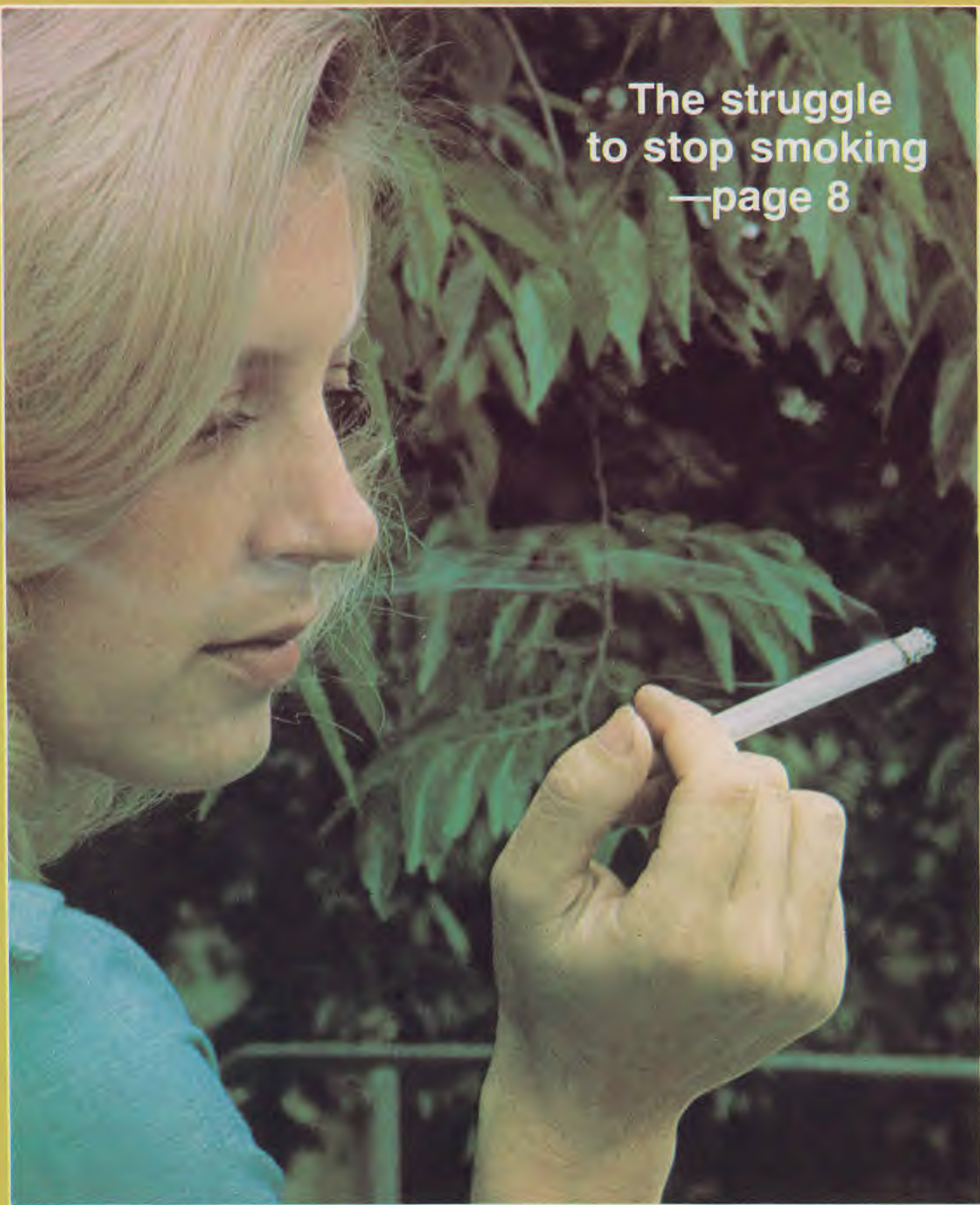


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No Prophetic Significance
for Modern Israel

by Herbert E. Douglass

Thousands expect Israel to play a major role in God's future plans for earth. What is the Biblical evidence?

MANY PEOPLE today consider the restoration of the Jewish nation in Palestine to be a direct and dramatic fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, a phenomenal best seller of the last four years, declares that the end of the world will come within the lifetime of the generation that saw the founding of the Israeli state in 1948, hereby applying the words of Jesus: "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matthew 24:34).

Coupled with this fascination with Israel is a novel teaching regarding the return of Jesus, called the "secret rapture." Lindsey speaks for many today who expect God secretly to take the "church" to heaven prior to the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple on its old site where the sacred Muslim shrine, the Dome of the Rock, now stands. According to this position, after the "church" is "raptured" to heaven, there will be seven years of the worst period of famine, bloodshed, and pestilence ever experienced by man. During this great tribulation the focus will be on God's dealings with the Jews, who are again given the responsibility for the evangelization of the world.

According to secret-rapture spokesmen, the battle of Armageddon will climax the end of the seven-year tribulation as the nations of the earth take sides over the future of Israel. When mankind teeters on the brink of incinerating the world, Jesus will return gloriously and save man from self-extinction. At that time Jesus will set up a literal one-thousand-year reign on earth with Jerusalem functioning as the spiritual capital of the world.

Most evangelical periodicals and pulpits teach this view today, and to those who do not know better, it might ap-

pear that this prophetic scenario, known as pretribulationism, has been the traditional teaching of the Christian church since New Testament days. Nothing is further from the truth.

The First Mistake—Dispensationalism

Four mistakes in Biblical interpretation united in the nineteenth century to produce the pretribulationist argument. The first, called dispensationalism, was developed by J. N. Darby of the Plymouth Brethren in England around 1825. Originally formed as a protest against the spiritual weakness of the Church of England, the Plymouth Brethren eventually rejected the whole concept of church organization and the ordained ministry.

Dispensationalists believe that there are seven distinct periods of time, or dispensations, "during which God tests man, by means of some specific standard of conduct, in respect to man's obedience to the will of God." These dispensations have been given the following names: innocence, conscience, government, promise, law, grace, and kingdom.

