

SIGNS
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OF THE TIMES



TIME RUNNING OUT...

see inside

RESOLVE:
TO FOLLOW
JESUS





JAMES RABE

COSTLY FLOPS

THE SUPER DROME, a huge dome-shaped sports centre near the main commercial section of New Orleans, U.S.A., is an impressive sight. As you stop to admire it, to take photographs, you will almost certainly be told by some passer-by that the building should have cost \$50 million, but the final accounting revealed a tab of \$176 million, due to inflation, labour difficulties, and the usual problems.

There are some red faces around New York City, as red as the shiny new double-decker Leyland buses imported from Britain. It seems someone forgot to measure the buses, and the bridges under which they are supposed to pass. The \$US98,000 juggernauts are just a foot too high for the bridges.

And coming nearer home we read an almost daily barrage of adverse criticism in our newspapers of the Melbourne underground rail loop, currently under construction. "A costly flop!" snort the experts. "Stations in the wrong places. Millions of dollars down the drain."

So the account could continue, of opera houses, city squares, freeways, public works of all description, begun in high enthusiasm, costed reliably, and all arrangements made for funding the project. Then begins the bickering, the interminable delays, the escalating costs, and often there comes the bitter realization that the dream will not really come true, that the supposed benefits of the scheme are not there.

As in the corporate efforts of mankind to create better living conditions, so it often is in individual attempts to bring meaning and value to our lives. With high resolve on or around January 1, we declare that this year things really are going to be different and better in so many ways. And almost invariably, not very long after, we begin to entertain suspicions that we may be costly flops. The high idealism that inspired our resolution has waned. Along with our goals of personal development there are sometimes even purchases we have made, believing them to be consistent with our new way of life, remaining to taunt us and remind us of shattered dreams and easily forsaken objectives.

Evidently this very human trait of character has been around for some time. Christ, speaking to His disciples of the cross they were called to bear, continued with these words: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." Luke 14:28-30.

Christians have one great advantage over business enterprises and their gigantic construction works. We can sit down and calculate in advance exactly what it will cost us to build a tower of Christian witness to the world around us. If we neglect to do this, then the danger of erecting foundations and failing to go on with the job becomes very real. Those who take the name of Christ without counting the cost are a living reproach to God's church.

The cost is easily reckoned. The towers the Lord would have us build cannot be built in our strength alone. Discipleship involves the complete and permanent renunciation of personal ambition and of worldly interests. If we are unwilling to go all the way, we may as well not even start. Yet paradoxically, as C.S. Lewis points out in *"Mere Christianity"*, Christian witness costs everything and nothing at the same time. In making a total surrender of everything, the things in his life he thinks good, as well as the things he considers bad, the Christian steadily comes to the realization that he hasn't given up very much at all, certainly little enough in comparison to what his Lord has given for him.

We need to remind ourselves constantly of this. It is so easy to become a costly flop, to commence the foundations of discipleship only to find that we have not really counted the cost. Some cherished ambitions and worldly possessions interfere with service for the kingdom of heaven. Christ's entire ministry on this earth warned people against lightly assuming the responsibilities of Christian stewardship.

At this time of the year we tend to review the progress of our lives, looking with regret and dissatisfaction at the half-hearted nature of our commitment and resolving anew that by God's grace our witness will be more effective in future. The message from the Word of God is relevant both to those who have previously made no profession of Christianity and those who have tried and failed. It is a message of comfort and warning, offering an invitation to eternal life, and spelling out the cost of rejecting the invitation.

Can you claim to be a born-again Christian? Have you faithfully counted the cost? Do you understand, as Moses did, that the pleasures of sin for a season cannot compare with the riches of Christ? (Hebrews 11:26.) At the commencement of this year of grace, 1977, may the Lord give us all eyes to see clearly the free gift of salvation contrasted with the terrible price of being numbered with the costliest flops of all, those who will experience final separation from our Lord and Saviour at His coming.

James H. Rabe.





A Story for the
New Year . . .

The inevitable Resolution

ALTHOUGH NEW YEAR'S EVE is traditionally a time of rejoicing and happy fellowship, there is one New Year's Eve that stands out in my memory because it held none of the joy and excitement that one might expect. In fact, it was definitely the most unhappy New Year's Eve I have ever endured. We can't always organize the events in our lives to suit the mood of festive occasions.

I was in my late twenties at this time—almost thirty, to be exact—married with two children (David, six, and Linda, almost nine). But the marriage had gone sour—worse, it had rotted and fallen apart. The man I should respectfully call my husband had finally walked out and gone his own way, rather to the relief of us all. He should have been doing a stretch in the “cooler,” but with a brilliant barrister to get him off the hook, he had managed to escape a gaol sentence. Well, good for him! While I believe in justice, still I bear no malice. I had no desire to see my own husband incarcerated, even though our marriage was all washed up and finished.

I had close friends who had migrated to Australia a few years previously, and with whom I still corresponded. Hearing now of my problems, Keith and Nora Bradfield wrote and urged me to leave England and join them in this country.

It sounded like a great idea under the circumstances. I'll spare you a lengthy recital of all that followed; briefly, I finalized divorce proceedings and made the necessary arrangements to migrate to Australia with the children. I was convinced that it was going to be a successful new start, leaving behind all the misery and scandal of a life I'd be happy to forget.

On arrival in Australia, I went to spend a few weeks with the Bradfields in a country town in Victoria. While I was staying with them they introduced me to Gary, a neighbour who often visited their home. I suspect they might have had ideas of finding me a new companion, but right then I was not particularly interested in getting romantically involved with another man. Furthermore, being an English city girl, I found the

Australian countryside unattractive at first. I decided I'd rather settle in Sydney.

Settled in Sydney

I was not entirely destitute. Two years earlier I had inherited a modest sum of money that now helped ease my situation. But of course it didn't last long in this new country, with all the expense of trying to establish some kind of home. I soon ran into difficulties I had not anticipated. I found that rents were high and jobs were scarce. So what else was new? My problems were not unique, as any deserted or divorced woman could have told me.

When I settled in Sydney I was ill-equipped to earn a living. In my late teens I had been training for a professional career, but that prospect had evaporated when a road smash left me severely crippled. With skilful medical and surgical treatment I finally recovered, but it took more than two years and prevented me from entering upon the career I had planned.

Soon after my recovery, in youthful innocence I had married a man whose deceptively charming manner hid much that was dishonest and evil, together with a total lack of fidelity to his marriage vows. I was blissfully unaware of this at the time. Although I now had a home of my own, I did not possess any adequate training to earn a living. But that did not worry me. Being young and in love with my newly acquired husband, I could not foresee that there would be any necessity for me to go out to work in the future. When I knew that our first baby was on the way, I thought that my happiness was complete. How mistaken could I be!

So here I was now, ten years later, with two children to support and forced to work long hours at hard, menial jobs to earn enough to exist. Besides that, I had to pay out some of my meagre income to a woman who minded the children for me after school. (There were no adequate social security pensions for deserted wives at that time.)

I had enjoyed a happy and secure childhood, guided by good parents who stressed the importance of Bible reading, prayer, church attendance—all the moral virtues—so I should at least have had a confident faith in God to support me in my difficulties. But I began to experience nagging doubts about the relevance of all these carefully cultivated Christian attitudes.

It seemed to me that it was fine for all those happy folk with their nicely ordered lives and comfortable social patterns. But I now lived in a different atmosphere. I knew the rough side of life, the struggle and heartache. I came in contact with the “leeches” who would try to take advantage of an unfortunate woman. Socially I was more or less an outcast—a lone woman with a couple of kids.

If you think that our enlightened society has changed, that deserted or divorced wives today are as respected and accepted as anyone else in society, I'd say that you have little knowledge of the situation. Such women are still largely regarded as misfits—people you aren't quite comfortable with, people to be pitied and charitably helped occasionally, but mostly to be excluded from your social circle.

I'll skip the details; I am not looking for your sympathy, but you might understand when I say that within a few months the experiences I passed through left a bitter, cynical lump where my heart used to be.

Gary Again

At first I found a church near our lodgings and attended regularly. But I did not sense there any great warmth of Christian welcome. Perhaps that was my own fault. Maybe a defensive attitude on my part tended to keep other members from being too friendly. Anyway, I finally ceased to attend, partly because my sensitive nature made me feel that while some of the folk tolerated my divorced state, they did not quite accept me, and partly from sheer physical weariness and a desire to “rest in” at the week-end after the exhausting labour all week, all of which was necessary to earn a living. In my discouragement I began to feel mistakenly that even God did not care very much about me.

When the Christmas holidays were nearly due, my friends in Victoria wrote and said, “Do come down to the country

by Rosemary Brent*

and stay with us over Christmas and the New Year." I reasoned that such a holiday was just what I needed. It would be good for the youngsters, too—fresh country air and space to run about, all that kind of thing. So I gladly accepted the Bradfields' invitation and we went down two weeks before Christmas.

The second day I was there Nora Bradfield invited Gary around to their home. When I mentioned Gary earlier, I don't think I told you that Gary was a divorcee with a seven-year-old daughter. They lived in a comfortable home further down the same street, cared for by an elderly housekeeper.

I found I liked Gary very much. His appealing sense of humour and kind-hearted nature made him very pleasant company. He also understood the problems of one-parent families. He began to visit or take me out almost daily during my holiday, and we got along fine. As the days passed there followed some long heart-to-heart talks between us. Within three weeks the Bradfields had decided that my friendship with Gary was moving along nicely and would soon provide a wonderful solution to my problems.

On New Year's Eve just about everyone in the street was invited to a big party on the lawns of a large nearby home. Of course Gary planned to take me, but I declined. I made the excuse that the children were tired from all the lovely country activity and I didn't want them to be up late. Gary then offered to stay and spend the evening with me, but again I declined. I wanted to be alone.

So, as I told you at the beginning, here I was on New Year's Eve—my first in this country—feeling absolutely dejected. And you thought that things were looking up for me—that there was a growing romance between Gary and myself?

Oh, sure! You are right about that. Gary attracted me very much. To be quite honest, I guess I must admit that I had fallen in love with him. Obviously he had also developed a deep affection for me. Now he had come right out in the open and laid it on the line: last night he had proposed to me.

And that was why I was so unhappy!

A New Year's Resolution

Tonight I had to get the whole situation clearly analysed in my mind. More correctly, I needed to make a firm resolution. Yes, a New Year's resolution, if you like, though right now I wasn't thinking too much about the New Year.

After everyone had left for the party (still saying, "I wish you'd change your mind and come with us"), I sat alone in the house for a long time. Around 11 o'clock I went outside and walked in the sweet-scented night air of the garden. I strolled down a sloping lawn in the half-moonlit darkness to where the stars were reflected in the still water of a small pond.

I realized that, right from the time Gary had proposed, there really had been no doubt at all in my mind as to what my resolution would have to be, and what it would cost me. That was the reason why I felt so lonely and depressed. A rosy future with a chance of happiness had loomed before me—but it could never be.

Yes, Gary had proposed to me all right, but it was not the kind of proposal you have in mind. It was *not* a proposal of marriage.

Gary had proposed that I merely go and live with him. "After all," he had reasoned, "we are both mature people. We've both had disastrous marriages. Why risk disaster again? We can just live together and be happy while still being entirely free. If either of us decides it was a mistake, we can just call the arrangement off without the trauma of a divorce. In this modern age it is the 'done' thing—the most sensible thing.

"After a while, if the arrangement works smoothly, then we can get married if we both want it that way. But to begin with, I think we'd be foolish to consider marriage. However, if it makes you feel better about it, we can go away for a week and pretend to have been married; and you can use my name. No one need be any the wiser. It will be wonderful to have each other for company, and great for the children to have two parents again. Please don't try to decide at once. Take a couple of days to think it over carefully."

I had given the subject much serious thought, as he had requested. Nevertheless, I could still come to but one conclusion: the inevitable resolution to refuse Gary's "proposal," and battle on with life alone. I knew, also, that I must take God back into my life to help me face the future with courage and joy while I made a happy home without a father, for my children.

I knelt on the grass by the little pond and prayed, and while I was still there I heard whistles and shrieks and car horns in a great, ear-splitting cacophony

that heralded the arrival of the New Year. I also heard church bells ringing joyously in the night.

God's Solution

Next day a frank talk acquainted Gary with my New Year's resolution. I explained that my Christian principles prevented me from accepting his proposal, for, as the words of the Christian marriage ceremony so expressly state: "Be ye well assured that if any persons are joined together otherwise than God's Word doth allow, their union is not lawful." I could not accept a union that did not have the approval of God. I knew that, no matter how much permissiveness might flourish in the world today, no true happiness will be found unless we follow the Ten Commandment law which God gave to guide our conduct, and one of its explicit requirements is: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

Gary showed open disappointment over my decision, but he said, "If those are your principles, I wouldn't try to persuade you against them. I'm afraid my outlook on marriage has become rather cynical, but I admire your stand."

Two days later the children and I returned to Sydney. The Bradfields were quite upset that my romance with Gary had ended abruptly, but they did not press me to tell them the reason.

☆ ☆ ☆

Perhaps you wonder how life has turned out for me since then? I'll tell you. The going was rough, but I did not regret that New Year's resolution. God became again a very comforting presence in my life and gave me the necessary strength to maintain a happy Christian home for my children. But He did not decree that I should remain lonely for the rest of my life.

