter, i.e. "stuff" *from which* God creates, this term⁴ contains alone with the emphasis of the phrase "in the beginning" the idea of creation out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*).⁵ Since the earth is described in the next verse (verse 2) in its rude state of desolation and waste, the word "create" in the first verse of Genesis must signify the calling into existence of original matter in the formulation of the world.⁶

The fourth affirmation deals with the object of creation, the stuff that is brought forth by divine creation, namely "the heaven and the earth." These two words are in the Hebrew language a surrogate for our term cosmos. A thorough investigation of the 41 usages of the compound terms "heaven and the earth" reveals that these words do not mean that God created the entire universe with its thousands of galaxies at the time he created the world.⁷ The focus remains on the planet Earth, our globe, and its more or less immediate surroundings.

The sublime ideas expressed in this first verse of the Bible set the tone for the entire Genesis cosmology. They are without analogues or parallels in the ancient world, a fact that needs to be stressed over and over.

III

Let us turn now to some of the more critical issues of modern times relating to the Genesis cosmology specifically and to the Biblical cosmology generally. This will involve a brief review of the understanding of cosmology and cosmogony in the Bible based on modern expositions.

It is widely believed that the Biblical cosmology, and thus that of Genesis, is mythological⁸ and maintains the ancient picture of a three-storied universe with a heaven above, a flat earth, and the nether world underneath.⁹ If this understanding is coupled with the assumption that the Bible supports a geocentric universe,¹⁰ then the Biblical cosmology seems hopelessly dated. On the basis of these views many modern men have become convinced that the Biblical cosmology is historically conditioned, reflecting a primitive and outdated cosmology of the ancient world.¹¹ Therefore, they say, the Biblical cosmology should be abandoned and replaced by a modern and more appropriate scientific one.

The highly influential scholar Rudolf Bultmann wrote some years ago that in the New Testament "the world is like a three-storied building. In the middle is the earth; above it is heaven, below it is the underworld"¹² made up of hell, the place of torment. Visual representations of the cosmology of the Old Testament, in the view of other writers, literally depict such a picture of a three-storied universe with physical storehouses of water, snow chambers of winds, windows of

A thorough understanding of the Genesis cosmology proves it to be head and shoulders above other ancient concepts.

heaven, in a vaulted canopy of the heavens above a flat earth at the center of which is a navel with waters under the earth and rivers of the netherworld.¹³ Such a mythological cosmology is now out of date, wrote Bultmann¹⁴ and inaugurated the famous program of "demythologization."¹⁵ Modern man cannot believe in such a mythological cosmology while simultaneously using electric lights and radios.¹⁶

What we have outlined so far highlights the common understanding of a widespread segment of modern men. It leaves open only two alternatives: either (1) accept the assumed mythological picture of the world, at the price of intellectual sacrifice (*sacrificium intellectus*), or (2) abandon the cosmology of the Bible and adopt one built on whatever happens to be the latest scientific theory.

We believe that these alternatives, which cut to the roots of man's understanding of God, are false. We say so because the Biblical cosmology is not mythological. Do we find on close scrutiny any evidence anywhere in the Bible for a three-storied universe? The so-called netherworld, the center of which is hell, exists only in medieval theology. It has no basis at all in Scripture! Scripture knows of no realm where the dead exist in a conscious or semiconscious state.

Does the Bible support the notion of a geocentric universe? If anything, the Bible is man-centered. The center of interest is man or, more accurately, the interrelationship between God and man.¹⁷ In

the Old Testament God is the center of everything,¹⁸ but not at the physical center. The Bible does not provide information of a physical center. According to it, the solar system could be geocentric, heliocentric, or something else.

Where has the interpretation arisen that the Bible presents a geocentric picture? This arose in post-New Testament times when leading theologians adopted the Ptolemaic cosmology of the second century AD and interpreted the Bible on the basis of this non-Biblical cosmology. The ignoble affairs associated with the famous trial of Galileo in the seventeenth century could have been avoided had the theological consultants of the church recognized that their interpretation of certain Bible texts was conditioned by tradition based on the cosmology of the pagan mathematician-geographer Ptolemy.