The grace period is the time of the Christian church from Pentecost to the moment when the last person is added to the spiritual church. At that moment Jesus will "rapture" His people, ushering in the seventh dispensation, during which Israel is supposed to begin its glorious millennial reign as the center of God's activity on earth.

The Second Mistake—Secret Rapture

The second mistake in Biblical interpretation was the novel introduction of the secret-rapture concept in the early 1830's. Never before in the history of the Christian church had the idea of a secret coming of Christ been taught. However, a woman of Edward Irving's congregation announced, while speaking in tongues, that the Lord had revealed

to her that the true church would be caught up to heaven before the last great tribulation.

Strange as it may seem, this obscure announcement swept the evangelical ranks like a prairie fire. It provided a solution to the dispensational problem of getting the church out of the way before the great tribulation and the resumption of the Israelite dispensation; it also provided a welcome counterattack against the postmillennialism (the belief that Jesus returns *after* the millennium of glorious peace) of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While leading postmillennial preachers were optimistically pointing to the triumphant march of the Holy Spirit and the church in the hearts of men the world over as evidence that the glorious millennium was almost a reality, belief in the soon return of Jesus became increasingly more difficult. This new emphasis on the fact that Jesus would return prior to the millennium and not after it, revived the traditional hope of the church and brought urgency back to the Second Advent doctrine.

The Third Mistake—Futurism

These two latecomers to Biblical interpretation—dispensationalism and the secret-rapture concept—then joined an old Catholic interpretation of prophecy, called futurism. Futurism believes that the seventieth week of Daniel 7 as well as Revelation 4 to 22 were yet future events to be completed during the seven years of great tribulation. In the late sixteenth century, a Spanish Jesuit, embarrassed by the Protestant identification of the Pope as the antichrist, had counterattacked with the position that all texts referring to the antichrist had a future application. Futurism did not enter the Protestant church until S. R. Maitland, disillusioned that history was not unfolding according to his prophetic interpretations, became its first convert in 1826. Maitland played a leading role

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in the union of futurism with dispensationalism.

The Fourth Mistake— The Church Misunderstood

The fourth error of Biblical interpretation that lies at the bottom of the dispensationalist, secret-rapture, futurist syndrome is the misunderstanding of the nature of the Christian church.

Most probably, if the relationship of Israel and the Christian church had been correctly understood, there would never have been the need to insert a hypothetical "age of the Christian church" between two Jewish dispensations. Nor would there have been the need to invent the secret-rapture theory, which neatly arranges for the Christians to be removed from the earth so that the Jews would again become the focal point of God's activity. The whole dispensationalist position, and thus, for all practical purposes, the Israel-restoration argument, rests upon a faulty understanding of the nature of the Christian church.

In fact, John F. Walvoord, president of Dallas Theological Seminary and probably the leading spokesman for the secret-rapture, pretribulation position, wrote: "It is safe to say that pretribulationism depends upon a particular definition of the church, and any consideration of pretribulationism which does not take this major factor into consideration will be largely beside the point" (*The Rapture Question*, pp. 16-19).

The deciding issue could not have been better said. Walvoord correctly states that the whole issue of the secret rapture rests on the interpretation of what constitutes the "church." But Walvoord is wrong when he attempts to distinguish (1) between the responsibility given by God to the Jewish nation prior to the cross and that given to the Christian church, and (2) between the "church" that will be raptured and all other Christians before and after the rapture.

The awesome truth of the New Testament is that there is *no* spiritual distinction between the men of faith in the Old Testament and the New.

"So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be

blessed.' So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith." "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. . . . And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:7-9, 26, RSV).

The earliest Christians were Jews. Being Christians, they were founders of an organization that had one primary objective—to proclaim that the Lord Jesus was their Saviour not only from the penalty of sin but from its power as well.

This postcross message was essentially no different from what the Lord's prophets had been saying before Calvary. Men of genuine faith are saved from the power and penalty of sin, whether they lived before or after the cross. But after the cross the message became clearer and man's rebellion less excusable.

No Biblical Support for Dispensationalism

According to dispensationalists, Israel has two dispensations, or time pe-

riods, in which it functions as God's special instrument of salvation. Between these two periods of time comes the dispensation of the "church." The church receives a heavenly reward at the time of the rapture, while Israel receives an earthly reward at the end of the tribulation. There is no support in the New Testament for such a view.

The chief reason why the modern state of Israel has no prophetic significance is that after the Jews as a body rejected Jesus as the Messiah, God gave to the Christian church the special privileges, responsibilities, and prerogatives once assigned to the ancient Jews. No longer were the Jews to be His special people with a prophetic destiny.

All the promises of a glorious kingdom on earth once given through the Jewish prophets to the Jewish people became void because the Jewish people as a nation did not fulfill the conditions of these prophecies. Failing to receive the glory that *could have been* Israel's is probably the saddest story in literature. Placed at the crossroads of the ancient world, God furnished them with



Photograph by Rick Smolan / Image

"All the promises of a glorious kingdom on earth once given to the Jewish people became void because as a nation they did not fulfill the conditions of these prophecies."

every facility for becoming the greatest nation on the earth. God wanted to reward Israel with every physical and spiritual blessing as they put into practice the clear-cut principles that He had graciously taught them through His prophets (Deuteronomy 7, 8, 28).

The Old Testament records the sad story of how the vineyard of Israel produced, not the mature fruit of a Christ-like character, but "wild grapes," a misinterpretation and perversion of what the God of Israel was really like. "What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?" (Isaiah 5:4, RSV).

Even when the Jewish nation was suffering the bitter consequences of disobedience during the Babylonian captivity, God mercifully promised that a restored Israel was possible and that there was yet time to recover its special role as His representative on earth—if it would honor His law and submit to His principles. Even then the Jews could have become, if faithful, the head and not the tail, in matters physical and spiritual; all nations would have looked upon Jerusalem as not only the center of wisdom but also the spiritual capital of the world (see Isaiah 45:14; 60:1-11).