Some four years later I married an old friend of my brother—a good Christian and a wonderful, happy-natured companion. I had known Peter previously in England, so when his company sent him out on a trip to Australia, naturally he looked me up. He decided to remain in Australia and it all started from there. We took our time; it was a romance that progressed slowly, but eventually we married. Of course, we have had our ups and downs—who hasn't? But it has been a good marriage. What counts is that we have established a happy Christian home together and my children love Peter. And so do I. ★★

*Rosemary Brent is a pseudonym. No real names are used in relating this story.



ARCH HEFREN

plaintalk

BETHLEHEM

BETHLEHEM EPHRATAH, an insignificant village in the ever-turbulent country of Palestine, was the birthplace nearly two thousand years ago of the most influential man ever to enter the life of this earth. Lump together Mohammed and Napoleon, Buddha and Hitler, Confucius and Einstein, and they all have had a less profound influence on the life of this planet than has Jesus, the son of Mary and the Son of God, according to which aspect of His life you consider.

If you think that an exaggerated claim, then consider some of His achievements. Where else, other than where Christianity has penetrated, have women been raised to privilege and honour as a consistent pattern of thought? Who else has taught an amazing amalgam of restful love and the dynamic overthrow of entrenched systems of man's selfishness?

Would you be convinced of His importance? Then observe how viciously or subtly the powers of darkness have sought either to destroy Him or to nullify His influence. A Herod tried to take His life and was prepared to slay a whole generation of Jewish children to achieve his end. He believed in the Christ! The Jews pursued Him with a malignity that reached its height at the cross. Talk if you will of their reputation as religious lights; but those same men regarded with contemptuous indifference Barabbas, whom they accused of the same crime that they tried to pin on the Christ, a claim to Messiahship and rebellion against Rome. Why the indifference to one and the hysterical hatred against the other by the same men at the same time?

You see, they sensed clearly what T. S. Eliot has depicted so vividly in his poem, "The Journey of the Magi." No sloppy sentimentalism this, but an uncomfortable awareness of the fact that the humble birth at Bethlehem marked the end of an era and the ushering in of a dramatically new one which could never live in harmony with the old. Not merely had a new day dawned. An old dark one where evil had seemed to triumph had met its fate. The death throes might be prolonged, but the end was sure. "Peace on earth, good will toward men," was

the theme of this new dispensation. Before the Babe of Bethlehem would die He would exclaim, "It is finished." God and man, so long estranged, would be reconciled. Man could know in his heart the ineffable peace of heaven, even though about him raged the violence and torments of earth.

Civilization would never be the same again. Art, culture, and education would be profoundly influenced by the life and teachings of this tiny baby. A Louis XIV might produce a Versailles, but Jesus would leave a legacy of thought and power that would send a Schweitzer to the lonely jungles of Africa, that would take a Morrison to China, and a Carey to India. Eighteen hundred years after He lived on earth His life would save England from the horrors of the French Revolution through the ministry of John and Charles Wesley, while at the same time it would lend peace and hope to the poorest labourer drawing his last earthly breath in a garret.

Decline to believe in Him you may, and be infinitely the poorer for it; but deny His existence you cannot. No atheist is daring enough to deny the reality of His earthly life. The memorials of His presence lie all about us. But if you reluctantly agree that that is the case, you are left with the awkward question, Why did an obscure member of a despised race living His life in an unattractive country and spurned by His own countrymen leave an influence which has lasted powerfully ever since?

He founded no church, He claimed no special privileges, He enjoyed the advantages of neither birth nor wealth, and yet He turned the world upside-down. Insignificantly educated, He confounded the wise men of His day, and His sayings still represent the highest pinnacles of human philanthropy today. Why? More insistently still, there have been thousands of people with all these advantages who have experienced the dynamic of a changed life He alone can produce. Why? Bethlehem demands an answer! What have you to give? If you want to know the secret, take Him into your life. He has promised to come. Bethlehem need not be merely a place, but an experience. I dare you to try it! ★★





Something to last

"ANGIE," I said to my thirteen-year-old daughter, "do you know if the store down the street has writing-ink?"

I had just found an old fountain pen, apparently in good condition, in a desk drawer while giving it its first cleaning out in I-don't-know-how-many years. The bright idea flickered in my mind to put the pen back into active duty.

The request was greeted with a blank stare. There was a brief pause while she tried to comprehend the import of my request. Then she answered: "A bottle of what, Daddy?"

"A bottle of ink. You know—writing-ink."

"Writing-ink? Whatzat?"

"Angie, don't act smart. It's what you put in a fountain pen, of course."

"What's a fountain pen, Dad?"

I gave up on her. I know when I am licked.

Later that day I went confidently to the stationery department of a small store and began to look. To my surprise I found no writing-ink.

"There must be so great a demand for it that they've sold out temporarily," I mused, "but I'll ask an assistant to be sure."

There was a shop girl rearranging some goods on the counter.

"Pardon me, miss, but where could I find the writing-ink?"

She gave me the same blank stare, then exactly the same answer that I had heard earlier: "A bottle of *what*?" However, she put more emphasis on the last word.

I repeated the request, wondering why so many people were having hearing problems that day.

"Oh, you mean a ball-pen refill. Yes, they're . . ."

"No," I insisted, "a bottle. A bottle of washable blue-black writing-ink for a fountain pen."

"You mean a cartridge refill for a pen?"

I was getting somewhat impatient. "No," I insisted. "All I want is a *bottle* of ink."

She looked at me suspiciously, as if I had asked her for a buggy whip or a moustache cup. "Just a minute," she murmured. "I'll call the manager."

Later, with the manager's help, we found three bottles of writing-ink, hidden behind other goods.

"We don't get many requests for this any more," the manager explained.

That is only one recent example when I have been smacked in the face with the fact that times are changing. It is not pleasant, but I must reluctantly admit that at the age of fifty-one

I am strictly ancient history—a prehistoric man trying to cope with the modern world.

Something Unchanging

This is a rapidly changing world. It has been said that there have been more changes affecting our life-style in the past twenty-five years than in all the years of history preceding. And even more revolutionary changes are predicted in the next twenty-five years.

Confused by all these changes, many people are looking for something to which they can anchor their faith—an immutable standard of conduct during this age of situation ethics, when too often each person decides for himself what is right under the particular circumstances.

That "something" does exist, and is available to everyone who wants it. It is a book that has been translated into well over a thousand languages. Practically every bookstore and library in the Western world has it.

Did we say "a book"? This is not an accurate description, for actually it is a library of sixty-six books, written by some thirty-five authors over a period of about sixteen hundred years. The last of these books was written almost nineteen hundred years ago. This library is called by various names: "The Holy Bible," the "Word of God," and the "Scriptures" are three of the more common.

One amazing thing about this book is that it is still up to date; its principles are still valid in this age of computerized technology. Though not a science textbook, it gives principles of science which were later "discovered" by man—for instance, the idea of a round earth (Isaiah 40:22). And only by receiving information from an omniscient Being could the Biblical prophets foretell events which later came to pass exactly as predicted. John, to give one example, told of a time when man would have the power to destroy the very earth on which he lives (Revelation 11:18).

This Book, inspired by the Lord Himself (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21), was written by men whom He had chosen to be His spokesmen. Its theme throughout is Jesus, the Messiah, or Saviour from sin. The Old Testament, written before He came to live among men, begins with the story of His creating the earth (Genesis 1; John 1:1-3, 14; Hebrews 1:2). The third chapter of the Bible predicts Jesus' final victory over Satan (Genesis 3:15), told in symbolic language. The tabernacle service of the Hebrews pointed to a coming Saviour, as did their holy days. The Passover, for instance, not only commemorated the deliverance from Egyptian slavery, but

by Eugene Lincoln

Eugene Lincoln lives in Tennessee, but we are happy to see his manuscripts arrive on the editor's desk. They have a gently original touch.

also pointed forward to Jesus as the Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7) to help man escape the slavery of sin. The prophet Daniel, living over five hundred years before the Christian era, told the very year that Christ would begin His ministry on earth and also the year of His death (Daniel 9:25, 26), using a day to represent a year, as was often done by other prophets (Ezekiel 4:6). Micah 5:2 prophesied the name of the town in which Christ would be born, and Isaiah 53 told of His life and shameful death.

The New Testament tells of His life among men and of His establishing a church. It tells also of His death on the cross for sinful man. Both the Old and New Testaments tell of His future return to earth in power and great glory, to reward the righteous and punish the wicked (Psalm 50:3 and John 14:1-3, to mention only two). The Bible gives many signs by which we may tell when His second coming is near (Zephaniah 1:14-16; Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; 2 Timothy 3:1-5, and others).

But most important of all, the Bible points to Jesus as the only One who can save from the penalty of sin all who accept Him (John 1:12 and 3:16; Matthew 11:28-30; Acts 4:12; Romans 6:23).

The Enduring Book

A hundred or so years ago many sceptics were stating in their writings that soon the Bible would be a "dead book," not read by anyone. But Isaiah, long before them, had predicted something altogether different; he had said, "... the Word of our God shall stand for ever." Isaiah 40:8.

Who was right? Isaiah, of course! The books of these men who predicted the end of the Bible now gather dust in libraries; they are seldom read by most men. But the Bible continues as a best-seller.

Writing-ink may be almost a thing of the past, along with many other items once common. But the Bible remains, and shall always remain, never becoming obsolete. It still has the answers to solve the problems of modern man. But, like medicine, it must be applied to the person needing it. It is no good on a table or shelf.

Here is an invitation and a challenge. Don't judge the Bible before you have read it. Do you remember foods that, as a child, you "knew" you would never like? But you tasted them, and now they delight your palate. Doesn't the Bible deserve the same trial? As the psalmist said: "O taste and see that the Lord is good." Psalm 34:8.

If you have trouble understanding the language of the King James Version, try reading a modern version such as the Revised Standard Version or The New English Bible. Read something about the advantages and limitations of the various versions.

Start perhaps with the Gospel of John. Then read the rest of the New Testament. After this, read the Old Testament. Or maybe you would enjoy studying it by the topic method. One excellent aid to this kind of study is "Here's Life Bible Guides," available free of charge and with no obligation by writing to: HERE'S LIFE, Box 4112, G.P.O., Sydney, N.S.W. 2001, or HERE'S LIFE, P.O. Box 10-125, Balmoral, Auckland 4, New Zealand.

But whatever method you use, begin now to read the greatest Book ever written. The essayist Francis Bacon wrote, "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." The Bible is one of the latter. Read it. Digest its great message, and let it change you into a new, far better person. ★★



Just look at me;
I'm doing it again;
The same mistake.
Oh! Will I ever overcome?
Am I destined always
To be a failure?
How can I beat
The unbeatable?
Overcome that which is
Bigger and stronger than I?
Yesterday I swore
I would never again succumb;
But today,
Just look at me;
I'm doing it again.

"I'm Doing
it Again!"

☆ ☆ ☆

The same mistake.
Oh! Will I ever overcome?
But Christ can save you,
The Living Word declares.
Do you mean
I'm not lost after all?
I can beat it
Through Christ?
Then Jesus take me,
Help me,
Be my Strength;
For I'm too weak—
Too used to saying,
"Just look at me;
I'm doing it again."

A.B. Marchant.

QUIZ

Twenty Important Questions for All Who Are Seeking Contentment in 1977

ARE YOU MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR LIFE?

by David Gunston

FEELING REFLECTIVE? Wondering if life shouldn't be offering you more than it does?

Then here's the quiz for you. Twenty thoughtful questions to find out just how much you're getting out of life—or how much you can get out of life in 1977.

Each question requires a straight YES or NO. (Circle the answer which you feel is your response.)

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. However humble or mundane it is, is your daily job a really useful and worth-while one? | YES | NO |
| 2. Whatever troubles you may have, are you usually bright and jolly when in the company of others? | YES | NO |
| 3. Is your sense of justice strong enough to make you try to right wrongs whenever you are able to do so? | YES | NO |
| 4. Are you a faithful and loyal friend? | YES | NO |
| 5. Can other people truly say that their lives would be harder but for your help? | YES | NO |
| 6. Does your present degree of contentment owe anything to a faith in higher things? | YES | NO |
| 7. Do you try to keep an open mind on every subject? | YES | NO |
| 8. Are you tolerant of other people's failings? | YES | NO |
| 9. Do you try to pursue as many hobbies as you can? | YES | NO |
| 10. Are you much sought as a giver of advice or counsel? | YES | NO |
| 11. Do you try to "open windows" in the lives of others? | YES | NO |
| 12. Do you keep money in its proper place in your scheme of things? | YES | NO |
| 13. Do you appreciate the true value of simple things in life? | YES | NO |
| 14. Are you a willing, rather than an apathetic, sort of person? | YES | NO |
| 15. Is there any serious side to your nature? | YES | NO |
| 16. Do you have some degree of ambition both for yourself and those around you? | YES | NO |
| 17. Can you truthfully admit to achieving a deep, lasting and satisfying human relationship with even one other person? | YES | NO |
| 18. Do you try to bring a little warmth into the world, your own special kind, that is? | YES | NO |
| 19. Are you always clear in your mind between the things in life that must be changed and those that cannot be changed? | YES | NO |
| 20. Are you basically a happy person? | YES | NO |

☆ ☆ ☆

NOW FOR THE VERDICT

Count up the number of times you truthfully answered YES out of the 20.