Although we are freed today from the Ptolemaic cosmology, a vast number of Biblical scholars still read the cosmology of the Bible through the glasses of the pagan cosmologies of the ancient Near East. What is so widely claimed to be the meaning of texts relating to the Biblical cosmology is in actual reality nothing but a dubious interpretation based on a highly problematical hermeneutic. Moreover, the claim that the cosmology of the Bible is mythological is of fairly recent origin.¹⁹ It is high time for Biblical teaching to be liberated from the domination of non-Biblical influences and categories of thought. It is our contention that

the Bible properly and honestly interpreted on its own terms is acceptable by the modern mind and does not present the kind of cosmology so widely attributed to it.

IV

Let us turn to specifics in order to investigate whether the Biblical cosmology is mythological and supports the widespread notion of a three-storied universe.

The magnificent Creation narrative of Genesis 1 speaks in verses 26-28 of man as "the pinnacle of creation."²⁰ Man appears as the creature uniquely "blessed" by God (Genesis 1:28); he is "the ruler of the world,"²¹ including the animal and vegetable kingdoms. All seed-bearing plants and fruit trees are for man's food. Genesis 1:29. This lofty picture of the divine concern and care for man's physical needs stands in such sharp contrast to the purpose of man's creation in Sumero-Akkadian mythology that one is led to conclude that the Bible writer described the purpose of man's creation deliberately to combat pagan mythological notions while, at the same time, emphasizing the man-centered orientation of Creation.

The Sumero-Akkadian myths unanimously depict the need of man's creation as an afterthought resulting from an attempt to relieve the gods of hard labor in procuring food and drink.²² This mythical notion is contradicted by the Biblical idea that man is to rule the world for himself as God's vicegerent. Obviously this antimythical

emphasis cannot be the result of adopting pagan mythical notions; rather it is rooted in Biblical anthropology and the Biblical understanding of reality.

The widespread notion that the Biblical cosmology reflects a pagan picture of a three-storied universe has cast its shadow broadly. But we must ask whether ancient mythical cosmologies had a clearly defined three-storied universe. The ancient Egyptian view in the Memphite theology was that the place of the dead was in the west and not in an underworld.²³ In Canaanite mythology the supreme deity El had his throne near the "sources of the Two Rivers, in the midst of the pools of the Double-Deep,"²⁴ which means that the gods did not always dwell in the heavens or the upper story of a supposed three-storied universe.²⁵ The Canaanite god Baal, who unfortunately was also worshiped at times by idolatrous Israelites,²⁶ had as his place of abode the mountain of Zaphon²⁷ in northern Syria at the mouth of the Orontes River.²⁸ These random examples make it clear that there was no uniform ancient mythical picture of a three-storied universe. The dead could dwell in the west; the gods in various parts on earth rather than in a heavenly world.

This is the first of two parts. Part two will appear next month.

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3. F. C. Rust, *Nature and Man in Biblical Thought* (London, 1953), pp. 32-35; and especially W. Eichrodt, "In the Beginning," *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, eds. B. Andersen and W. Harrelson (London, 1962), pp. 1-10.
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5. W. H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift*, second ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1967), p. 88: "*Bara* designates God's creating activity as effortless, free, and without analogy, as something which is not dependent upon pre-existing matter." It is true that creation out of nothing is never explicitly expressed in the Old Testament. Nevertheless,
- the omission of the accusative of matter (or material) along with emphasis on the uniqueness of the creation of the world reality cannot be brought into smooth harmony with the fact of a reshaping of pre-existent matter. So correctly Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, pp. 101-104; Childs, *Myth and Reality*, p. 41.
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10. This was the medieval view challenged by the Copernican revolution which gained its victory in the seventeenth century. See J. J. Landford, *Galileo, Science, and the Church* (New York, 1966); C. F. von Weizsäcker, "Kopernikus, Kepler, Galilei," *Einsichten, Gerhard Krüger zum 60. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt, 1962), pp. 376-394; R. Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1972), and the paper read at the Michigan Academy of Science and Arts, and Letters (April, 1973), by G. F. Hasel, "Founders of the Modern Understanding of the Relation Between Science and Religion" (18 pp.).
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13. For example the representation in Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis. The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (Schocken paperback; New York, 1970), p. 5, which is an exact duplicate of Fig. COS 50 in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 1, p. 4.
14. See Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth*, pp. 3, 4.
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A Story for Children

MOLDY MELON That Worked a Million Miracles

Kenneth examined the melons on display in the market and snorted, "None of these are bad enough."