When the Jews returned to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity, the promises given to Abraham and expanded through the writings of Moses and other prophets could have been fulfilled; the whole earth would have been alerted for the first advent of Christ, even as the way is being prepared for His second coming today.

Missed Their Last Opportunity

These Old Testament prophecies that picture Israel dwelling in peace and prosperity, with all nations beating a path to her doors, could have been fulfilled centuries ago if they had indeed prepared the world for the first coming of Jesus (see Zechariah 8:14). But instead of fulfilling their greatest assignment they missed their last opportunity, and Jesus their Lord finally had to pronounce with irrevocable judgment: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you

would not! Behold your house is forsaken and desolate" (Matthew 23:37, 38, RSV).

Those who regard the establishment of the modern state of Israel as a fulfillment of those Old Testament prophecies overlook the fact that these promises were made either prior to their release from Babylonian captivity or during the rebuilding days soon after their return. God would have fulfilled these promises if Israel had been faithful and obedient to the conditions on which the promises were made.

Although God promised a "second chance" to Israel after their failure leading up to the Babylonian captivity, He promised no "third chance" to them after their final rejection when their Lord Himself "came to his own home, and his own people received him not" (John 1:11, RSV).

But God did not give up, even though Israel as a nation had failed Him. Although corporate Israel no longer was to function as God's special agent, the individual Jews who received and obeyed Jesus Christ would constitute the new organization through which He would now work.

Paul describes this remarkable transition in Romans 9 to 11, where he appeals to individual Jews (such as himself) to respond to God through Jesus, join those Gentiles who have found in Him the solution to their anxious, sinful condition, and together arouse the world to the simple fact that God wants to make an end to sin and its misery by setting up His eternal kingdom composed of those who have found in Jesus the promised Saviour.

Paul makes it very clear that the literal Jew has a future, a part in the eternal plans of God, but only as a *Jewish Christian*. Even as individual Gentiles are grafted into the saving fellowship of God's people, so individual Jews are "grafted back into their own olive tree" (Romans 11:24, RSV). In New Testament language, the "Jew" is no longer the literal descendant of Abraham but the person (Hebrew or Gentile) who has been converted and has become a disciple of Jesus Christ. "For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a

matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal" (Romans 2:28, 29, RSV). Indeed, before Jesus returns, we expect a large number of our Jewish friends to join those who wait eagerly for Him.

Promises of a Restored Israel Were Conditional

In conclusion, the Old Testament prophecies that depicted a central role for the nation of Israel as (1) God's evangelistic agency for the whole world and (2) the world's center of material and spiritual prosperity have not been fulfilled and will not be fulfilled because Israel as a nation defaulted on her responsibilities. The prophecies of future blessings and glory depended upon Israel's obedience.

Those who place prophetic significance on modern Israel have either overlooked or rejected this simple fact because they ignore the Biblical principle of conditional prophecy. Jonah had to learn this lesson under difficult circumstances; Moses made this principle clear in Deuteronomy 28; Samuel emphasized it in 1 Samuel 2:30, 31; and Jeremiah pointed out its importance in chapter 18:7-10. The principle of conditional prophecy, simply stated, recognizes that the promises and judgments of God are alike conditional. Ignoring this fundamental principle of Biblical interpretation results in a distorted picture of promises and predictions.

The pretribulation position disintegrates as soon as it is conceded that nevermore as a people would the Jews be a special evangelistic instrument in the plan of salvation and that the Christian church, composed of both Jew and Gentile, has received from God the same commission once given to the Jewish people: to function as God's instrument of salvation and to be the living representatives of His way of life. The secret-rapture novelty becomes unnecessary. The argument that modern Israel is fulfilling a prophetic role also vanishes, not only because there is no Biblical support for a modern, literal, glorious millennial restoration of Israel, but because God's purpose for all men since Calvary has been made known through any person, Jew or Gentile, who witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Here all men stand equal. ☉

African nomads face starvation

A missionary nutritionist, who recently returned from the drought-stricken disaster area in Africa, said nomads there face further mass starvation. The prolonged drought in north-central Africa threatens to take five to six million lives, and no relief from mass starvation appears to be in sight, said Maxine Burch of Nebraska, who spent four months in the disaster area with a medical relief team.

She told officials of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indianapolis that Sahelian nomads have lost most of their herds of animals—which deprives them not only of meat but also of milk, milk products, and bartering power. Grain crops are also gone.

One possible solution to mass starvation is to resettle hundreds of thousands of the nomads south of the 13th parallel, Miss Burch said. The people would be moved into more agriculturally developed areas and into cities.

Big, Small Prayer Groups Dot Washington Scene

Something far more significant lies beneath the glamorous veneer of the National Prayer Breakfasts in Washington. Started by Ike in '53, NPB gets big headlines. Everyone goes to be seen. It is hardly a humble affair. But NPB's effect is pale compared to small private prayer groups springing up around Washington. No publicity, prestige, political gain. Men from diverse political positions meet regularly for prayer and testimony. And the practice is spreading to state and local governments—even to foreign countries.

Street Christians Losing First Love

Arthur Blessitt, former "Minister of Sunset Strip," claims that "street Christians" in the U.S. have retreated from their crisis ministry. He says they are now writing books and playing concerts that cost five dollars to attend. Blessitt's cry was echoed in Washington, D.C., by Edward Plowman, news editor of *Christianity Today*. Plowman lamented the emphasis on high royalties by many who got their start witnessing to fellow dropouts. In his opinion they should not abandon their first calling—to reach those in greatest need.

Growing Black Magic Cult Bringing "Nightmares"

Church leaders in England are having nightmares over a growing black-magic cult, according to London Bishop Gerald Ellison. "There is too much evil all around us—and I am convinced that the spread of antireligious feelings and black-magic practices are to blame," the minister told a reporter for the *National Enquirer*.