If you scored more than 12 then you are indeed living life fully and richly, and a score of 15 or more reveals you as a person who has managed to make as much of life as is usually possible.

If you scored under 12 you must accept the fact that life could be offering you more if you wanted it. Greater contentment could be yours if you would make the effort to get more out of your life simply by putting more into it. Go back to the questions where you had to answer NO and see what you can do about it, now. It'll be more than worth it!

Will America keep faith?

IN THE PROVIDENCE of God, the United States came into being for a great destiny. It was to receive the politically alienated, the socially deprived, and the victims of religious persecution, and to bind them together into a "nation of nations," which was to be a "New Order of the Ages."

Within this grand design, its greatest destiny was to be the stage on which the thrilling story of the "faith once delivered unto the saints," obscured during the long years of the Dark Ages, and re-emerging in the great Reformation movement, was to reach its culmination.

We have seen how many vital truths, neglected or rejected by the compromising Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican State churches, were nurtured by evangelical Protestants, and carried by them to the New World, "seeding" it with the rediscovered truths of the gospel. Besides the basic Reformation doctrines of the supremacy of the Word and salvation by grace through faith, they brought to America an increased emphasis on righteousness by faith or Scriptural holiness, the perpetuity of the moral law of the Ten Commandments, including the observance of the true Sabbath of the fourth commandment, the recognition of the church as a free community of faith, completely sepa-

rated from the state, believer's baptism by immersion, signifying personal commitment to Christian living, a belief in the "sleep" of the dead until the resurrection at the last day, and a lively expectation of the pre-millennial second advent of Christ.

Not all these truths were held by all the evangelical communities in America, but the "seeds" of all were scattered throughout the English colonies from Maine to Georgia, waiting to be brought together in the final phase of the "everlasting gospel" in the closing days of human history. How then was this grand "ecumenical movement of truth" to be brought to its consummation?

Advent Revival in the New World

THE CATALYST which was to spark off the final gathering of truth came in the second quarter of the nineteenth century in the form of the great Advent revival. William Miller, of Low Hampton, Vermont, in his early life was a deist, and but vaguely Christian. In 1816, however, he was converted and became a devoted student of the Bible, and especially of the prophecies. A conviction of the approaching second coming of Christ deepened with the years, until one Sunday in 1831, under the direct leading of the Lord, he preached his "maiden" sermon on the Second Advent. The sermon developed into a series in the

local Baptist church, and from the spiritual springs opened in these lectures, the great second advent movement spread throughout New England and beyond.

Among the earliest recruits to join William Miller in the Advent proclamation were Methodist Josiah Litch, Congregationalist Charles Fitch, Joshua V. Himes and ex-captain Joseph Bates of the Baptist-aligned Christian Connection, who brought their particular insights on believer's baptism, Scriptural holiness, the "sleep" of the dead, and other truths into the Advent movement, and as it spread and grew, these truths were added to and reinforced.

The Sabbath in the Advent Movement

IT WAS IN Washington, New Hampshire, that the two vital streams of the Advent message and the Sabbath truth came together. In this little community there was a dedicated company of believers in whom the Methodist teaching of Scriptural holiness had been linked with the hope of the second coming of Christ. To it came Sabbatarian Baptist, Rachel Oakes, whose daughter was to teach school in the little township. Soon Rachel Oakes was discussing the Law of God and the true seventh-day Sabbath with the minister, Frederick Wheeler. In March, 1844, he accepted the Sabbath and began to keep it. In October, a number of the congregation, after earnest Bible study and prayer, likewise accepted the Sabbath message, and the first com-

by W.L. Emmerson

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pany of Sabbatarian Adventists came into being.

From this historic company the message of the Sabbatarian Adventists went forth, and as the church spread through New England and beyond, they were led in humility to recognize the movement of which they were the nucleus, to be none other than the message of the three angels of Revelation 14 which was to gather out, in the

last days, a people who "keep [all] the commandments of God, and the [full] faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12.

A Movement of Destiny

RECOGNIZING THEMSELVES more and more as the appointed bearers of the "everlasting gospel" to the world in the "hour" of God's "judgment," they decided in 1848 to arrange a series of Bible conferences in Connecticut, New York, Maine and Massachusetts. In

them the truths handed down from the Reformation were related to their opening understanding of God's last message of mercy to men. So, in the providence of God, and at the precise time indicated in the prophetic Word, the many "seeds" of truth rediscovered in the Reformation movement, hounded out of Europe by the "uniformity" demanded by the compromising Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican State churches, and sown in the wilderness of the New World, came together in the faith of the Sabbatarian Adventists. And in 1860, the spreading communities of Sabbatarian Adventists, united in faith, were formally joined together in a church organization, which took the appropriate name of Seventh-day Adventists.

As might be expected, even after the organization of the church, and the affirmation of its faith, some imbalances and aberrations lingered in the minds of a minority. But it is surely an evidence of the leading of the Lord, that, through continual searching of the Word, these imbalances were eliminated, and the faith of Seventh-day Adventists was manifest in all its purity and fullness.

Earth's remotest bounds now respond to the ministry of compassion and concern offered by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This ministry is supported by people who believe that the everlasting gospel must reach to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Significantly, these mission endeavours report miraculous occurrences, divine intervention and growth on a scale that strongly suggests providential guidance.

We live in a time when ecumenism appears to be the order of the day. Popular churches hold "dialogues" in an effort to resolve doctrinal differences, to compromise some beliefs and give flexibility to others in order to accommodate members of a different persuasion.

We believe that such ecumenical efforts are destined to ultimate failure, that the faith given once for all time to God's church on earth is the faith spelt out in the Decalogue. We hold that the church supporting all its precepts forms the nucleus of God's final "ecumenical movement of truth."

Further, we cannot but believe that greater than all the purposes, political, social, and economic, which in the providence of God the United States was to fulfil, its greatest destiny was to be the place where the fullness of gospel truth was to be gathered together, and sent forth into all the world, as God's last message of salvation to lost mankind.

Will America Keep Faith?

THE REALIZATION of this great responsibility which has been vouchsafed to the United States of America, must lead us to a final question. Will America, at the zenith of her power, seek to extend and preserve the principle of liberty, that all people to the ends of the earth may have the opportunity of hearing and accepting the final gospel message before the close of human probation?

For answer, we may ask, first of all, what we have a right to expect from the fundamental principles on which the United States was founded.

When Thomas Jefferson was expounding the doctrine of independence as the basis of the separation of the thirteen colonies from the "mother" country, he set forth, as Daniel Boorstin points out in his 1975 Reith Lectures, "another kind of independence . . . the sovereignty of the present generation." "Each generation," Jefferson declared, could be regarded as "a distinct nation, with a right, by the will of the majority, to bind themselves, but none to bind the succeeding generation." "This corporeal globe," he said, "and everything upon it, belongs to its present corporeal inhabitants, during their generation."

Now this principle raises an embarrassing possibility. If the "sovereignty of the present" is regarded as placing no limitations on the generations to follow, they could set aside every principle of the Founding Fathers, and turn the nation into something which was the very antithesis of the *Novus Ordo Seclorum* of 1776.

Many Americans today might well say that while this is a "theoretical" possibility, it could not really happen. But when we turn again to the wonderful prophecy

in the thirteenth chapter of the Revelation, which delineated the rise of the "lamb" power of the United States, we learn not merely of the possibility, but of the imminent danger of such a reversal of the nation's noble heritage.

From "Lamb" to "Dragon"

IN THE LAST DRAMATIC DAYS of earth's history, the Revelator declares, the erstwhile "lamb" power would actually begin to "speak as a dragon." Revelation 13:11. In other words, the United States, which began as the very antithesis of the "dragon" powers of the Old World, would discard its lamblike qualities and enter the struggle for world supremacy. No one who has followed the political and economic history of the United States of the past two hundred years can fail to recognize the startling changes which have taken place in America's sense of world mission.

After the War of Independence, says Ernest May in "American Civilization," "most reflective Americans regarded their new nation as unique. They conceived of it as destined to be an island of liberty in a corrupt world." As an example to the nations, Thomas Jefferson declared in his first inaugural, America would provide "the world's best hope."

As, however, the United States saw authoritarian regimes gaining a foothold in the New World, she began to feel that she might have to abandon her "passive" role, and involve herself at least in the affairs of neighbouring nations, to ensure that they would not endanger her own existence. And so, during the nineteenth century, a "compromise" philosophy developed, "Intervention in the Western Hemisphere, but isolation from the rest of the world."

With the outbreak of World War I, the United States realized she would have to abandon even her hemispherical isolation, and build up her strength to preserve democracy in the world. When World War II followed, President Roosevelt began to talk about America's "rendezvous with destiny" and of the "world pattern of events" which was drawing America, in spite of herself, into permanent involvement in the affairs of the whole world.

"To many," comments Ernest May, "there has arisen in recent years, a shamefaced awareness that the United States had somehow given up its pretensions to uniqueness. . . . During its first decades as a great power it had



at least kept some appearance of being devoted to ends other than those which preoccupied other nation states. After World War II it had gradually set aside traditional ideals and begun to *behave like all other powers*" (our italics). Certainly, today the United States is speaking unmistakably like a "dragon."

America and Rome

BUT THIS IS NOT ALL. At the time when the United States would reach the zenith of its world power, the Revelator declares that it would effect also a complete reversal of policy toward the spiritual power of Rome. Presumably as an aid to controlling the increasing chaos and confusion among the nations, it would enlist the support of the mightiest religious institution in the world for the establishment of another "new order of the ages," which would bring peace and security to the latter-day world. (Revelation 13:12.) We may therefore ask, Are there any indications in the United States today which suggest such a reversal of policy towards the Roman Catholic Church, which might correspond with the prophecy? Indeed, there are. When the United States became independent, the Congregationalists were the largest denomination, with the Presbyterians second, the Baptists third, and the Church of England fourth. And in all America there were probably not more than 10,000 Roman Catholics.

After the Revolution, however, religious liberty gradually extended to all the States, and the number of Catholics steadily increased. As a result of the great potato famine in Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century, nearly a quarter of a million Irish Catholics entered America, and by 1850 the Roman Catholic population reached 1.6 million. By 1860 it was over 2 million. During the second half of the nineteenth century another wave of immigrants brought 3.3 million Italian Catholics and 3 million Polish Catholics, besides many others from Eastern and Southern Europe. Commenting on the growth of the Roman Catholic Church during this period, Thomas O'Gorman compared it to the third century of the Christian era when "the church laid hold on the Roman Empire." The inflow of Spanish-speaking peoples in the twentieth century added more millions of Catholics to the total, and today the Roman Catholics are the largest religious group in the United States, with

more than fifty million adherents. They also constitute, according to Monseigneur Ellis, "the third most numerous body of Catholics in the universal church."

As a result, Roman Catholics are becoming increasingly vocal and active in American political and social life, and one Roman Catholic has already reached the ultimate eminence of president of the United States. On the election of John F. Kennedy, some writers began to describe the situation as the "post-Protestant era."

In America's foreign relations, President Roosevelt during World War II bypassed the long-standing policy that the United States would have no political representation in Rome, by appointing his own "special representative" to the Vatican. And although this office was discontinued after the war, the liaison then established has been deepened and strengthened in subsequent years. The visit of Pope Paul VI to America some years ago is evidence enough of the changed relationship of America to the Vatican. And it is certainly not without significance that in this Bicentennial Year, Rome should have decided to celebrate the International Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia, the birth-place of the Union.

The "Ecumenical" Alternative

THE PROPHECY of Revelation thirteen, however, has still something else to say. In spite of the efforts of the "lamb" power turned "dragon" to make the Roman Catholic Church the spiritual basis of its "new order of the ages," not all would be prepared to surrender themselves completely to the Roman power. So the "lamb" would offer another plan as an alternative. It would suggest that the people of the world "should make an image to the beast, which had a wound by the sword and did live." Revelation 13:14.

There are many who see in this aspect of the prophecy the development of the "ecumenical movement," which, during this century, has been breaking down the theological barriers of the Reformation, and bringing the separated churches closer and closer to unity. The history of the ecumenical movement cannot be discussed in detail here, but it is significant that the beginning of the modern movement was initiated by an American Episcopal minister, William Reed Huntington, of New York, who, in the year 1870, proposed the four

"essentials" of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral as a basis for unity. Another American Episcopal Bishop, Charles H. Brent, from the Philippine Islands, introduced the subject of ecumenism into the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, and blazed the trail which eventually led to the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948. Since then, American money has largely contributed to the growth of the World Council organization, and following the retirement of Dr. Visser 't Hooft, the first general secretary of the World Council, American Presbyterian Dr. Eugene Blake, initiator of the "Blake Plan" for ecumenical consultation in the United States, became its second general secretary.

Arising out of the discussions among the churches of the World Council, innumerable "consultations," "conversations," and "dialogues" have been organized, which are effecting a doctrinal and ecclesiological "convergence" which may one day produce the "great church," which is Rome's ultimate goal.