Then his eyes lighted up. He had caught sight of a pile of overripe melons the grocer was obviously planning to throw away. Eagerly he pawed through them and soon found one that was truly rotten. "This should be moldy enough." He grinned as he picked it up.

He carried it to the counter and got out his purse. Two women shoppers saw him, and one whispered to the other, "That's what you can expect when a *man* shops. I wouldn't serve stuff like that to my dog."

Kenneth wasn't the least bit disturbed by her remark. He had plans for that melon the woman had never dreamed of.

The storekeeper almost refused to let him buy it. "The thing's rotten," he said, "and your wife will blame me for letting you take it home."

Kenneth only smiled again. What was the use of explaining? No one would understand.

Leaving the store with the precious cantaloupe, he hurried to the Department of Agriculture building where he knew his purchase would be appreciated.

You see, Kenneth was helping with some very important experiments. Several years before this, in 1939, Sir Alexander Fleming had discovered that moldy bread produces a chemical called penicillin, which is very helpful in treating disease. But in all the thirteen

years since that time, only enough penicillin had been produced to treat a handful of patients. A single dose might cost as much as twenty-five dollars. Yet there were hundreds of thousands of people who could be helped by the medicine—if only it could be produced cheaply. Since penicillin had first been found in moldy bread, it was quite reasonable to look for it in some other moldy food.

So when Kenneth's moldy melon was received at the laboratory, the mold was quickly scraped off and placed in a test tube.

A few days later the scientists were able to make their tests, and that moldy melon proved to be just the thing they were looking for. Working with it—and there was a lot of work involved—they were soon producing enough penicillin for everyone. In a few years the price came down from twenty-five dollars a dose to just a few cents. Millions of sick people have been helped.

A moldy melon! The grocer saw in it only junk. Kenneth saw in it a million miracles. What about yourself? Do you feel you aren't worth as much as other people, that you have to be content with some mediocre goal in life? Remember the melon. If a moldy melon with a man's help could work a million miracles, think what you can do with God's help!

Jesus said, I will make a person "more precious than fine gold." Isaiah 13:12. That means you!

Your friend,

Uncle Spencer

Your Bible Questions Answered

Ivan Crawford

LEGAL PIGS OR PRINCIPLE

In the May 1974 issue of "Signs," under the heading, "Why Not Eat Pork?" you state that the Mosaic health laws "are not legally binding on Christians today." How does this statement relate to what Mr. Francis D. Nichol said on page 151 of his book, "Questions People Have Asked Me"? I understand Nichol was an Adventist minister. He says, "The prohibition of unclean meats as formally set forth in Leviticus 11 is not a ceremonial one, uniquely and exclusively belonging to the Jewish dispensation, and therefore . . . it is still in force in our day."

M. M.

In my answer printed in the May 1974 *Signs* I did not say that the health laws of Moses are not binding. I said that they are "not legally binding." Legality has to do with a document, but principles go far beyond legality. They relate to the author, and not to his writings.

When the animals entered the ark at the time of the Flood, the clean ones entered by sevens, but the unclean entered by twos. See Genesis 7:2. Thus several hundred years before Abraham, the father of the Jews, was born, the matter of clean and unclean beasts was known and observed. These principles later became codified into health laws, laws not written by God's finger on tables of stone and placed in the ark, but laws and ordinances written by Moses under God's direction and placed in the side of the ark. See Exodus 24: 12; 34:1, 4; 25:21; Deuteronomy 31:26.

The health laws are in force today in principle, just as they were before being codified into a document, for health laws are not the exclusive right of any one people.

We do not, however, observe the part of the law that says that the person who touches the dead carcass "shall be unclean until the even." See Leviticus 11:25, 27, 28, 31, 39, 40. If we regarded these laws as legal, we would be bound to observe all. But we regard them as binding in principle. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31.

That the eating of swine's flesh is an offense to God is shown in Isaiah 66:17 and in other texts. If we love God, we should wish to "do all to the glory of God." We will "keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." 1 John 3:22.

I am fully in harmony with what Pastor Nichol wrote. The health laws are "in force," not legally or in the letter, but rather in principle.

IS CIRCUMCISION REQUIRED?

In Genesis 17:10-14 is told the story of the age-old covenant of which circumcision is the sign. Acts 16:3 says that Paul circumcised Timothy. And Jesus, in John 7:22, 23, does not rebuke the Jews for the practice of circumcision.