Cases of demonic possession and haunted houses have become so numerous that Dr.

Ellison has appointed a prominent exorcist to help churches in his diocese fight the forces of evil.

Henry Cooper, noted exorcist and famed "ghost hunter," said that "dabbling in this type of thing opens the door to evil. Evil manifestations in our everyday life are becoming very common. I'm getting calls from all over the country for advice on how to combat the forces of evil, and I'm glad that the church is now recognizing the tremendous growth of evil."

"China Doctor" Receives Commendation From Nixon

President Nixon has given Presidential commendation to an American who has spent some sixty years in China. Dr. Harry Miller went to China in 1903 as a Seventh-day Adventist missionary. He introduced soy milk to the Chinese, developing the product himself through his personal research. He led in the establishment of more than a dozen hospitals in the Far East and became renowned for his skill in goiter surgery. Last year at ninety-three, he performed his last operation.

Lutherans Accept the Pope?

Latest Lutheran-Catholic accord on Papacy may provoke loud howls (and schism) from conservatives in Lutheranism. Joint commission of Lutheran and Catholic theologians from across U.S. have worked out a five-thousand-word Common Statement after nine years of effort. The agreement is labeled as a "major ecumenical landmark." While the statement says only that the bishop of Rome could legitimately function in the future as general overseer of ecumenical affairs, many Lutherans may react strongly to any suggestions of rapprochement with Luther's old foe. If they do, watch conservative groups, especially within Missouri Synod, gain while moderates are tainted by association with the commission.

No "Christian America" Any Longer

The term "Christian America" has a hollow ring to the ears of Don Mabry. "Those who believe in and practice the Christian faith in America today are in the minority. The term 'Christian America' simply isn't true anymore," Mabry said.

Mabry is director of the department of survey and special studies for the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board, operating out of Atlanta, Georgia.

America is largely peopled with those "whose life-style simply has no room for spiritual things. They are busy making money or doing the things they think are bringing them happiness. But they are among the most frustrated of people," he added.

"Man, some areas of our country are literally exporting young people to the metropolitan areas. These young people are migrating to the established urban areas in tremendous numbers," he said. Mabry cited statistics which show that 75 percent of the people in America today live in metropolitan areas. By the year 2000, he said, that figure will leap to 95 percent.

"People dream of the rural, pastoral life-style of the country, but at the same time want all of the amenities of the city," he said. As a consequence, he noted that a peculiarity of the rush to the city is that many city churches—inner city, near downtown, neighborhood, and suburban—are in crisis. Many are closing their doors.

Family Gains as TV Appeal Levels Off

George Gallup has discovered that watching TV remains the most popular evening pastime of about half of Americans, but that the proportion has not increased since a 1966 survey. He found, on the other hand, that engaging in family activities at home is now the favorite way of spending an evening for twice the number of people since the 1966 survey.

Reading was the highest on the 1938 list, followed by the movies, the theater, and dancing. Each of these pastimes dropped sharply in the next survey—1960. TV had dominated the list for some 28 percent.

His American Institute of Public Opinion lists 1974 percentages of response to the question "What is your favorite way of spending an evening?"

Watching television (46%); reading (14%); dining out (12%); family activities at home (10%); movies / theater (9%); resting / relaxation (8%); visiting friends (8%); entertaining friends (8%); playing cards / games (8%); participating in sports (5%); listening to radio / records (5%); dancing (4%); sewing (3%); working in home workshop (3%); club or church meetings (3%); other responses (9%).

The college-educated group was found more likely to cite favorite evening pastimes as entertaining friends, dining out, and attending movies or the theater.

Celebrities Reported "Born Again"

Three noted celebrities have reportedly given their lives to Jesus Christ, according to *Evangelical Newsletter* published in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Mickey Rooney, asked by the Salvation Army to do promotional radio spots, surprised Army authorities by stating firmly, "Since I accepted Christ as my Saviour, my life is altogether different." He said a message by Billy



Graham was the key in his conversion experience.

Some were dubious, referring to Rooney's past affiliation with Church of Religious Science. The newsletter said he is reportedly attending a large evangelical church in the South.

Jeanie C. Riley—songster in miniskirt famous for her rendition of "Harper Valley PTA"—says she started reading Ken Taylor's Living Bible in a hospital and declares her life is completely changed.

The third is Joanne Pflug, star of M*A*S*H. The actress was "reborn as a new Christian, baptized in Pat Boone's pool, then married to a Jesus Freak," the newsletter of the Evangelical Foundation noted.

Kidnap Victim Preaches to Abductors

A banker's wife said the prayers of Christians throughout the world and her Christian upbringing sustained her during a harrowing eighty-two-hour ordeal in the hands of abductors. Mrs. Eunice Kronholm, forty-six, told newsmen at Bethel Seminary chapel in St. Paul, Minnesota, that she was "terrified but uninjured," after being taken by two men wearing ski masks as she was wiping the frost off the windshield of her car March 15. One suspect was captured quickly by the FBI; the other turned himself in.

"I asked for a radio on Sunday so I could 'go to church,'" Mrs. Kronholm said. "They drummed up some kind of radio and asked what program I wanted." She suggested 90 on the dial, location of Christian radio station KTIS in Roseville. One of the abductors remained in the room and heard William Malam at First Baptist Church and Evangelist Billy Graham.

"Shortly after that," Mrs. Kronholm recalled, "KTIS came on the air with an announcement of my abduction and asked everyone listening to pray for my safe return to my family. You can't imagine what that made me feel like. It really boosted me like I really can't explain to you."

The courageous lady was formerly a nurse at Bethel Theological Seminary. Seven years ago she married Mr. Gunnar Kronholm, president of Grover State Bank in South St. Paul, who had been a widower. Her husband paid the two hundred thousand dollars demanded, but the FBI recovered all but one hundred dollars of the ransom money.