Prophecy and the Bicentennial

IN THE LIGHT of facts such as these, this Bicentennial Year should lead Americans seriously to ask themselves how they stand in relation to the prophetic outline of the history of the "American civilization." The "straws in the wind" cannot be dismissed by the argument, "It couldn't happen here." The facts suggest that it is already beginning to happen. It is no longer inconceivable—indeed it is almost hinted at by Solzhenitsyn—that the mightiest secular nation on earth could form a liaison with the mightiest religious institution in the world to bring about a latter-day "new order of the ages," co-operation with which could mean the difference between economic life or death for humanity. (Revelation 13:16-18.)

While there is still time, therefore, we must, as individuals, declare that we will not be party to the undermining and reversal of the American destiny. Rather must we affirm that, come what may, we will not worship either the "beast" or his "image," but by the grace of God we will stand in the strength of the Lord for the full "faith of Jesus" and the keeping of all "the commandments of God," including the sign and seal of the last remnant, God's true Sabbath, that we may be found standing with Him in the day of His final triumph. ★★

God used a Wedding

EVERYONE AGREED that it was a delightful wedding—John and Juli were ideally suited. They were both highlanders, they had both been educated in church schools and they had both dedicated themselves to work for God. John had just accepted a position at the mission high school after graduating with his B.Sc., and Juli had been a mission school teacher for many years. Their wedding day was special to everyone—relatives, friends, teachers and missionaries. But it was only God who knew just how special it really was.

The church was crowded with people from all over Papua New Guinea. There were Australians, New Zealanders and Papua New Guineans, some of whom had never been inside a church, let alone witnessed a Christian wedding. As they waited for the bride to arrive, there was an uncontrollable buzz of excited conversation which was only partly overshadowed by the organ music. But it ceased abruptly when the organist played the opening bars of the bridal march. The people scrambled to their feet and turned to stare in silent awe towards the door. Juli was there standing with downcast eyes, holding the arm of her father.

Nili is a tall man, broad shouldered, upright with a strong, handsome face. There was no sign of nervousness or uncertainty in his attitude. Although he



by Molly Rankin

was in completely new surroundings, he was in command of the situation. Many of the missionaries who knew his story smiled, not in amusement, but in love and wonder and delight. Nili looked so clean and neat and well dressed. Well dressed? In open-necked shirt, shorts and bare feet? Yes! No one would have wanted to see the bride's father any different. The thrill of his being there with his daughter was enough.

When he and his close friends and relatives had arrived at the mission high school a week before the wedding, they had been dressed in the traditional Wabag way—broad bark belt round their waists, a length of material hung over the front and a bunch of *tanget* leaves looped in at the back. The Welfare ladies at the high school had outfitted them until they had time to get to town to buy trousers.

Nili had not intended to give his daughter away. He was not a church member and knew nothing about such things. But when he had been at Kabiufa just a few hours, he changed his mind. Everyone within the mission family made him so welcome. The students at the high school, the teachers and missionaries, and above all, his own daughters—Juli and her schoolgirl sister. John treated him like his own father, and Nili decided that it would be a great pleasure to give his daughter to this young man.

"Juli, my daughter, when you get married it is I who must give you away. I am your father and I want to walk with you in the church. No one else must do that. Please will you allow me to walk by your side?"

"Oh, Papa," Juli's face was a mixture of astonishment and ecstasy, "do you mean it? Nothing would make me happier."

Since childhood, Juli had pleaded with her father to join her church. At one time he had started to go to worship, and even went as far as to join "class ready," but his attendance was spasmodic, and he never did graduate from the baptismal class.

Not that you could really blame him. He had three wives and many children and he owned even more pigs. But an even greater hindrance to his becoming a Christian was the pressure from his clan. Nili was the son of his father's twelfth wife, and when warring tribes had killed his father, the clan had elected Nili to take his father's place as their leader.

They could not have made a better choice. He was a strong leader, knew how to handle a bow and arrow and fighting axe, and above all he was wise in the ways of his people. He counselled them and settled many a dispute. They said quite frankly, "You cannot become a Christian. You won't fight if you believe in Jesus, and what use will you be to us as a leader if you won't fight?" So in spite of Juli's pleading, Nili remained a heathen. But then the wedding changed everything.

As Nili stood in the doorway of the little church, he was overcome by the wonder of the scene. There was his little Juli, now grown, looking more beautiful than he had ever seen her, with her long white dress and all that fluffy white veil over her head. He was sure that the angels must look like that. John, with his two brothers, was standing up the front of the church, smiling nervously back at them. And there were all the people, silent and expectant, staring and smiling. The minister was standing with open Bible beckoning them to come, and there was the music. It seemed to swell and fill the small church. It stirred his heart and enveloped him in glorious, vibrant sound, drawing him up and up. "Heaven must be like this," he said to himself. "These are God's people. Here is my daughter, there is my first wife and my other daughters. They will go to heaven and shall I be left behind?"

At that moment Nili made the most important decision of his life. He decided then and there that he would become a Christian. He told everybody so too, although there were few who understood. When the minister got to the "who giveth?" part of the service, Nili made his little speech in his own language. The minister smiled and nodded, but had no idea what he was saying. But Juli knew and her mother knew and the Wabagians in the front few pews knew and their delight showed on their faces.

When the excitement of the wedding was over, Nili and his wife and people returned to Wabag, and the first thing he did when he reached his village was to call his people together.

"I have made up my mind," he said. "I am going to leave my old ways and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. I thought my life was good. I liked the clothes I wore, my pigs and my way of life, but now I have seen a better way. You have been with me to my daughter's wedding. You have seen the ways of the

Christians, that they are good. I shall no longer lead you in fighting. What I have done in the past is wrong, and I am going to live for Christ alone from now on. Who will come with me?" As a result of his example twenty-one people agreed to follow him.

Nili's baptism was a very big event in the area. People from all the neighbouring tribes came along to see for themselves, as their arch enemy took his stand for Christ. They stood on the high river banks in their separate tribal groups, holding their bows and arrows, axes and knives, ready for action if they could find the slightest reason to fight.

Nili stood beside the pastor in the water far below them all. The calm, confident expression on his glowing face held everyone's attention, and as he spoke his voice carried so every word could be heard.

"I am sorry for the way I have fought you all in the past. I am sorry about the many men I have killed, and I want to ask your forgiveness. But more than that I want you to follow me in the decision that I have made. I am finished with my old heathen ways. I have taken Jesus as my Saviour, and I want you to do the same. It is not good that we should be fighting all the time. The pastor is going to baptize me now and some of my relatives. When it is finished I want all those of you who want to become Christians with me to line up on the bank behind me." The four pastors who were baptizing worked long and hard that day, but when they had finished there was a mass movement among the people on the river banks. One by one they came towards Nili, and, clutching their weapons to their sides, they shook his hand and took their places in the long line that was forming behind Nili and the other baptismal candidates. When the final count was taken, more than two hundred had agreed to accept Nili's invitation and study to prepare for baptism.

Among the joyous spectators was one young woman standing hand in hand with a handsome young man. The tears were streaming down her cheeks—tears of joy and thankfulness. It had been worth all the years of pleading and standing firm for Christian principles. Her prayers had been answered in a greater degree than she had ever thought possible, for God had used her wedding to bring all these people to Him. ★★



Where do I go from here?

"WATCH OUT!" I yelled, stamping my foot on an imaginary brake.

Strong hands gripped the steering-wheel more tightly. There was no hope of giving way to the right in obedience to the New South Wales traffic laws. Veering suddenly with the caravan would be dangerous. All that could be done was to sit tight with clenched teeth and await the impending collision.

Thud! We'd got him! On the right-front bumper bar. Stomachs turned sickeningly as another "grey" bit the dust, adding to the country-road kangaroo death-toll. Immediately there was a gloomy silence as the kangaroo's unfortunate demise and possible car dents were considered.

Suddenly and unexpectedly the gloom lifted. Would you believe it? That temperamental, non-functioning, right-front headlight was going again! All it had needed, according to the expert, was "a jolly good thump in the right place." Yet it had responded neither to polite kick nor heavy fist, and had caused some anxiety as we pushed on, half blind, into the night. As heavy trailers roared past on potentially

dangerous corners, there was much thankfulness for that imprudent kangaroo whose body had provided the necessary "thump" for our safety.

A freak incident? A common occurrence? Or an act of Providence?

Perhaps we shall never know. But just hours before, these words had been read: "From what dangers, seen and unseen, we have been preserved through the interposition of angels, we shall never know, until in the light of eternity we see the providences of God. Then we shall know that the whole family of heaven was interested in the family here below, and that *messengers from the throne of God attended our steps from day to day.*"—"The Desire of Ages," E. White, page 211 (emphasis ours).

Day-by-day guidance . . . step by step. Is that what you desire through 1977? Do you really believe that God has a plan for your life this year? Does He wish to reveal that plan to you personally, or is it just His little secret alone? Is our God capable of giving guidance in the minute details and the major decisions of life? If He is, will He do just that for you? If you have any reservations you are in effect saying, "He leadeth me, BUT . . ."

"The Same . . . for Ever"

Oh, yes, there is absolutely no doubt that God's overruling hand has touched the lives of Bible men and women. The "dungeon-to-prime-minister" experience of Joseph; Jonah's "in-the-spot-at-the-right-time" whale; the miraculous path opened up through the Red Sea; Pharaoh's daughter herself discovering the basket in the bulrushes—all assert that God has led.

This Lord is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." Hebrews 13:8. Just as surely His same guiding hand can be on your shoulder in the thoroughly modern year of one thousand, nine hundred and seventy-seven. With Samuel you can say, "EBENEZER—Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12), and with Abraham, "JEHOVAH-JIREH—In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen [The Lord will provide]." Genesis 22:14.

by Norma O'Hara

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With the promise of guidance there is definite word given that we will be instructed and taught in the path of His choosing. Listen! "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye." Psalm 32:8.

However, although the promises of guidance given in the Scriptures are legion, the greater majority of them are conditional, showing that it is the truly surrendered Christian whom the Lord has in mind to guide. Consider the following, noticing each time that decided guidance is given, it is promised IF . . . !

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." Psalm 37:23.

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:6.

"But as for the upright, He directeth his way." Proverbs 21:29.

"I being in the way, the Lord led me. . . ." Genesis 24:27.

"What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose." Psalm 25:12.

"The meek [teachable] will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way." Psalm 25:9.

If these conditions are met, as far as we know how, and our sincere prayer is "Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path" (Psalm 27:11), then we must expect guidance and will receive it.

But where do we go from here? How can we know God's guidance? What methods does He use? Is there any formula that can help us govern our course of action?

Plans and Principles

David gives us our first guideline when he prays, "Order my steps in Thy Word." Psalm 119:133. It is in the Word of God that instruction is given to order our steps aright. A "Thus saith the Lord . . ." is given on practically every subject under the sun. There is clear direction given on the matter of dress, finance, marriage partners, anxieties, conversation, avenging wrongs, diet, conformity to this world, parenthood—and a host of other practical subjects. We are never left in the dark concerning God's viewpoint, for it is written down to enlighten all. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Psalm 119:105.

Our first rule, then, is to line up our intended plans with Scriptural principles. It is dangerous to proceed if Biblical injunction is ignored.

Often the Holy Spirit guides us by planting a desire within the heart. Catherine Marshall expresses it this way in her book, "A Man Called Peter," page 66: "I learned that just because God loves us so much, often He guides us by planting His own lovely dream in the barren soil of a human heart. When the dream has matured, and the time for its fulfilment is ripe, to our astonishment, and delight, we find that God's will has become our will, and our will, God's. Only God could have thought of a plan like that."

When God's dream begins to germinate, we often find ourselves expressing, "How I wish I could do such and such! I'd very much like to." With the passing of time the desire becomes stronger, until it becomes an almost irresistible longing and an intense craving. At times it can be so overwhelming as to be disturbing and impatient of restraint. Watch to see if the desire is present at your best moments, while you commune with God in prayer and Bible study or while reading spiritual books. It is a healthy, encouraging sign if it is.

Do not be alarmed if your dream seems impossible of fulfilment, or too good ever to come true. There is nothing impossible within the providence of God. The more beautiful your dream, the more chance it has of coming to pass. "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Psalm 37:4.

This desire is not a thing of passion being ruled only by the heart and not by the head. Enlightened common sense considers all angles. It aligns itself sensibly with the other evidences of guidance, and submits graciously to the sovereign will of God. Should the desire continue and there be no corresponding opening in providential circumstances, there are two things the surrendered Christian can do.

First, we may wait for the Lord to show us the time, place, means, circumstances or people necessary to achieve our heart's desire. This is not easy. Waiting never is, especially when something is burning within your bones. However, waiting is wise. Who knows, but in God's own appointed time your sphere of usefulness, your increased

maturity, your development may be such as to make your wish blossom more fully than at the present time. What folly then to pluck your blessings green, when the Lord would have them ripe! Thus wait, not in frenzied anxiety, but in quiet trust. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." Psalm 37:5.

The second thing that may be done is even harder. It is completely surrendering your best and deepest wish to the Lord, giving it up into His hands to be done with as He wishes. With the voluntary surrender comes the realization that your precious treasure may be returned to you with manifold blessings, may be kept in "cold storage" until His time, or may be taken and never returned. This is the risk you take. It is the acid test that shows just how sincerely you wish to be led by higher hands.