Must a man be circumcised in order to be right with God?

S. I.

God gave to the Hebrews the sign of circumcision by which they were to be known as God's people. The rite is still observed by Jews and Muslims, and many Gentiles circumcise for sanitary reasons.

Even in Old Testament times circumcision was used figuratively. Jeremiah speaks of Israel as being "uncircumcised in the heart." Jeremiah 9:26. And he told Israel that the "ear is uncircumcised." 6:10.

While in New Testament times the Jews were known as "the circumcision" (Galatians 2:8; Colossians 4:11), the early Christian

believers were divided on the matter. The circumcision party was headed by Peter, while Paul was the apostle to the "uncircumcision." Galatians 2:7, 8.

It is true that Paul circumcised Timothy, there being no stigma associated with the act. The question at issue became, *Must* Gentiles be circumcised to be accepted as children of God? The answer is that circumcision of the flesh is a negligible matter. What really matters is the circumcision "of the heart," and "faith which worketh by love." Galatians 5:6; 6:15; Romans 2:28, 29.

In John 7:22, 23 Jesus gave circumcision its larger interpretation—involving the whole person and not merely one part of him. This accords fully with Hebrews 8:8-12, where under the new covenant God's law is written in the heart.

HAS THE WEEK BEEN CHANGED?

Although I am not an Adventist, I am a born-again Christian, accepting the Bible as the inerrant word of God. I do resist the concept that I must accept the doctrines of your church in order to be a good Christian. And I believe that if facts can be found to refute your claims, the truth must be accepted. Here are some of my theses: 1. The weekly cycle is not based upon recurring astronomical phenomena. 2. The Bible in its original languages does not give any names for the days of the week. 3. The time of our Lord's crucifixion

BIBLE ANSWERS

If you have a Bible question you'd like help with, send your question to
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Please be sure to include your name and address as not all questions can be answered in the limited space of these columns.

has not been definitely fixed. 4. The weekly cycle was changed at the time of the shift from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. 5. The Qumran community had a 364-day year which when placed against the 365-day year changed the order of the weekly days. They used an intercalary month in order to adjust their year. 6. In "Answers to Objections," page 560, is a letter from Mr. James Robertson of the US Naval Observatory in which he supports an unbroken weekly cycle, even from pre-Christian times. However, this letter is dated 1932 and must therefore be now classified as out of date. L. C.

It is a pleasure for me to correspond with one who is a Christian. At least we can begin on common ground in that we accept the sacrifice of Christ and the validity of His Word, the Bible. I don't know who it was who told you you must accept the tenets of our church in order to be a good Christian. Somebody got things mixed up. First you are to find a good relationship with Christ, and then because you love the Lord you will want to do according to His will. It would be a travesty on religion to put it the other way around.

Another point in which I agree with you is that we must follow wherever truth leads. The church does not make truth. It discovers it and cherishes it. Whatever is according to God's will is truth. His "word is truth." John 17:17.

You start out by stating that the weekly order is not dependent upon "recurring astronomical phenomena." Why then do you go on to get involved with such things as intercalary months, the chronology of the crucifixion, the changes from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar, the 364-day year, the 365-day year, etc., etc. None of these had any effect whatever on the days of the week in their orderly succession. Thus in your question you have raised two distinct issues: the week, which has nothing to do with the movements of the heavenly bodies, and secondly, months, years,

and chronologies that do not affect the week at all.

In matters regarding the seventh-day Sabbath the question is, Did the Jews keep the weekly cycle inviolate? Romans 3:2 says that to the Jews were committed "the oracles of God." The Jews have their own calendar to this day, and Christendom has no quarrel with them in regard to the identity of the days of the week. If you were to visit the Near East today, you would find them giving their favorite salutation, "Shabat shalom," Sabbath peace. In Israel this term is used not only on the Sabbath, but on other days of the week as well. You mentioned that in the original languages no names are given for the days of the week. They are given. What we call Sunday they call "the first from the Sabbath." In Greek it is *hē mia tōn sabbatōn*. And so it goes through the week until the

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Sabbath comes. And then the cycle begins again.