Mrs. Kronholm, speaking to a packed seminary chapel during live ABC and NBC telecasts, said her abductors were puzzled by her ability to remain calm and not to become bitter. "All I could say was that I am a Christian and that God had given me the strength to do this," she said. "I told them, 'You won't

believe this, but there are going to be thousands of people praying for me.' I continually felt the presence of God, . . . and the verse that kept coming to me was 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee'" (a reference to Isaiah 26:3).

Mrs. Kronholm's testimony to the men (she called them "Bill" and "Jerry") seemed to lessen their will to hold her captive. After the FBI took the ransom money to the various locations, she "just walked out" of the vacant house, hitchhiked to a Tom Thumb superette store, and phoned home to a grateful family.

Adventist Chaplain Substantiates Demon Possession

A Seventh-day Adventist chaplain in the U.S. Navy says the devil is real, demons do exist, and people are possessed. Chaplain Robert L. Mole, stationed at Fort Myer near Washington, D.C., conducted field studies on demonology in Thailand which he says, along with Biblical accounts, convinced him. After witnessing numerous exorcisms, Mole says the main ingredients are the reading of selected passages of Scripture by concerned Christians and earnest prayer to God for the demon to depart. Mole made a distinction between persons with chemical deficiencies or those mentally disturbed and demon-possessed individuals.

More Famines in the Offing

The 1973 famine in which more than fifty thousand Ethiopians perished is but the first of a series of global famines, according to a representative of World Vision International. Bernard Barron says, "We're going to see a lot more famines as a result of the world's upset ecology." Barron, who himself is a native of South Africa, says much of the blame for starvation in Africa and Asia is due to overconsumption by the Western World. "It isn't right," Barron says, "that one quarter of the world's population consumes 80 percent of the world's resources."

Pastor "Gets Attention" With 300-Pound Popsicle

Pastor Ed Courtney of Westland Baptist Church in Lakewood, Colorado, goes to greater lengths than most ministers would with his attendance drives. He recently gave away three three-hundred-pound popsicles to teen-agers who brought the most visitors to Sunday School and Sunday services. Each popsicle required seventy-five packages of drink mix. The sticks were six feet long and made of one-by-six lumber. Prior to popsicles, Courtney gave away a seventy-five-foot-wide banana split! His point of view: "We live in an age when we have to get people's attention to attract them to come to church."

Dorothy L. Sayers: "No good whatever will be done by a retreat into personal piety or by mere exhortation to a 'recall to prayer.' The thing that is in danger is the whole structure of society, and it is necessary to persuade thinking men and women of the vital and intimate connection between the structure of society and the theological doctrines of Christianity."

Dr. H. H. Halley in *Bible Handbook*: "It may be that some Bible utterances are ancient thought-forms for ideas that we would express in a different way—for they were expressed in the language of ancient times. But even so, the Bible contains precisely the things that God wants mankind to know, in exactly the form in which He wants mankind to know them. And to the end of time the Bible will remain the one and only answer to humanity's quest for God."

James M. Orche, former chairman of the board, General Motors Corporation: "Until recently, many businessmen shared the common misconception that all alcoholics are on skid row. This is not the case. The majority of alcoholics, especially those in the early and middle stages, are operative in society. Millions of them are employed in industry and business. No segment of society is immune from the disease. Persons suffering from alcoholism make up 5 to 10 percent of any given group—doctors, lawyers, butchers, bakers, assemblymen, or business executives."



The struggle to stop smoking

by Russell Holt

Photography by Wanda McMullin

An inside look at what goes on during a session of the now world-famous Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking.

SEVEN THIRTY PM. Thirty-seven men and women sit at student desks in a classroom of Madison Hospital, Madison, Tennessee, knowing the next five days will be some of the most miserable days of their lives.

Between them they will have shared headaches, nausea, jangled nerves, blurred vision, dizziness, stomach cramps, and heartburn. Some will experience only one or two mild symptoms; others will have the whole package.

The thirty-seven men and women represent a typical cross section of America. There is a bank employee, a truck driver, a newspaper reporter, a factory worker, a used-car salesman, a professional photographer, a songwriter, and a housewife, or "domestic engineer" as she laughingly calls herself. The thing that has brought them together and which will hold them together for the next five days is their common desire to stop smoking. This desire has brought them, nervous and somewhat ill at ease, to the first meeting of another Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking, a unique program sponsored by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

No one knows exactly how many million smokers continue puffing along in spite of the grim message issued by the Surgeon General of the United States and required by law to be printed on all cigarette packages and advertising. It reads: "Warning. The Surgeon General has determined that cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health."

Behind that statement lies the fact that smokers die at a 68 percent faster rate than do nonsmokers; that each cigarette subtracts six minutes from the life of the average heavy smoker; that smokers are seven times more likely to die from lung cancer than a nonsmoker, ten times more likely to die from emphysema, and twice as likely to die from heart disease. Each year smoking contributes substantially to the deaths of over 300,000 Americans.

Roe Gunter, photographer, sits toward the back of the room and listens. She knows about the figures in a personal way. Her husband had died eight months earlier of lung cancer from smoking cigarettes.

Memories flood into her mind, briefly crowding out the voice of Preston Wallace, leader for the program. As he talks, she remembers the slow decline, the suffering,



the paralysis and wheelchair, the death. She remembers, too, how during those final months she hid from her husband the knowledge that she herself was smoking. She didn't want him to know. After his death she had to carry on the business alone. The pressures built until she found herself smoking more and more, reaching for a cigarette first thing in the morning and stubbing one out the last thing at night.

A few months later Roe began feeling bad, and she worried that she might have

cancer. Going to her doctor, she remained uncertain even when he assured her that her chest X ray showed nothing. She remembers thinking that perhaps by the time it showed up on the X ray, it would be too late anyway.

A day or two after her visit to the doctor, she read in the newspaper about the Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking to be held at Madison Hospital. The first meeting was scheduled for Monday night at seven thirty. Monday morning Mrs. Gunter threw away

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all her cigarettes—except one. She saved it all day until six o'clock. Then she smoked her last cigarette down as far as she could and drove to the meeting.