"A Thousand Ways"

Should His answer be, "Let the dream go," then you are perfectly entitled to ask that He will take the desire from you. He certainly has no intention whatever of leaving you frustrated, thwarted and unhappy. Gradually the longing will fade, the hope will die, until you wonder what it was all about, for it will have slipped from you so easily and painlessly. Your attitude of trust is still there, and you are completely at peace. Joys now hidden, other hopes and different dreams soon appear, and you will say, in all sincerity, "This surely is best. I would not want it any other way."

The third evidence of guidance is to notice a corresponding opening in providence; a gradual train of circumstances or, conversely, a sudden, almost miraculous opportunity that unmistakably points out the way you should take.

A letter, an answer, a proposition, a cheque, a promise or a mere word is sometimes the key that will open a stubbornly locked door, providing an "open sesame" in a way previously hedged up with difficulties. Remember, God is a specialist in things thought impossible. He has a thousand ways of providing for you of which, at present, you know nothing.

This should not surprise you, for has He not promised to go before you, setting up things in order, in preparation for your journey that way.

"Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee

into the place which I have prepared." Exodus 23:20.

"I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight." Isaiah 45:2.

Since, as a Good Shepherd, "He goeth before them," He will expect that "the sheep follow Him." John 10:4. Naturally, impulsive human behaviour is to run ahead of the Lord, organizing and arranging to suit ourselves. If providence seems a little slow we fret and fume. Taking things into our own hands we force locked doors and push our way forward in frantic haste, leaving a path of devastation and bruised bodies in our wake.

Such a course of action is not blessed of the Lord. Soon we run into difficulty. Far better to re-learn the children's game of "Follow the Leader."

It is a peculiar quirk of human behaviour that we often fail to notice the wide-open doors of providence right under our noses. We look wistfully at wider horizons and grander tasks that seem frustratingly out of our grasp. Like the cripple in the Pied Piper, doors seem to open invitingly for others, bidding a warm welcome, but on our arrival they shut painfully in our faces.

Sometimes it takes a gentle nudge from a close bystander to point out what we have missed. Often we are standing on the very portals of a door of opportunity, our feet already on the threshold of a promising path of service. Perhaps the very work we are at present doing at home, at church, or in the community has become so commonplace that we fail to see its immense possibilities and its challenge.

To do the very work that lies nearest us, to develop fully the talents that we already have, to bring blessing to the people we meet in ordinary, everyday situations—this is God's appointed task.

When our plans receive the green light on all three counts, then it is time to consult our sixth sense. Beware of persistent nagging doubts. A strong, impression that we are doing the right thing should convict us before we move forward.

Remember God's Leading

Sometimes the way we are instructed to take may fill us with a sense of inadequacy. It will take courage to fill that high destiny awaiting us. There may be disapproval from the very ones nearest us. There may be financial loss involved. But when that call comes to move forward into unknown paths, "we

must yield to it, or suffer an unspeakable loss"—"The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life," Hannah Whitall Smith, page 73.

The life of obedience is a life of rich blessing. Do not be afraid, then. Act at once, for you have been acted upon by a higher power. The hour of opportunity is the turning-point of life.

Worry is blind and cannot discern the future. The present alone is ours to grasp. What to us is a closed book is completely open to Him. But God never reveals the last chapter, and turns the pages but one day at a time.

The future need not look grim or foreboding so long as we continue to remember the way the Lord has led us in the past.

A tropical rain forest is a sight worth seeing, especially to those accustomed to more temperate climes. At least we thought it worth spending a tidy little sum of holiday money to tour a rain forest in Queensland. There were exciting travel pamphlets describing exotic tree orchids, hanging vines, clinging creepers, rare ferns and giant palms. Eagerly we clambered aboard the open tour bus to find that all but the very back seats were taken. Peer and dodge as we could, all that could be seen were heads and sun hats. How frustrating and disappointing! The situation was hopeless.

Suddenly it dawned that, although we could not see forward, if we looked backward we would have a "front seat" view. Ah, what a rewarding sight as the lush greenery of the forest opened up to us in wide, panoramic display! And through it all lay the twisting, sandy path to show the way we had come.

How long since you looked back on the way you have come? As you review your life, counting the blessings, remembering the times God has overruled, considering the little miracles that have been performed on your behalf, and seeing how one event has dovetailed into another, how can you fear for the future? As He has dealt with you in the past, so He will deal with you in the future. "For I am the Lord, I change not." Malachi 3:6.

Rejoice, then, in the sweetness of His continual presence this day and every fresh tomorrow. An ever-present companion, He will speak His mysteries to you personally.

"And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." Isaiah 30:21. ★★



ROBERT PARR

THE "NEW CALL" ENDORSED

IN 1951 leaders of Australia in the fields of government, religion, commerce, education, the arts and sciences called the nation to higher standards in moral behaviour, observance of the laws of the land, public affairs, planning the nation's future and honouring the heritage that had been passed to us by those who had pioneered our country.

To some, in even those days which now seem far-off and relatively unsophisticated, "The Call to the Nation," as it was headed, was little more than an exercise in idealism at best, the expenditure of so much "hot air" at worst. You get critics and cynics whenever you attempt to lift a standard or maintain a principle. The cynics poured out their sneers without measure upon such an ill-disguised attempt to lift the national morality, but in spite of all its critics, "The Call to the Nation" meant something to those whose interests lay in decency and whose faith in our nation was bounded only by the principles upon which our people built the future of this country.

Now, twenty-five years on, another set of leaders has issued a "New Call to the People of Australia"—Sir Edmund Herring being the sole representative of the original band. This "New Call" is published on page 27 of this issue. And we endorse this "New Call" with all the enthusiasm we can muster.

It is a sober commentary on today's manners and mores when such a "Call" has to be made, yet those who have been the instigators are realistic enough to recognize that standards have indeed fallen in the twenty-five years that have intervened between the present and the original "Call." In no aspect of our lives has this been more apparent than in the field of entertainment. One of the chief villains of this piece is the advent of television to this country. No single innovation has had such impact upon the lives of ordinary Australians in the last two decades as has the square-eyed monster in the living-room.

When it came twenty years ago, we were assured that this would be one of the greatest means of education that people could have. It would bring cultural programmes vividly into our homes; travelogues and events of national importance would be faithfully portrayed, thus broadening the outlook and stimulating the desire for information and knowledge. What a boon the box would be! And in some ways it has been. But if a TV station wants its ratings to plummet, it serves up travelogues and educational programmes. If it wants its ratings to soar, it peddles such programmes as "The Box," "Number 96" and whatever else it can dredge up from the murk of men's minds in the form of sex-and-violence.

Witness the recent furore about the vetoing of "Alvin Purple" from our TV screens. "People have a right to see what they want to see" might sound a reasonable argument, but if you throw caution out the window and purvey all kinds of uninhibited behaviour, spreading it broadcast throughout the land, your standards of decency must erode, your youth and children must become infected, and your morals and standards must hit a new low. It is little short of amazing that people who imagine themselves to be decent citizens would WANT to stand up for the right to bring such vile rubbish into the homes of other decent people. Is there no standard which might be a common denominator for all people? Are there no people of principle in the entertainment business who would denounce the suggestion that such immoral and amoral stuff be flashed upon our screens and brought into our homes to lower the standards and trample good taste in the mud? And where are Mr. and Mrs. Ordinary Decent Citizen who will loudly proclaim that they and their family refuse to watch such vile garbage?

Those who claim that they are merely standing up for the right to televise whatever they like in the name of public freedom, and who see the eventual breakdown of individual liberty if pornography is kept off the air, are merely playing into the hands of the pornography peddlers.



The great god Profits is the only motivation they have; the ultimate balance-sheet is the only star by which they steer.

We'll have the writers of the "New Call" included in their charter: "We appeal to the media and creative artists to use their talents to uplift and ennoble rather than to demoralize and demean, seeking thereby to arrest the growing cynical degeneracy of our culture." Every citizen to whom the Lord's Prayer means anything will applaud that sentiment to the echo.

The permissiveness of our age has emphasized that there is a deterioration in the moral fibre of our nation. The world has gone alusting after the cheap thrill, the vicarious sex-experience, the depiction of horror and evil, and people have reached the point of satiety. Now it is not good enough to sit and watch; now they want to dabble in the murk and mire themselves. Thus have standards wilted, and thus has our nation been weakened.

Long has it been known that a person or a nation will indicate the worth of character and the nobility of principle by how leisure time is spent. To park children in front of a TV screen in order to keep them quiet is the quickest way to invalidate any moral training you are trying to give them, and the fastest way to lessen their intellectual perceptions, and the surest way to send your children on the downward path to a wretched future. And to have them know—as they surely will—that their parents watch explicit sex and horrible violence will negate the principles of morality you are trying to teach them.

The very last line of the "New Call" holds the key to the entire future of this or any nation. It is a simple quotation from the Scriptures and it reads:

"Hold fast to that which is good!" (Romans 12:9.)

We commend the signatories to the "New Call" for thus summing up their hopes and ideals. They could have chosen no finer conclusion; this IS the common denominator for which we have sought, the basic principle by which this nation can lift itself to better and nobler things.

This will require, in the area of which we have been speaking, some re-evaluation of those things which are regarded as entertainment. This will require inhibitions in the minds of parents, and prohibitions for those too young to make a firm decision for what is good. A determination by parents that they themselves will not sully their minds with lewdness and vulgarity, and a strong wrist which will turn off the offensive programme are the two most valuable assets you can have in helping your children to "hold fast that which is good." Why not add your signature to the "New Call" too?

Robert H. Parr.

family fare



MYRTLE O'HARA

A STORY FOR THE BOYS AND GIRLS

THE BILLY-CART RIDE

ARTHUR STOPPED working and stepped back to see that everything was as it should be, or what he thought it should be. He lived with Grandma and Grandpa and several of their grown-up children who were his uncles and aunts. Arthur was a somewhat lonely little boy among the grown-ups, who were always so busy with the work that had to be done on the farm. He had to amuse himself most of the time, and was for ever thinking up something new, and he often did all kinds of foolish things.

There was the time when he was sure that if he fixed wings of some kind to his arms he would be able to fly like a bird. When he was ready he climbed to the top of the barn roof, then slid down the steep slope so that he could launch into space. But the guttering brought him up with a jerk. He tried and tried again, but fortunately one of his uncles discovered what he was doing in time to stop him from perhaps killing himself if he had succeeded in getting off the roof.

It seemed to Arthur that grown-ups were all against him. He was just full of wonderful ideas, but no matter what he tried to do they almost always said "Don't." They were always giving him good advice, but he didn't want advice, and mostly he wouldn't take it. There was a sawmill on the place and the saws were worked by steam. He knew enough not to go near the big saws, but he was told never to touch the metal pipe that carried the steam, because it was hot. Well, he watched that pipe for a long time. How could it be hot! It looked exactly like any other piece of piping. So one day he put his hand on it to feel if it really was hot, and his yell as his flesh stuck to the hot metal could be heard all over the farm. He decided that perhaps the grown-ups knew what they were talking about after all, but it wasn't long before he was going his own way again.

The farm was on hilly country, and Arthur had made a billy-cart and had great fun riding down the steep slopes. At the bottom there was a gully and then the ground flattened out on the other side. He thought if he could make a bridge or a set of rails across the gully he could continue his ride for quite a distance. So he got two pieces of narrow timber, measured the distance between the wheels of his cart and placed the rails that distance apart over the gully. He was sure he could steer his billy-cart safely over them.

He was so thrilled with his brain wave that he told his favourite uncle what he was doing. "Put the timber back where you got it," he said. "The idea won't work, and you will break

your neck." But Arthur didn't put it back. He didn't think to dig the dirt away underneath the rails so they would be level with the surface of the ground, but simply laid them on top where they stuck up about eight centimetres.

The next day two of his small girl cousins visited the farm. He put them behind him in the billy-cart and off they went, faster and faster down the hill, twisting and turning till they came to the rails at the bottom. Arthur steered straight for them. The wheels hit the ends. The cart stopped with such a jolt that it up-ended, and the girls flew one way and Arthur flew (at last!) the other way, and they all landed in the bottom of the gully.

Arthur was too scared at what he had done to make much noise, but you wouldn't believe what a racket the two little girls made. Everyone within hearing distance came running.



Fortunately, no bones were broken, but there were plenty of bruises and quite a deal of skin was lost, and the talking-to that Arthur received from the grown-ups left him a sadder and wiser boy for a long time to come.

So many children think that parents and grown-ups are against them, but they only want to save their children from doing things that would hurt them and cause them sorrow and suffering. They know what they are talking about, because they have been children themselves. Arthur's Grandpa once said to him; "If you will only learn from my experience, Arthur, it will save you a lot of trouble."

So, boys and girls, listen to good advice and follow it, and think twice before doing what you want to do. ★★



W. A. TOWNEND

HERE'S A PROMISE FOR YOU

COULD 1977 be the best year of my life? Or is that too much to expect these uncertain days?

While I was thinking around those two intriguing questions (the very afternoon, in fact) I read this, "The new year was entered upon with fresh assurance, bolder resolution, and larger enterprises." And, I do admit, that sounded like somebody was heading for a particularly good new year, back there in 1866. And the facts of history tell that he had it. Who was he?