Changes from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar—changes that were made at different times by different nations and which have not yet been made by the Russian Orthodox Church—these changes, or lack of changes, have in no way affected the weekly cycle. You may call Tuesday the tenth, and

Wednesday the twentieth or the thirtieth or whatever, but if Wednesday follows Tuesday, etc., the cycle is not broken. Likewise, when the Jews put additional months into their 360-day year they took care not to disturb the weekly cycle. Israel and Judah differed in some points of chronology, but in the identity of the Sabbath there was harmony. You spoke of the Qumran calendar. I quote from *The Damascus Document*, Article 13, paragraph 1: "Concerning the Sabbath, to observe it according to its ordinance: Let not a man do work on the sixth day from the time when the sun's disc is its full width away from the gate, for that is what it says: 'Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy.'" And then this document found at Qumran goes on to list numerous regulations concerning the Sabbath. Millar Burrows, in *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 359-361, gives a translation. This community calendar gives nothing else than a seven-day week and is in accordance with the Sabbath that Christ and the apostles kept.

Working on the principle that the Bible should explain itself, we note that at the time of the death of Jesus the Sabbath that was then kept was "the sabbath . . . according to the commandment."

You refer to Mr. Nichol's letter from the US Naval Observatory as being out of date seeing it is now 40 years old. But 40 years is nothing compared with the defined period of 2,000 years. To date we have no evidence that Mr. Robertson's statement should be refuted.

Some people refer to Joshua's "long day," others to certain changes from one calendar to another, others to the insertion of intercalary adjustments. But these have not affected the weekly cycle, as the records show. The Bible simply says, "Remember the sabbath day." God would not give His people an impossible assignment. It would seem, then, that we should simply accept the facts as they are until evidence of another kind is forthcoming.

I Have a Problem

Dick Winn

LOCATING THE SIN

Is it a sin to go to a movie or a drive-in? If so, why? What part of it is bad? Is it just wrong to be there in the midst of all those sinners? Then what about watching television?

Sin doesn't reside in electrical currents, in light waves, in celluloid, or even in dark buildings. It resides in people's hearts.

One useful description of sin is thinking or doing anything that will hurt us or other people, or hurt our relationship with God. Keeping this in mind, let's agree that the real issue in movies or television is not the location, or even necessarily the company. The real problem is with the content of the ideas that come across the screen. Almost without exception, the content uplifts ideas, values, and goals which are entirely contrary to the purity, love, and unselfishness of the Christian life. In almost every movie that is produced today, the values of sexual looseness, violence, frivolity, and just plain selfish fun, are either a featured part or strongly portrayed in a supporting role. In most cases the same can be said for television programming.

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that by beholding Christ we become changed into His likeness. This principle applies to other kinds of beholding as well. If we behold that which is trashy, our own value system will become trashy. Our privilege as Christians is to be transformed into Christlike people, so that we can reveal Him to others. But in order to do that, we must turn away from all that is contrary to Christ and His values and choose to fix our eyes upon that which is Christlike.

I seriously doubt that anyone can freely watch television or regularly go to the movies, and at the

same time maintain an exciting, personal contact with God in the study of His Word and in private prayer. The two fight against each other. The Christian will soon come to the place of rejecting one or the other.

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

DO I JUST SIT AND STARE?

I read that people shouldn't do things like kissing and hugging until they are married. I understand that the sex act shouldn't be practiced until marriage; but what's wrong with two lovers kissing each other? Marriage for me is a long way from now; but if I ever get engaged, am I supposed to just sit and stare? (Age 14)

We've got to go behind the acts of kissing and hugging, and think about *motives*.

Genuine love is an unselfish giving for the sake of another person. It isn't mixed up with heavy doses of selfish thrill-seeking. If a person isn't motivated by mature, self-disciplined love, kissing and hugging become cheap ways of getting kicks and thrills out of a relationship. One person uses another person's body to get pleasant thrills. Call it exploitation or romance or infatuation; don't call it love.

You are right in saying that two people in love should express that love. But there are many ways to express it other than the physical. In fact the physical is the most risky way, because it becomes so easily confused in its motives and so quickly dominates all the other ways of sharing love.

In building a relationship that is going to last, spiritual sharing must take first place—that is communica-

tion about common goals and values and your relationship with Jesus Christ. Next come the mental-emotional matters—the thoughts and feelings about everyday items. Physical expression comes third and must always be under the control of the first two. If it isn't under control, it will quickly take first place and destroy the beauty of the two higher communications.

Now to answer your question: I believe there may be a place for reserved kissing and hugging within a very mature relationship that is headed for marriage. But it must be carefully guarded lest it become an end in itself.