Snapping out of her private thoughts, Mrs. Gunter hears the moderator announce a thirty-minute film of an actual lung-cancer operation. He suggests that "some may want to look away or take a deep breath or two" as surgeons open the chest of a lung-cancer victim in living color on the screen.

While the lights dim for the movie, Gene Grubbs, truck driver, feels for the pack of cigarettes in his shirt pocket just to be sure they are there. He feels better knowing he has some close. Five days later he still carries them in his shirt pocket, unsmoked.

Mr. Grubbs, who has been smoking since he was five years old, is now forty-five, meaning forty years of tobacco use. For a number of those years he smoked three packs of cigarettes a day, although more recently he cut that amount in half. Tonight is his first attempt in forty years to

quit. He just never has wanted to before. Understandably, he is a bit on edge. His wife looks across and in the dim light from the projector smiles encouragement. She doesn't smoke but attends the meetings to lend additional support to her husband. She plans to go to the next session of Weight Watchers, and he will accompany *her* for encouragement. Besides, she finds the Five-Day Plan meetings interesting, and she can put to use many of the tips in controlling her weight.

The movie ends, the lights come on, and moderator Preston Wallace introduces one of several physicians who will give practical, sound advice to help the thirty-seven men and women become ex-smokers. Among the tips the doctor presents are the following: Drink six to eight glasses of water daily, especially when the urge to smoke strikes. You may slosh as you walk, but the fluids will flush the nicotine from the system. Keep handy "oral substitutes" such as carrot sticks, toothpicks, or dietetic

gum. Maintain a bland diet of fruit, juices, and unseasoned vegetables (spicy foods, coffee, tea, cola drinks, and alcohol are taboo during the next five days). Breathe deeply when wanting a smoke, and get out for walks after meals. The meeting ends with the moderator urging each participant to remember the motto "I choose not to smoke."

Roe Gunter, photographer, Gene Grubbs, truck driver, Vivian Flatt, housewife, and Robert Tate, car salesman, along with thirty-three others, leave convinced that for the next five days their every waking move will be governed by the little black control booklet they hold in their hand. It outlines exactly what they must do each hour of the first day. The following night they will receive the next section covering the second day's program.

The first day is a hard one for Gene Grubbs. After forty years of smoking he wants a cigarette badly. His body is nervous and tense. But each time his hand steals to-

ward the pack in his shirt pocket, he reminds himself, "I choose not to smoke!" Somehow he manages to get through the day without a cigarette.

At home, Tuesday, after work his nerves start really acting up. "Let's get out of this house," he tells his wife. On the way to the Five-Day Plan meeting, he stops for a bottle of orange juice. Might as well try to flush more nicotine out of the body. That morning he had tried to drink two glasses of water as soon as he got out of bed. That is what the booklet said to do. But no sooner did he get one glassful down than nausea brought it back up. He tried again, but he couldn't do it. All day he has drunk a glass and a half of water.

He drinks the orange juice slowly as his wife drives. Suddenly he motions to her to pull over to the side of the road. She does. Minutes later they drive on—without the orange juice. It isn't easy to quit smoking after forty years!

That night four participants fail to return. But Gene Grubbs and Roe Gunter and Vivian Flatt and Robert Tate are sitting at their desks. For twenty-four hours they haven't smoked a single cigarette. Psychologically it feels great, but physically it feels terrible.

For most smokers the first two or three days generally prove to be the worst. If they are going to have problems (many have only mild reactions), the first three days will usually bring them out. After the third day the situation improves immensely. The vast majority who continue coming to all

five of the ninety-minute sessions are able to quit smoking during these five days. Between 35 and 43 percent of Five-Day Plan graduates have still not smoked a single cigarette a year later. For all other types of stop-smoking plans the average varies between 10 and 15 percent who remain off cigarettes twelve months later. Studies also show that a person who has gone for a whole year without smoking rarely starts again.

During the third night's session Wallace throws the meeting open for discussion. In spite of the fact that the third day often is the most difficult physically, the participants have grown familiar with the program and with one another and are eager to talk. Because everyone shares a common problem there is no reluctance to discuss their own experiences.

"I've been smoking for about twenty-five years now," volunteers Robert Tate, car salesman. "I smoked two packs a day, but so far since the Plan began I haven't smoked! I've tried to quit several times by tapering off, but I always wind up smoking a whole lot more when I start back. So I just made up my mind to quit, and when this plan started, I came to it. When you see all the films, it's a shock. I haven't smoked any since. Drinking lots of juices and water has probably helped me the most, but I haven't lost my taste for cigarettes. At certain times I still want one badly."

"I still want to smoke too," Gene Grubbs says, thinking of the past few days.

"Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday were my worst days. Many times during those first few days I had an almost-overwhelming urge to smoke."

Vivian Flatt, housewife, nods her agreement. "Especially in the afternoons about three thirty. Even the nights are not as bad as the afternoons. I started smoking in college, nineteen years ago. I had surgery in October, and since then I've been smoking even more because I've been nervous. And now I've quit! I haven't had a cigarette since the first night. The most impressive thing about the whole program, to me, is that someone cares enough to help by having a plan like this. The moral support is just tremendous. When you start, you know it is going to be hard, but truthfully, it has been easier for me than I thought it would be. I can't imagine that I've gone without a cigarette for so long! It sounds sort of elementary, I guess, but just knowing that you are going back to the meeting in the evening helps. When you're a housewife and stay home all day, sometimes you feel no one notices what you are doing, that they don't care."

"That's right! Most people don't realize how hard it is," Roe Gunter exclaims. "I haven't told any of my friends or relatives what I'm doing these nights. If I did, they would tease me, and I don't want to hear it. When I happened to mention the Five-Day Plan a couple of weeks ago, my brother-in-law said, 'You don't have to go to that. Use your willpower!' So I just don't want him to





know what I'm doing. I'll just wait and see if they notice I'm not smoking. And if they don't, one day I'll say, 'Do you notice that I'm not smoking?' " She laughs and everyone joins in.