Taylor was his name, J. Hudson Taylor, a man who believed God, and, because he believed God, he was able to found and run successfully the great China Inland Mission, the like of which the world had not seen prior to this man of faith appearing on the scene of world needs.

Before quoting the promise that well could have heralded 1866 for Hudson Taylor, and could be your promise for 1977, let me recall for you one of the events that did happen for Taylor and his work that year he entered with "fresh assurance, bolder resolution and larger enterprises."

It was the year of the first number of the official paper of the Mission, *Occasional Papers*. In it was to be an announcement of the need for \$3,000 (an awful lot of money in those days) to enable a party of missionaries to sail from England to China in May. The last day of 1865 had been set aside as one of prayer and fasting, waiting upon God. *And* before the first issue of the paper, \$3,948 had been received in answer to the prayer of faith alone! The new paper had to carry a coloured insert announcing the filled need, with Hudson Taylor writing, "Truly, there is a *living God*, and He is the Hearer and Answerer of prayer." Taylor's good new year had started. And it carried on that way. It was the year that saw Hudson Taylor, his wife and four children, another married couple, five single men and nine single women—twenty-two in all—set sail for China, May 12. Only the Taylors had been there before. The voyage took four months. The year was under way, under God.

The promise Hudson Taylor loved so much, your promise for 1977: "I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Psalm 16:8.

James Moffatt translates your promise, "I keep the Eternal at all times before me; with Him so close, I cannot fail."

January 1, May 29 or October 26—it makes no difference. Any day, *every day*, you can have God close by you. He never changes. Nor do His promises. And this Taylor knew very well, especially as that new year of 1866 opened.

Earlier, some years before, he had adopted a double motto: "Jehovah-Jireh" and "Ebenezer." The first gives the idea that God is seen as the Provider, and the second says "hitherto hath God helped." With those mottoes ever before it, the China Inland Mission marched on. And comes the new year of 1866 and Hudson Taylor adds a third motto, "Jehovah-Nissi." What does this mean, you ask? "God is my banner." That's it.

And it was "Jehovah-Nissi" that Hudson Taylor had printed on the cover of the new paper he had published that new year.

Your new year? This new year of 1977? Why not Psalm 16:8. "I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." "Jehovah-Nissi." That's He.

He is the banner. He holds the banner. Why not march through 1977 with Him? January 1, May 29 or October 26—it makes no difference. The promise will still be there, Psalm 16:8. And because the promise will ever be there, so will the banner—"Jehovah-Nissi."

Have a good year. You can. The year 1977 can be the best year of your life. And that's not by any means too much to expect with God at your side, every day, and all the way of every day.

"Stand, then, in His great might,
With all His strength endued;
But take, to arm you for the fight,
The panoply [banner] of God."

★★



MARYE TRIM

CHRISTIAN HOME-MAKING

IN MEMORIAM

CHRISTMAS CARDS have come and gone, but there is one Christmas greeting that I will not discard. It is a tranquil scene of Mount Egmont and Lake Maungamahoe, New Zealand. The handwriting on it reads, "With much love, Mary Darling, to you and all your family, from Auntie Clare."

That card with its tender greeting came to me over a year ago now, and, after Christmas 1975, I placed it in my treasure-drawer, knowing with keen awareness that there would be no Christmas greeting with the same signature in December 1976. Nor was there, for my Aunt Clare, the best of aunts, fell asleep in Jesus soon after on a February evening. I fancy that at that moment the sea-gulls over Evans Bay squealed out in sharp lament, and that the voices of many children were suddenly silenced with sorrow.

Gulls and children—not so odd a combination! Not for my Auntie Clare, anyway. Through the mists of years I see her again as I remember her from when I stayed in her home for a summer holiday—a handsome, reassuring person with a ready smile and tinkling laugh. "Now don't you worry about your Uncle Charles," she would whisper to me when his sometimes stern manner and fastidious habits hid his loving heart. I remember the white clover honey—sweet and rich as her own nature—that she kept in a cute beehive-shaped honey pot, and her camaraderie with the Chinese fruit-and-vegetable-seller at her back door-step; and the yellow bananas and succulent mandarines that graced her table. Again I remember her neat pantry with its jar of nutty biscuits, and I also remember the crusts and scraps for the gulls that fed at her window-sill. I felt her concern for the pecked-at one with the twisted wing or the shy bird with an injured leg.

On those sunny summer mornings we would work quickly at housework, and then be off together at a half-run down the steep incline from her hillside home to Evans Bay below. There we would splash and swim together, I with an eight-year-old's vigorous overarm style and Auntie Clare with the relaxed backstroke or breaststroke style more suited to an aunt in her late forties. Most afternoons she would point out good books for me to read from my cousin's bookcase, and she would retire to her study.

My Aunt Clare spent many hours in her study, serving the isolated boys and girls of the Church of England in New Zealand. She was in charge of the "Mail-Bag Sunday School," and worked at distributing and marking lessons for fifty years. Today, all through New Zealand, there are men and women who loved "their" Auntie Clare, who wrote them friendly letters

with their Sunday school lessons, and whom they came to know as a particularly caring person. Of course I thought she was my Auntie Clare first, but I had to share her. But Auntie Clare had a big, loving heart, and it had room for all of us.

I knew very well, without being told, of the priorities in my Auntie Clare's life. There was my Uncle Charles and their only daughter whose photograph in a nursing sister's veil held the place of special honour, and from whom a phone call, letter or visit brought beams of joy. There were also dear friends and relatives (and that included me), there was the world of literature that opened up through a card that said she was a member of the Wellington City Library, and there was Auntie Clare's church life. The latter was basic to her entire living. Faithfully each Sunday she worshipped at her church; faithfully during the week she ministered to others, especially to the children of the neighbourhood who visited regularly, to her "Mail-Bag" children and to anyone or anything that needed love and help. All her life she gave herself away. And I believe that I am a better person for having received a corner of her heart.

December, twelve months ago, I discerned that she was looking back over the pathway of years. Her letter was bright, full of Christian faith, yet giving signs of acknowledging the end of the road in sight and that the tranquil slopes and lakes of heaven were in view. She wrote, "It was wonderful for me to know that you remember me with prayer. Believe you me, I depend on such prayers in my 'sunset' years. . . . Last August I was eighty-five years old. The last time I saw my own mother she said, 'Never live to be ninety, Clare. It's too old!'"

As I read on I could envisage her whimsical smile, but I read her real message. "How I do chatter on!" she exclaimed further on in her letter. But it was not just chatter. She spoke wisdom, shared insights and still gave herself. Soon after came the Christmas card. And I knew, again. So I placed it carefully away in my treasure-drawer.

Now I stand in my Aunt's place. Now I am the middle-aged aunt. Soberly I ask myself, "What sort of loving am I giving? What sort of sharing—of ideals, of examples and priorities? Am I carrying on the Aunt Clare tradition? Please, God, I would like to try."

As I touch again that last Christmas card, I see that Auntie Clare bought it to support the "Save the Children" fund. It seems a fitting benediction to her fragrant earthly life. Amen.

★★



Apples OF GOLD

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Proverbs 25:11.

LET US GO ON

Some of us stay at the cross,
Some of us wait at the tomb,
Quickened and raised together with Christ,
Yet lingering still in its gloom;
Some of us bide at the Passover feast
with Pentecost all unknown—
The triumphs of grace in the heavenly place
That our Lord has made our own.

If the Christ who died had stopped at the cross,
His work had been incomplete.
If the Christ who was buried had stayed in the tomb,
He had only known defeat;
But the Way of the Cross never stops at the cross,
And the Way of the Tomb leads on
To victorious grace in the heavenly place,
Where the risen Lord has gone.

So, let us go on with our Lord,
To the fullness of God He has bought,
Unsearchable riches of glory and good
Exceeding our uttermost thought;
Let us grow up into Christ,
Claiming His life and its powers—
The triumphs of grace in the heavenly place
That our conquering Lord has made ours.

—Annie Johnson Flint (J. Clements).

BACKWARD—FORWARD

I stand upon the threshold of two years,
And backward look, and forward strain my eyes,
Upon blotted record fall my tears.
While brushing them aside, a sweet surprise
Breaks like a day-dawn on my upturned face
As I remember all Thy daily grace.

Thou hast been good to me; and burdened past
Thou has borne with me, and the future days
Are in Thy hands, I tremble not, but cast
My care upon Thee, and in prayer and praise,
Prepare to make the coming year the best
Because of nobler work and sweeter rest.

—Author unknown (Esther Fabian).

- Each month a selection is made from readers' favourite quotations. No original matter please. Include source, author, and your own name.



HE WENT FIRST— 9,996 FOLLOWED HIM

A WOMAN looks out from the door of the log cabin and sees her husband and four sons hewn down by screaming Indians. That woman was a direct forebear, carrying the same name, as the man of whom we write under the title, "He Went First—9,996 Followed Him." There was the blood of pioneers in his veins, and many the pioneer story he learned as a lad he in turn told to his own children.

But for the present, back to the tragic events of that morning on the corn farm that Ezra Andrews and his family were carving out of the New England forest in a part of America where, in those dangerous days, there were Indians who savagely opposed the white man's presence, well-meaning and kind as many of them were. And Ezra Andrews was one of these kind ones.

Less than an hour before she looked on the blood-stained, lifeless bodies of her husband and four sons lying there amongst the corn, Eliza Andrews had served them a simple and adequate breakfast on the bare boards of the homely old kitchen table. No doubt the family had talked about the Indians, and no doubt the wife and mother had voiced again her words of warning and caution, "Do be careful of the Indians today." They were.

Each of the five men carried a musket, and each placed his musket in an easy-of-access position against the stone wall nearest to where they were to hoe corn that stood higher than their shoulders.

Unknown to Ezra Andrews and his sons, many blood-intent Indian eyes saw all this, their owners well hidden in the forest. Then with a whoop and a scream they raided, cutting the five men off from their precious weapons. In utter

desperation Ezra and the boys tore up by the roots small trees as armament. But to little avail. The Indians and their spears conquered. Death reigned.

All was not lost for poor Eliza Andrews, however. Back in the log cabin she still had one living son. That tragic morning a fever had kept him in bed! Peter Andrews was left. The family name could, and did, go on. God had a plan, and a man.

As time moved along, Peter Andrews grew up, married, and had a large family that became well known in many parts of New England, and of that Andrews family came the man of our story, John Nevins Andrews. Heard of him? His life is worth looking at, and in a highly significant setting he's the man who went first; rather amazing results following.

But for just now let's get somewhere near to the start of his life, that is, we focus in on a bit of Andrews' family history before July 22, 1829, the day John Nevins Andrews was born.

We see the members of the Andrews family being marked for their courage, fortitude and loyalty as patriots in George Washington's army, the George Washington who became the first president of the United States. David Andrews is a member of that group, as is his friend John Nevins. About fifty years later the granddaughter of the man John Nevins, Sarah, married Edward, a grandson of David Andrews. This couple had a son whom they named John Nevins, after his great-grandfather. This new John Nevins Andrews, the baby, becomes the man of our story, clearly God's man as we shall discover.

A University to His Name

Climb aboard. Fasten your seat-belt. Prepare for take-off. In a light plane, this day in 1977, we are off on a low-flying sight-seeing trip around the Berrien Springs area in the state of Michigan in U.S.A. Below us, along the winding St.



Joseph River and close to U.S. Highway 31, we see an extensive campus. We can't miss it, for it covers some 1,573 acres on which are thirty-six large buildings valued at over \$27 million. That's Andrews' University down there. We're going down, for Andrews University has its own lighted airfield and planes, associated with its College of Technology.

We can best see this university campus on foot, but as we make the descent a few facts about this very attractive modern university in that lovely rural setting just below us:

- There is a teaching faculty of 176, including 120 with doctorates.
- There are forty-seven non-teaching administrators.
- There are thirty-seven laboratory supervisory instructors.
- There are 375 other full-time staff.
- Its annual operating budget is \$18,000,000.
- There are 303,000 bibliographical items in its library.
- It subscribes to 2,650 periodicals.
- In its vaults are 60,000 pages of letters and manuscripts and 4,600 published articles from the pen of Ellen G. White, the person who wrote more than any other woman of her day.
- Construction is underway to double the size and triple the book capacity of its library.
- Financially, it has operated in the black since 1953.
- Its archaeological museum has a collection of 7,000 items.
- Its beautiful church can accommodate 2,750 worshippers.

Mention has been made of the College of Technology, which, by the way, grants degrees in twenty-six areas of concentration, and certificates in twenty-six areas of occupation education. But that's only a part of the academic programme of Andrews University. There is a College of Arts and Sciences, a School of Graduate Studies extending to Doctor of Education, and a Theological Seminary granting degrees as Master of Divinity, Master of Theology, Doctor of Ministry and Doctor of Theology. Some 500 of the students from Andrews take part in community-action programmes as tutors for underprivileged school children, and in health education programmes, and still others go as student missionaries around the world. Some thirty music students direct choirs and play organs in churches in the Berrien Springs area.

Andrews has accreditation with seven top-line national and state educational authorities.

And it's named for JOHN NEVINS ANDREWS, the John Nevins Andrews of our story. Why?

Because he founded this university? No.

Because he was its first president? No.