True enough, marriage should be a number of years into the future for you. What better time to learn how to communicate on those higher, more important levels!

MUST CHURCH BE A RELIGIOUS COMMERCIAL?

Whatever happened to the days when church was a place that you came to for a closer communion with God? More and more time is being taken up with dinging the congregation for money, for promoting a work bee, and for doing all the other business of the church. By the time it is all done, the minister has less than 30 minutes to "slip in a few words from God."

Now I'm all for supporting needy causes. But I really feel bad when I bring non-Christian friends and all they hear is appeals for money. Do you think the mainline churches

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have wandered from the right track to the point where we will need to leave them?

Your concern touches a responsive chord in many hearts. Large numbers will join you in longing for a church service that uplifts Christ in an attractive way. I cannot defend the increasingly secular emphasis in so many church services, for this signifies a loss of faith in spiritual priorities. When a worship service leads a congregation to the foot of the cross, all the concerns of money, support of the building project, and changed life-style come properly into place. And for the right reasons!

But the question remains: What can be done about it? I read of one congregation that anonymously pinned a note to the pulpit that simply read, "Sir, we would see Jesus." After some initial annoyance, the pastor realized that the message was valid and changed the whole tenor of his ministry. I do not know what the exact nature of the problem may be in your church, but it is certainly within your place as a member of the congregation prayerfully—and with evident love and tact—to speak to the persons involved.

There is little to be gained by leaving the church. God still chooses to work through the fellowship of the saints; and there are many people around you that could draw warmth from your enthusiasm. Spiritual renewal is beginning to flow through many congregations; and this is a great time to work within the ranks to fan those sparks into a roaring flame. Find a "prayer partner" in your church who has your same concerns; then regularly consult with Christ on how you may bring new life into your home church.

MUST I QUIT BEFORE I COME?

I want to come to Christ, but I am a heavy smoker, and I don't know if I can quit. What should I do? Surely Christ would not accept me if I smoke. Or will He?

If He won't accept you because you smoke, then surely He won't accept Bill because he's proud, or Fred because he's lustful, or Mary because she loses her temper, or Sam because he's prejudiced, or Cheryl because she fights with her husband, or—. In fact, I doubt that He could accept *any* of us. Just look at us! Corrupt sinners every one.

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Romans 5:8, RSV. We don't clean up our lives in order to come to Him. We come to Him so that He can clean up our lives.

The gospel tells us, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." Acts 16:31, RSV. After we come to Christ and are totally loved and accepted by Him, then He gives us the power to overcome our problems. And that includes all the power you need to conquer the smoking habit.

Now, isn't that good news?

A SHADE HERE AND THERE

Do you think there is anything wrong with wearing makeup? If so, why? I don't mean overdoing it. I mean just enough to make a different shade here and there.

The problem with makeup is located on the inside of a person, not so much on the outside. And that problem is usually a confusion about what makes a person truly beautiful. According to 1 Peter 3:3, 4, beauty is something that comes glowing from the inside. It comes in the form of a gentle and quiet spirit and a heart that is filled with the love of Jesus. The person who doubts that she has much of that inner beauty is usually the one who begins stacking on the exterior decorations. Perhaps she is trying to camouflage the loss of inner beauty.

I'm never as concerned about what people put on their face as I am about *why* they put it on. Since you're the only one who can answer the question about *why* you might put it on, you can also answer the question of *what* to put on.



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Your Health Questions Answered

Harold Shryock, M.D.

ENERGY FROM SUGAR

Does a person who is physically active need to eat more sugar than one who is sedentary?

The body requires a simple form of sugar, circulating in the blood, as its source of energy. But concentrated sugar in one's diet is the least desirable of the various sources of energy food. During the process of digestion, the body converts starch into simple sugar and thus into its energy food. Digestion can also convert fat and even protein into energy food.

Obviously, the person who is physically active requires more energy food than the one who is relatively inactive. But it does not follow that the person who is physically active needs to eat more concentrated sugar. He will need to eat more food, of course, but it is

not necessary for him to include larger amounts of sugar in order to provide the additional energy food. One of the greatest faults of the popular diet is that it contains too much sugar in the form of sweetening for pastries, desserts, beverages, and even prepared cereals.