"Well, it certainly isn't easy to quit," sympathizes Grubbs. "But like it has been said, just knowing that someone cares is a real help. I have had quite a bit of infection because of cigarettes since December. I had pneumonia and bronchitis, and the doctor said I would never get rid of it until I quit smoking. But after smoking for so many years, I don't believe I could ever quit on my own."

"I'll have to admit that the main reason I came to the Five-Day Plan was my health," Mrs. Flatt says. "I was smoking so much following surgery that my legs hurt. It was interfering with the circulation. I don't know if I'm just all pepped up from the diet and water and baths and everything, but I've not had the leg aches this week. I know I'll have a weight problem though. I'll just have to stay with fruits and juices and keep my weight down."

Actually many ex-smokers do have a problem with weight. But built into the Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking is a whole program designed to deal with this side effect of not smoking. In fact, the program is valuable for those who do not smoke but

who have a weight problem. The plan doesn't feature hard-to-follow diets, but it concentrates instead on practical suggestions which anyone can begin putting into practice at once.


The participants share experiences, compare symptoms, and encourage one another until the moderator stops the discussion and introduces the doctor for the evening. He is a pathologist and has brought some specimens of organs which show damage from tobacco. Holding up a cancerous lung blackened by tar residues from cigarette smoke, he explains the relationship of smoking to lung cancer. The people have seen pictures on previous nights, but the reality is much more vivid.

In this plan there is a different doctor each evening because it is hospital sponsored. But in many Five-Day Plans a single physician conducts the program. Because smoking is both a psychological and a physiological habit, the Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking utilizes a clergyman-physician team. The clergyman deals with motivating the will and presenting principles which will aid the smoker's desire to quit, while the doctor handles the medical aspect of smoking.

By the fifth night the original thirty-seven have dwindled to only twenty-six. But of these, twenty-five claim victory over the

smoking habit. This doesn't mean that all twenty-five will never smoke again. However, if national averages hold true, between nine and eleven of those twenty-five will not have smoked a single cigarette at the end of a year.

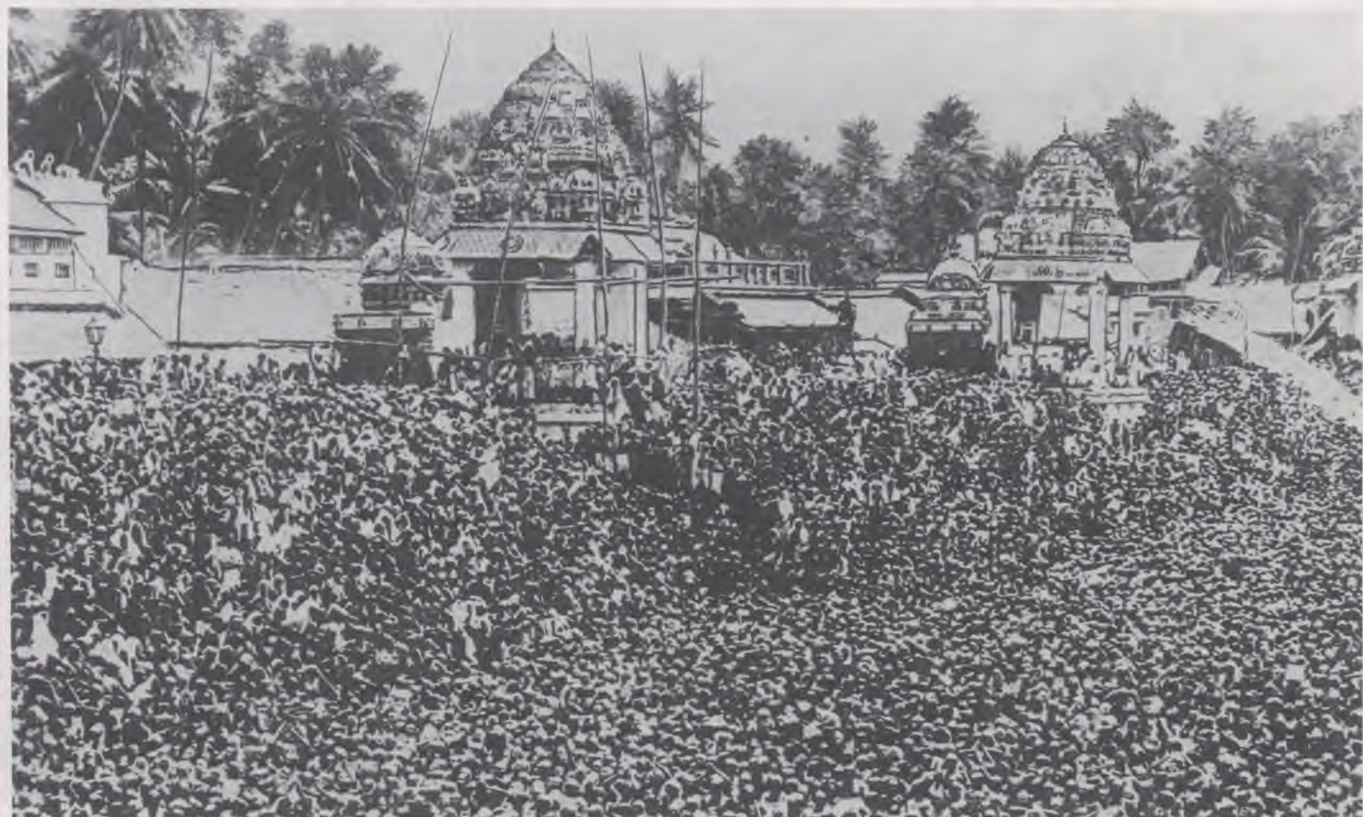
Looking back, Roe Gunter, Gene Grubbs, Vivian Flatt, and Robert Tate agree that the five days have been among the most miserable days they have spent. But after the final session, they, and the twenty-two others who continued to the end, walk out of the building, heads high, with a sense of personal achievement and satisfaction. They did it! For five days they chose *not* to smoke.