Because he was its most prominent president? No.

Because he was its most famous student? No.

Because he endowed it? No.

The Reason

John Nevins Andrews never even saw Andrews University. In fact, it would be safe to say that when he died on October 21, 1883, aged fifty-four, he had not the foggiest notion that there would be a Seventh-day Adventist university at Berrien Springs, let alone that it would carry his name. Well then, why is it so named? For a sound and good reason, we answer, and you will almost for sure agree.

The boy John grows up, but not with a "silver spoon in his mouth," either in terms of living conditions or of his own life. Of those boyhood days he later wrote, "I never saw the time when my physical strength was fully equal to that of most of the youth of my years." No difference. Young John and his brother, who was very much under par in health, had to spend long hours picking up stones in the fields of their father's farm which had shallow soil and a heavy crop of stones. Ever those stones!

One big plus the lad did have, happily, was his mind. There was also another big plus—his love for God. And there was yet another big plus. His was a Christian home led by devoutly religious parents.

A man who looked deep into the life of John Nevins Andrews, Virgil Robinson, whose book about him, *"Flame for the Lord,"* came off the presses in 1975, notes that, "School was a delight to John." Another biographer, Dr. Everett Dick, adds, "He was the type of individual who loved study and could gather information and develop himself independently." This he surely did. For

although his class-room education ended at the age of eleven, because of his sickly condition, he developed the ability and capacity to study in seven languages, including Latin, Greek, Hebrew and French. He could read the entire Bible in seven languages.

While a schoolboy, he built into his life-style that habit of getting up at four o'clock in the morning, spending the hours before breakfast in study of the Bible and in prayer.

This lad is marked to make a mark. And his cultivated large-capacity memory is going to help him. Pressed on one occasion for information on his personal acquaintance of the Bible, Andrews admitted that he could quote the entire New Testament from memory, but, he said, he was not quite sure about making a word-perfect recital of the Old Testament!

Young John Andrews was baptized a Methodist when his mother felt that he was old enough to understand and measure up to the responsibilities of church membership.

As Methodists, the parents became interested in the preaching of William Miller (a Baptist) and his associates of many other denominations who were proclaiming the imminent second coming of Christ, basing their messages on Bible prophecy. John went along to these meetings with his parents, and also did his own research and study, though but an early-teen lad. The "Millerites," as they became known (about one in every eighty-five of the United States population were Millerites), were correct in highlighting the Bible teaching of a soon-coming return of Christ, but they were wrong in setting



An aerial view of Andrews University.

a date for the event. An error we can today understand as we look at history and we discover that "the sanctuary" was back there understood to be this earth, and thus Daniel 8:14 had been interpreted, using the accepted and correct principle of a-day-for-a-year in Bible prophecy unless the context reveals otherwise, and, be it added, in harmony with the Bible's own teaching about itself (see Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6).

Student and Author

So, as a lad of fifteen, John Nevins Andrews shared with his parents and scores of thousands of other believers the keen disappointment of October 22, 1844, the day it was predicted Christ would return from heaven, and did not. But the faith of the Andrews held. They believed in God. They believed in His Word, the Bible. And they believed that God would not forsake them, that He had further truth for them, despite their mistake. And thus it was.

Study, and how John Nevins Andrews could study, brought to his enquiring and thorough-going mind the truth that the Bible teaches but one Sabbath day for Christians, the seventh day of the week, there being no other Christian Sabbath named or hinted at anywhere in the whole of the New Testament (which Andrews could repeat from memory). The Andrews became seventh-day Sabbath people, son John later joining with Joseph Bates, James White and Ellen White in becoming a founding father (a very young one) of the now world-wide Seventh-day Adventist Church. But that is not all.

Scholar that he was, he wrote a large historical and theological volume on "The Sabbath," and at the age of twenty-one his name appeared on the masthead of volume 1, number 1 of the Sabbath-keepers' *Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. Its direct descendant, the *Review*, published in Washington, D.C., and enjoying wide circulation wherever English is read in the world, is said to be the oldest continuous-publication religious paper in the United States. But that is not all, as we look at the life of John Nevins Andrews.

It is 1874. The young Seventh-day Adventist Church, founded a little more than ten years earlier, decides to send out its first missionary, a representative to go overseas, the very first for a church that today has its work in 193 different

countries of the world and employs 74,021 full-time salaried workers. John Nevins Andrews is chosen, one of the leaders of the church saying of him, "the ablest man in our ranks."

Typical of the man Andrews, is the speed with which he answered the call, even though it meant taking overseas with him his two motherless children, and leaving behind him in their graves two younger children as well as his wife. The historic action appointing the church's first overseas worker was taken by the General Conference on Friday, August 14, 1874. Andrews and his two children were on board the Cunard liner *Atlas*, bound from Boston to Liverpool, on Wednesday, September 15 of the same year, that is, just one month later. Switzerland was the ultimate destination for their missionary service.

Sojourn in Switzerland

For the record of Andrews' early times in Switzerland, we quote from Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell's four-page article on Andrews as it appeared in the American magazine *Focus* a couple of years ago: "Elder Andrews settled into the pioneering work he knew well, studying, writing, editing, preaching and organizing. After living in two different localities for a year, he chose as his permanent headquarters the historic city of Basel, famous for its presses and universities and located advantageously close to both Germany and France.

"Much of his time he devoted to mastering French. For years he had been able to read the Bible in French almost as easily as in English, but the French people are not patient with foreigners who torture their syntax, and Andrews reasoned that if he were to communicate with them through either the pulpit or the press, he must learn their tongue with exactness. Charles and Mary (his children) joined him in this, the three of them signed a written covenant promising that they would confine their family conversation to the French language. German, by exception, they could try if they wished; English was to be reserved only for emergencies."

Mary sickened, and died. Of this, and J.N. Andrews' own physical decline, Dr. Maxwell records, "Mary missed her mother and asked her father to sit with her. He was more than willing to, day after day. Dr. Kellogg warned him of the probable consequences, but he took no

heed. Mary had gone willingly to Europe without a mother and had stood by him like a brick. He would not let her down now.

"Before the year ended, she passed away at the age of seventeen.

"Andrews, who had entered a slow decline in health when his wife died in 1872, never recovered from the death of his daughter. . . . Missionary to the last, he threw every energy he could muster into his work, primarily into his tracts and *Les Signes*. . . . After this his physical condition became alarming. He realized that the same symptoms he had seen in Mary were reappearing in himself, one after another. . . . But his decline continued, and the end would come. . . . Andrews' mind remained clear and his spirits hopeful in the Lord. Unable to get up or even to digest more than a few morsels of food a day, he lay in his bed, a living skeleton, dictating to his helpers almost to the last."

And then the end came, the end of the life of the Seventh-day Adventists' first overseas worker. He left behind one grandson who became Dr. J.N. Andrews, the church's first missionary to Tibet where he served for fifteen years.

In the year 1874 John Nevins Andrews went to Switzerland as the first Seventh-day Adventist missionary. In 1874 Seventh-day Adventists opened Battle Creek College in Michigan. This college was later moved to Berrien Springs and renamed Emmanuel Missionary College and later became incorporated with the new Adventist University—*Andrews University*, in its name honouring John Nevins Andrews—for good reasons of both scholarship and history as well as industry and courage.

John Nevins Andrews—"He Went First" (yes) and "9,996 Followed Him" (yes), for from North America alone from 1874 to 1975 there went out to almost every country in the world, 9,996 different Adventist missionaries, plus thousands who went from other bases such as Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

As he had requested, no eulogy of John Nevins Andrews appeared in Adventist publications following his death. Today he rests in a little cemetery in Basel, Switzerland, his missionary work finished ninety-three years ago. But today the missionary work is carried on by the world's most international Protestant church. And there is Andrews University! ★★

Twenty-five years ago, twelve national leaders CALLED FOR—

- a new effort to advance moral standards,
- an understanding of the nature of law and of its necessity as the principle of order in a free society,
- deeper concern by citizens regarding public affairs,
- the examination by each Australian of his conscience and his motives, seeking thereby the renewal of the whole community,
- thought from the Australian people about the nation's future, and
- the honouring of all those whose labours opened this land, those who died in battle for us, and those who worked with mind and muscle for the enlargement of our heritage.

They issued that call, AWARE that Australia was then threatened by dangers both from abroad and from within, and that these dangers demanded greater unity of thought and purpose, urgent restoration of the moral order, and deeper respect for law. They did so BELIEVING that each of us has a duty to defend his community against evil, to preserve for future generations that which was entrusted to us, to deal fairly with our fellows and to work hard and honestly.

IN RESPONSE, many Australians were moved to intensify their sense of purpose both individually and nationally, and this helped to counter some of the insistent problems of the time. However, new, insidious trends have arisen in recent years, and the quality and unity of our national life are again in jeopardy.

NOW WE, affirming that those leaders were well justified in making their call in 1951, HEREBY ISSUE

a new call to the people of Australia

We call upon our fellow countrymen to join in affirming the primacy of the spiritual bond between man and his Maker as the only antidote to increasing materialism, and to reassert faith in the pattern of values inherited from our forebears.

We appeal for a renewal of the old consensus regarding standards of right and wrong as a counterweight to today's permissiveness, recognizing that no society and civilization can survive without standing for clear moral principles.

We call on all Australians to safeguard the twin institutions of marriage and the family, believing them to be the rock on which stable and healthy communities are built.

We call for recognition of the unique value and inherent dignity of each person and of the need to uphold these beliefs by working to eradicate violence, callousness, prejudice, poverty, loneliness, exploitation, and selfishness.

We invite both labour and management to seek to solve their problems responsibly through co-operation rather than confrontation, and affirm our belief in working as hard and honestly as one can to help cure the ills of inflation and unemployment, and to ensure the economic health and prosperity of the nation.

We call for informed and balanced programmes for the judicious development of our country, particularly its great interior, while preserving as far as possible its natural beauty and husbanding those resources likely to be increasingly in short supply.

We appeal to the media and creative artists to use their talents to uplift and ennoble rather than to demoralize and demean, seeking thereby to arrest the growing cynical degeneracy of our culture.

We call for a deeper sense of responsibility toward our laws, from those who make or enforce them as well as from those bound to observe them.

We appeal for better understanding between youth and adults and a wider awareness that responsibility lies as heavily upon young people as upon adults to bridge the gap between them.

We invite all our countrymen to pledge themselves, both individually and as a people, to set apart for the welfare of others as well as of themselves, a significant portion of their time, energy and income.

We urge Australians to commit themselves to stand ready at all times to defend their country against those who would attack Australia from without or undermine her from within.

IN ISSUING THIS CALL, we are convinced that Australia can be physically and morally strong and stable if every Australian joins in reaching out for these goals with determination, energy and Divine support.

"Hold fast to that which is good!" (Romans: 12.9)

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Window on the world

DAY OF RECKONING

BRITAIN is the focus of all eyes today. The once-mighty empire has slipped to a third-rate power, to a member of a commonwealth of nations that is so loosely strung together that many hard-heads pose the question, "Is this farce worth perpetuating?" At the drop of a vote, any one of the members can opt out, and whatever the price of severance may be, it never seems to be very high.

Now we have the amazing spectacle of sterling finding that it has the strength of a Puritanian schilling, and daily new depths are plumbed by its falling value. At the time of writing, the pound sterling has deteriorated from a value ten months ago of US2.03 to \$US1.57, and the Socialist government in Britain is recognizing in forthright terms that there must be a place for private enterprise, and the profit motive, so long discredited by the Labour Government, now takes on a new respectability.

Economists are trying desperately to pin-point the reason for the decline and fall of the British pound. They have come up with a number of reasons, such as the failure to lift the standard of industry by pouring investment into it—in other words, Britain's manufacturing plants are too old-fashioned to compete with the better managed, better equipped plants of its trade rivals; the loss of markets once the exclusive preserve of Britain—inevitable in the diminishing size of the once-world-wide empire as her fledgling offspring tried their wings of independence; the trade union movement with its incessant and wide-ranging demands which came on so strongly and put such pressure on the economy; and the inability of successive governments to control inflation.

All of these factors have combined to shrink the value of sterling and to further impoverish a kingdom which once knew no bounds to its prosperity, and which understandably envisaged its strength perpetuating for a thousand years. But things have changed in a changing world, and Britain has been one of the worst sufferers.

The present government has endeavoured to put the brakes on the worsening economic situation and has slashed government spending, put a limit on wage increases and raised interest rates in order to attract foreign capital and keep British investment pounds strictly at home because of the attractiveness of the interest to be



by Observer

earned by investment in local industry. These members have been relatively successful, if you consider a reduction in the inflation rate from 30 per cent to 13 per cent. Even so, no one is especially ecstatic about a rate of 13 per cent, and the demands of the electorate are that inflation must be curbed even more before the prime minister, Mr. Callaghan, can rest easily in his bed.

As they live thus in austerity, Britons are chafing at the lowered standards under which they live, and chafing, too, at the booming unemployment which they see all around them as 1.5 million people tramp the streets looking for work. This unemployment situation is such that millions of Britons are clinging tenaciously to their jobs in the hope that things will not grow worse, and all the time they are casting anxious eyes upon the government, hoping that Mr. Callaghan and his ministers will somehow pull the miracle rabbit out of the hat and set Britain on its course to prosperity again.