SCIATICA

I am 57 years old, and for about ten days now I have been unable to carry on my usual work as a landscape gardener because of severe pain in my left leg. The pain involves the region of the hip, the back of the thigh, and the leg as far down as the ankle. Ordinarily the pain is dull, but when I try to get out of bed or when I try to stand after sitting, it becomes very severe. When I sneeze, the pain in the hip and thigh becomes intense. I can be quite comfortable when lying on my back in bed. What can I do to get relief?

This type of pain, often called "sciatica," is usually due to some

kind of pressure on part or all of the sciatic nerve. It may be caused by an injured disk between the vertebrae where the fibers of the sciatic nerve leave the vertebral column. Another common cause is a form of arthritis affecting the bones of the vertebral column in this same region and causing them to press on the sciatic nerve.

Conservative treatment of sciatica for a few days usually brings relief from the pain. But the pain may return, for no apparent reason, at almost any time in the future. In some cases surgical treatment brings relief which is quite lasting. The conservative treatment consists of strict bed rest with the patient lying on a mattress that has been reenforced by placing a sheet of plywood between the springs and the mattress. Local heat from a heating pad, heat lamp, or hot water bottle, applied over the painful area, often makes the patient more comfortable.

STRETCH MARKS OF PREGNANCY

I am a young mother, and my one child is just three months old. During pregnancy some small, scarlike lines developed in the skin of my abdomen and breasts. I thought they would disappear after the baby came, but I still have them. What can I do to make them disappear?

These lines are called *striae gravidarum* (stripes of pregnancy). During pregnancy the abdomen and breasts enlarge quite rapidly, as you know. This stretches the skin until some of the tiny elastic fibers in its deeper layer break, allowing this deeper layer to pull apart. The same thing occurs frequently in certain parts of the skin of persons who become obese.

There is very little, if anything, that can be done to remove these stretch marks. As time passes, they will gradually become less conspicuous.

MY RESPONSE

Would you like to respond to Christ by inviting Him into your life, but are you wondering how? Just follow these simple steps:

1. Tell Him you are sorry for your sins. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9.
2. Invite Him in. Jesus said, "I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him." Revelation 3:20, RSV.

3. Believe He comes in. Remember He said, "I will come in." Believe it. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe." John 1:12.

The next thing to do is to read the Bible regularly. Start by reading a chapter in the gospel of John every day.

We would love to know about your decision. If you'd like, please fill in the blank and send it to us so we can pray for you by name.

Dear "Signs" friends: I gave my heart to Christ today.

Please pray for me. My name is:

Address: _____

6

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EDITORIAL

Thank God for Jesus / 34

ARTICLES

Smiles Everywhere! / 2
Charles Getts

God Answers Prayer / 4
James Joiner

God Guides Your Life / 6
T. R. Torkelson

God Accepts Sinners / 10
Lawrence E. C. Joers, MD

God Makes You Useful / 12
Louis F. Cunningham

Sick But Unafraid / 14
Harold Shryock, MD

At Home Forever / 18
Walter R. L. Scragg

Genesis Is Unique / 22
Gerhard F. Hasel, PhD

Moldy Melon That Worked
a Million Miracles / 27
Uncle Spencer

REGULAR FEATURES

Your Bible Questions Answered / 28
Ivan Crawford

I Have a Problem / 30
Dick Winn

Your Health Questions Answered / 32
Harold Shryock, MD

In the News / 33
Jan Bristol

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IN THE NEWS

Jan Bristol

EXPLODING PRICES

U.S. News & World Report has projected the cost of goods and services for the year 2000—based on the overall inflation rate of 9 percent for the last two years. For example: a \$40,000 house now will cost \$622,000 then; a year in a private college, now costing \$3,750, will be \$45,500; a man's suit, \$85, will be \$213; a semi-private hospital room, \$78, will be \$290. Family income, however, will leap from \$14,200 to \$112,000.

CATHOLIC CHURCH DECLINES IN FRANCE

The Catholic Church in France faces some bleak realities. While 90 percent of the French are baptized Catholics, polls show only about 20 percent attend mass weekly (50 percent do in the U.S.). The number of priests has declined from 41,000 in 1965 to 37,000 this year, and is expected to slump below 32,000 next year.

LOW U.S. POPULATION GROWTH

U.S. population growth rate has dipped below 1 percent and seems headed toward zero, according to UN statistics. Children per couple approximate the 2.2 replacement level.