Many of the British people imagined that their salvation lay in the North Sea oil deposits which were reputed to be of vast extent, with the production of oil in quantity apparently just around the corner. However, there are problems here also. Much of the money which has been invested in oil search in the North Sea has been withdrawn, and whereas there was a foreign investment in

Britain's oil of \$US8.2 billion in March 1975, there is now only \$US3.2 billion. The shrinking value of sterling and the withdrawal of funds by the oil nations has been responsible for the unhappy situation.

Perplexed to the point of distraction, Britain's financiers, economists and the government itself have at last come, cap-in-hand, to the International Monetary Fund to try to secure a loan of \$US3.9 billion. This, it is hoped, will bolster the declining value of the pound, but whether it will be a case of "too little, too late" remains to be seen.

One of the great strains that has come upon the British economy—and it should not be overlooked by any state which has delusions of ease which government hand-outs bring—is that the more people were given by the government, the more they expected. Thus succeeding governments were put to the stretch in dreaming up better and rosier promises with which to woo the electors. Consequently the welfare state came into being, and men thought that this was the be-all and the end-all of everything. Now Utopia had arrived. Free medicine, free hospital care, free this and free that, was deemed to be the eighth wonder of the world. And it is true that these things are, indeed, welcome bonuses to the people of the welfare state. However, it is easy to lose sight of one thing, namely, that SOMEONE HAS TO PAY IN THE LONG RUN. As one of our own politicians has remarked, "There is no such thing as a free lunch."

That is what so many in Britain forgot. That is what the welfare state can cause its people to forget. "Someone has to foot the bill" is an axiom of life which we are all prone to forget when the banquet is on and the wine of prosperity is flowing from every faucet. But there comes a day of reckoning, and it will not be easily set aside; the payment will have to be made in full; there is no hope, eventually, of side-stepping the day of settlement. The welfare state—whether socialist or communist, capitalist or totalitarian—must eventually bring its citizens to the point of paying for their luxuries and indeed putting hard cash on the counter for necessities. No economy can go on printing money as if it were bus tickets just to pay bills. Some time there comes the moment of truth when the belt has to be tightened and the facts faced.

Britain has reached that point right now!

★★

signs

INTERNATIONAL

BEER

The Australian Associated Brewers are concerned about the way young people are becoming dependent on alcohol! Accordingly they have approached the Federal Treasurer seeking a reduction in excise duty on beer, claiming that problems of alcohol dependency are growing among young people because spirits and wine give them more alcohol for their money than beer.

PUBLISHING

The biggest publishing venture since the King James Version was published in 1611 is being claimed by the Bible Society for its Good News Bible which was released on December 6, 1976. Like the K.J.V. it is expected to become "the People's Bible." The American Bible Society is printing and expects to sell ten million in the first year alone. Another million will be printed in the U.K. for the U.K. and Commonwealth countries, and these are expected to be gone by Christmas. The New Testament in the same translation (Today's English Version) has sold more than fifty million copies since its release in 1966.

CHAIRMAN

The general secretary of the Bible Society in Australia, the Rev. James Payne, has become the first Australian to head the United Bible Societies' Executive Committee. He was elected chairman at the General Committee's meetings in London recently. The appointment is for four years. The Executive Committee co-ordinates the activities of fifty-seven Bible Societies and thirty-seven National offices. It administers a budget of more than eight million dollars which is used for the translation, production and distribution of the Scriptures. The United Bible Societies work in more countries than the United Nations—more than 160. In the current financial year the Bible Societies are underwriting more than 600 translation projects, and most of them are for the nations of the Third World.

PENTECOSTALISM

The Assemblies of God denomination has increased its membership dramatically in Italy since World War II. When the war finished there were thirty-five small congregations meeting underground. Now there are 700 churches with more than 150,000 members. Growth is so embarrassingly fast that there are not enough pastors to go around.

BIBLES

A report issued in London by the United Bible Societies indicates that Scripture distribution is being forbidden in an increasing number of countries. John Dean, world service officer of the U.B.S., said, "There seem to be more places closed to the Word of God now than at any time since World War II." The Soviet Union has allowed some Scriptures to be printed, but quantities are never sufficient. No Bible work has been carried out in Albania since World War II. Only a few Scriptures have been allowed in Bulgaria since 1945, but a new Bulgarian translation is nearing completion and the U.B.S. is hoping that its offer to finance production of the Bible will be accepted by the government. Scripture distribution is not permitted in Libya, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia or the two Yemen republics, but has increased in other Arab oil states. Vietnam has been closed to new Scriptures since the war ended in 1975, but the U.B.S. hopes that the work may be re-established. The report noted that areas that continue to be "substantially closed to the gospel" include Afghanistan, Tibet, China and Mongolia.

FOUND

American and Saudi geologists say they believe they have found the "lost" gold mine of King Solomon in a mountainous region between Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia. Known as Ophir, it yielded about thirty-four tons of gold (\$US125 million worth at current prices) during Solomon's reign.



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DR. DESMOND FORD

OPINION, PLEASE

What do you think of such books as Hal Lindsey's "The Late Great Planet Earth"?
K.J.H.

This best-seller, approximately 4,000,000 copies in print, is representative of the dispensationalist, futurist school of prophetic interpretation. It informs us that many current newspaper speculations are about to become realities, and that these are all foretold in Holy Writ. Russia is to come down from the uttermost north upon tiny Israel. The oil-wells of the Middle East will be the magnet attracting armies to the last great battle of Armageddon in Palestine, and then blood will flow up to the the horses' bridles for 200 miles in each direction about Jerusalem. Earth's final war at the valley of Megiddo will fulfil prophecies about Rosh (Russia), the Oriental hordes from the east, and a revived Roman empire headed up by a new Fuehrer or antichrist. The latter will initiate a purge of 1,260 days' duration, a blood-bath making World War II atrocity figures look like child's play. As for God's people—they will have mysteriously disappeared just before the nightmare of tribulation breaks. Theirs will be the trip of all trips, leaving LSD, etc., as kindergarten stuff, for the saints are miraculously precipitated into the ultimate trip—even to heaven itself for the duration.

All of this is in error because it ignores the plain New Testament teaching that the world-wide Christian church is now the Israel of God, and that all the symbolic prophecies of Revelation are to be interpreted spiritually in this present "dispensation of the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:8, R.S.V.). The first chapter of Revelation was intended to save us from travelling such dead-end roads of false interpretation. Verses 2 and 20 of this chapter tell us that all which follows is "signified"—that is, conveyed by signs and symbols, just as the stars in Christ's hand are interpreted as the leaders of His church, and the candlesticks among which He walks as His world-wide church. (See Matthew 21:43 and 1 Peter 2:9 which tell us that the church is now God's holy nation.) There is war aplenty in the prophecies of Revelation, but it is not war between nations but rather the great controversy between good and evil. (See Revelation 12:7, 17; 11:7; 17:14, 16:14, 19:19.) This harmonizes with the rest of the New Testament wherein we are admonished to put on the whole armour of God, and to wage a good warfare as soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Similarly, a great gathering is foretold in Revelation. But it is not the gathering of Israel back to her land (there are more Jews in New York City than in Palestine), nor the gathering of nations to Megiddo, but rather the world-wide gatherings of all men into two camps—those embracing false worship, and those who cling to "the faith once delivered to the saints." Revelation (chapters 13 to 19) speaks of the last great conflict between Christ and Satan through their representatives on earth. It is said to be a conflict over "the commandments of God," particularly that commandment which reveals God as the Creator of "heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Revelation 14:12, 7. In preparation for this final clash of ideologies, an international threefold

message is described as gathering from "Babylon" (confused religion based on human traditions) those who choose to worship according to the Scriptures. (See Revelation 14: 6-12.) On the other hand, there is an international gathering of the kings of the earth and their armies by demonic spirits (Revelation 16:13, 14). These, like Cain, the Antediluvians, the Sodomites, the Babylonians, and the apostate Jews, wish to worship according to traditions which glorify the creature rather than the Creator. Armageddon is the symbolic name for the destruction of the wicked and the deliverance of God's people at the second advent.

WHAT IS "UNCLEAN"?

What is the meaning of Romans 14:14-23, especially the words "there is nothing unclean of itself"? Surely this passage is not saying that a thing is good or bad according to the way we think about it, yet the Scripture declares that "to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean." I.W.

The passage has reference to ceremonial uncleanness, and Paul is teaching that since the age of types and shadows ceased at Calvary, there is no longer any such thing as ceremonial uncleanness. He is certainly not saying that nothing is good or bad in itself, but only according to our individual thinking. Elsewhere he can quote with approval: "... touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." 2 Corinthians 6:17, and then adds: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Corinthians 7:1.

The context of Romans 14 also makes clear the intent of the Apostle. "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. . . . Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace. . . . It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth. . . . For whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Romans 14:15-23.

In other words—don't encourage anyone to go contrary to his conscience, for it is right to be guided by our conscience, provided it be rightly educated. If, says Paul, you insist on following your superior knowledge by doing something that is questionable to another man, you may encourage him to violate his conscience and thus rob him of "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

It should be observed that the discussion does not concern the relationship between diet and health. Many Christians today abstain from those foods called "unclean" in the Old Testament, but not in order to avoid ceremonial defilement. They choose to avoid such fare for reasons of health, deeming that God had this purpose in mind as well as symbolic religious instruction when long ago He forbade Israel the use of certain meats.

CHRIST AND WINE

Did Christ tarry long at the wine? I read in Genesis 49: 10-12 a prophecy about the Messiah which says: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; . . . His eyes shall be red with wine, and His teeth white with milk."

Now Proverbs 23:29, 30 says that those who have redness of eyes are those who tarry long at the wine. Would you please explain the Genesis verse? G.

The passage in Genesis 49 is certainly not intended as a description of drunkenness. It uses hyperbole to set forth the blessings of prosperity which will attend the Messiah's reign. Instead of "His eyes shall be red with wine" the Greek Septuagint version has "glad-eyed," and this conveys the thought of the original. The parallel line regarding the whiteness of teeth confirms this view that the passage points to blessing not bane.

"BETHLEHEM OF THE SPIRIT"

I have heard the statement that "Pentecost was the Bethlehem of the Holy Spirit." What does this mean? N.F.

The Second Member of the Trinity came into human flesh at Bethlehem, and at Pentecost the Third Member came to earth to abide in the body of Christ's bride—the church. He is as truly on earth now with each believer as was Christ during His ministry in Palestine. Just as without the atmosphere the heavens would be dark except for the painful blaze of the undiminished rays of the sun, and the earth arid, so without the Holy Spirit, the things of heaven would bring no comfort or strength to men. Pentecost, as the time of the richest precipitation of the Spirit, marks a stage of Heaven's beneficence as real as the advent of Christ itself.

A HECTIC LIFE

Life for me is continually hectic. I am asked to do so many things. Should a Christian refuse some requests for help or service? Anon.

God never intended that we should lead confused and frayed lives. While a Christian will ever be ready to give up his own plans for any emergency that demands his help, he must be on the watch lest the urgent crowd out the important. A dog that responds to every man's whistle is no good to any master, and we need to enquire carefully whether the continual emergencies which come our way are those allotted of Providence, or whether they are Satan's temptation to turn us out of the way. When one Christian was asked to violate his Sabbath by regular worldly duties, the argument was propounded that it was right to lift an animal out of a pit on the Sabbath day as on other days. He replied that this was so, but nevertheless if he had an animal that continually fell in a pit on the Sabbath he would either fill up the pit or get rid of the stumbling creature. All of us need to fill up some pits or at least discipline some wandering chronophages (time-eaters).

Remember that "when two duties conflict, one ceases to be a duty." It is always a duty to care for our health and to put first things first. While genuine emergencies may call for overwork for a time, such should never be prolonged. Scripture reminds us that we are not our own, for we have been bought with a price. The constant application of a true hierarchy of values whereby we clearly recognize an order of importance in all God-required duties will save us from sorrow and fruitlessness.

If the anonymous correspondent, "A regular receiver of the SIGNS OF THE TIMES," will supply the editor with his/her name and address, we will endeavour to answer some of the questions posed on the Book of Revelation. Editor.

★★

miscellany

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE . . .

For many years now we have featured the work of Christian missions in our February issue, and 1977 will be no exception. Ron Taylor who has a first-hand knowledge of the work of missions in the South Pacific was the writer-photographer last year, and we liked his work so much that we have commissioned him to repeat the performance for us this year. We are expecting a first-class submission from him, and are anticipating its arrival any day now.

The entire issue will not be on this one theme, however. There will be articles of general interest and we can whet your appetite with two . . .

"The Problem of Mental Depression" by Dr. Lionel Turner, will answer many questions about this vexing question. Perhaps you think that Christians shouldn't suffer from such a thing. This article will be helpful whether you are subject to depression or live with someone who becomes depressed.

We have heard many kind remarks about W.A. Townend's series "God Had a Man." Next month's story will be a particularly good one: "In a Dark Country—a Bright Light."

CO-OPERATION CORNER

From time to time SIGNS readers forward donations to us for various worthy causes. We are happy to acknowledge these gifts through our columns, and to disburse the gifts as directed by the donors. On behalf of the various funds mentioned we gratefully acknowledge the following donations.

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