DANGER IGNORED

In spite of the danger of cancer, Americans smoked a record number of cigarettes last year, the Federal Trade Commission reported—602.2 billion!

It recommended in a report to Congress that a stronger health warning be put on the packs and that the government step up its public service campaign to point out the dangers of smoking.

JOGGING HELPS MENTAL PATIENTS

Jogging mixed with group therapy has produced astonishing results among psychiatric patients. Dr. Thaddeus Kostrubala, director of psychiatric education at Mercy Hospital in San Diego, states, "I've never experienced this kind of success in psychotherapy before."

For best results the jogging must occur immediately before therapy.

GIANT WINGED FOSSIL FOUND

Fossil hunters in west Texas have unearthed the remains of a previously unknown flying creature that possessed the largest wingspan of anything known to fly above the earth—six times that of the condor, the largest modern-day bird.



PEACE IN SPACE, WAR ON EARTH. Models are used to practice docking maneuvers for the Apollo and Soyuz spacecrafts which will join in orbit during the Soviet-American space mission beginning July 15. In Cambodia a young man flees with his aging father from a rocket attack.



Thank God for Jesus

I never saw Jim's face until I had heard his story. And when at last I saw it briefly, he was being led off to jail.

His path to prison began last Christmas Eve. Jim Ball, 20 years old, penniless and addicted to heroin, was desperate. His body cried for another fix, and he wished he could buy his mother a Christmas present.

A solution for both problems seemed within reach when an older friend suggested bank robbery. Jim was to swear later he did not know Knox had a sawed-off shotgun. The two addicts picked up teen-ager, JW, selected a bank, and held it up.

How much money they got I never learned. But as, moments after the hold-up, the trio jumped into their getaway car, two police cars closed in on them. Knox waved his shotgun out a window, an officer fired, and Knox crumpled, JW fled. Jim was arrested. Knox died.

Haled before Federal Judge Charles B. Renfrew of the Northern District of California, Jim pleaded that he had not known Knox was armed and had wanted only to buy his mom a Christmas present and help her pay the utility bill. The court found him guilty of armed robbery. Now he was arraigned for final sentencing.

Judge Renfrew talked to him. It was clear that he considered armed robbery an extremely serious crime. Jim said, "But I didn't think anyone would be killed." Renfrew answered, "When there is a gun, sooner or later someone will certainly be killed."

Jim had a lawyer who pleaded, "He only wanted to buy his mother a present." Renfrew was not impressed. He said, "Ball was getting \$90 a month unemployment from the government. He could have used some of that to help his mother. No, any money he robbed would have gone for his habit."

He leafed through the young man's record, then gazed solemnly into Jim's face. "Twice you violated parole before committing this crime. What I find most serious is that there is no evidence that you have faced up to your problem. Your mother

wants to help you." I glanced around. Jim's mother was standing nearby. "Your aunt wants to help you. And all that is good. But they can't really help you at all. You've got to help yourself."

He sentenced Jim to ten years in jail, then urged him, "While you are there, pass the high school equivalency test, learn a trade, and make use of the provisions that are available to break your heroin habit. Come out a constructive member of society. But remember, you've got to help *yourself*. No one else can help you."

No one to help you. All of us face the final judgment, when God, the Ancient of Days, will sit at the bar of eternal justice, and all who have ever lived will be summoned to appear before Him. Daniel 7:10, 11; 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Will we be found guilty in that dreadful day? Or shall we face the righteous Judge with our sins cleansed and our records clear?

We have all broken God's law. The Bible is very clear about that. To break God's law is to sin. 1 John 3:4. All have sinned. Romans 3:23. The punishment is not ten years in jail but death. Romans 6:23. Since all of us are guilty, we all face the sentence of eternal death.

If you tend to take Judgment Day lightly, do as I did a few weeks ago. Visit a courtroom—most are open to the public—and watch.

Punishment for crime is no trifle to be carelessly ignored. Punishment for sin is even more serious—the end of everything for you forever.

Fortunately there is hope. If you apologize for your sins and ask for help, Jesus Himself will help you. He has promised, "I will help you." Isaiah 41:10, RSV. Paul found Christ's offer more than sufficient. He rejoiced, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13, RSV. You don't need to go on in your old sinful way. You can be a new person in Christ, conqueror of every evil tendency, beautiful with a character like the character of the lovely Jesus.

And then you can face the judgment unafraid. Thank God for Jesus Christ!

L. M.

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