They know the days ahead will not be trouble free. A friend will offer them a smoke. The old urge will come back when they least expect it. Something unforeseen will trigger the desire for a cigarette. But thanks to the Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking, the days ahead can be cigarette free. 

For information on the next Five-Day Plan to be held in your area, or to request a Plan to be held, call your local Seventh-day Adventist Church.



Body count



ONE DAY while visiting an Oriental city I saw a sight that made me feel sick.

The town is built outside a medieval fort, still well preserved. A despot, long since dead, had dug out a huge moat, and three centuries later it still has plenty of water in it. As I crossed the bridge to look at the fort, I noticed a crowd gathering on the town side of the moat, pointing to something in the green waters. But the sun was yet low in the sky and in my eyes too, so I could not make out anything.

Two days later when I emerged from the fort, the crowd had swelled to several thousand. I could see clearly now the object of their attention: a body floating in the moat. Over on the far bank the police were organizing a recovery operation. I watched as a young man stripped to the waist and plunged into the stagnant pool. Slowly he made his way to the body, grasped the hair, and gradually ferried it to the shore. He hauled it from the water; it was a man, both arms permanently frozen in an outstretched, imploring position. Had he died gasping and reaching for air?

A shout rose from the crowd. They pressed closer. The police went to work with batons, scattering them right and left. People ran in confusion. Bicycles tumbled to the ground. I turned away in sorrow.

That's the East, you say. Life is cheap in the East. Yes, life is cheap in the East. But increasingly it is cheap in the West also. Our generation has been nurtured on a diet of violence and cruelty until we have become unfeeling. We have been satiated with gruesome accounts of mass murder; we have drunk in daily reports of death on the highways. The

barons of the entertainment world have sent out a steady stream of violence for TV and movie, from "Bonnie and Clyde" to "The Godfather." The trend is toward ever more explicit portrayal of bloody death.

Perhaps the most distinctive mark of modern man's brutalization is the term "body count." It entered the common vocabulary during the Vietnam years. It is a ghastly expression, an appalling euphemism, for fathers, brothers, sweethearts slaughtered by the guns of war. These "bodies" to be entered in the statistical ledgers were once men!

As I see it, it is time for Christians to search their souls to see if they have been infected with "body count." It is time for them to protest the current degradation of the value of human life. It is time for them to reconsider the life and teachings of Jesus Christ to see the supreme worth of every man.

The Gospels spell out the passionate concern of Jesus of Nazareth for the individual. Two examples, however, demonstrate outstandingly the supreme dignity of every person. The first is Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan—the one who knelt to help, while others stood gazing. The second is the great act of Jesus Himself going to His death on a cross in fulfillment of His mission for the human race.

The picture of the upraised hands of the man in the moat remains to haunt me. I see in him every son of Adam, crying out for life, reaching out for hope. One body—but one life!

And from the picture I hear a voice: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

WILLIAM G. JOHNSON



The incredible Albert Schweitzer

by Josephine C. Walker

The story of a man who packed the careers of minister, musician, and surgeon into one, and became a legend in his own lifetime.

"OPEN YOUR EYES and look for a human being, or some work devoted to human welfare, which needs from someone a little time or friendliness, a little sympathy, or sociability or labor; . . . search for some investment for your humanity; . . . do not be without some secondary work in which you give yourself as a man to men."

The man who wrote these meaningful words lived them every day of his life. Perhaps no man in this century sacrificed more to alleviate human misery. He renounced fame, and gave up two different careers to devote his life in service to others. On the one hundredth anniversary of his birth, the world can be proud that Albert Schweitzer lived among us. His "reverence for life" concept and his establishment of a jungle hospital in Equatorial Africa have made him one of the world's most admired men.

Albert Schweitzer was an incredible personality. His achievements almost defy belief. In addition to being a physician and surgeon, Schweitzer added the accomplishments of a philosopher, a concert organist, a Biblical scholar, and, when there was a need, a pharmacist, an architect, and a builder. The amazing achievements at Lambaréné in his jungle hospital were conceived, built, and carried forward by Albert Schweitzer's hands, will, and intellect. Combined with his individualistic philosophy of life, there was another aspect of his character: he never left tasks for others.

Albert Schweitzer was born in Alsace, then a part of Germany, on January 14, 1875. His father and grandfather were ministers, and both his grandfathers were accomplished organists. Thus religion and music became important to Albert from his earliest years. His father taught him to play the scales when Schweitzer reached the age of five years. The child had an unexpected gift for harmony, and at seven he began composing his own hymns. When his feet could scarcely reach the pedals, he played the organ in church.

The summer of 1893 marked the end of his youth and the beginning of manhood. He had already decided about his life; he would study theology, philosophy, and music. In 1899 he became organist at the Church of Saint Nicholas; in 1900 he received his license in theology and was free to become a curate; at the age of thirty, Albert Schweitzer was a marked man: he was an organist, a curate, and had already written an outstanding biography of Bach.

But Schweitzer did not feel satisfied; he had a need to give service to humanity, to do more than traditional teaching. Two moods ruled him: an extraordinary, almost pagan, feeling for nature and a piercing sensitivity to pain. As a young man, he would sometimes cry, asking why so many living creatures had to suffer pain. Twice in his life he went fishing. The second time he was so appalled by the torment of the worms wriggling on the hook and by the torn mouths of the fish that he resolved never to go

fishing again.

One evening he picked up a magazine and read an article entitled "The Needs of the Congo Mission." The writer spoke of the suffering and disease there, ending with an emotional appeal for help by Christian workers. "Who should these people be?" asked the author—"men and women who can simply reply, 'Lord, I am coming'—those are the people needed." Albert Schweitzer's search had ended. Immediately his life and his future took clear shape.

—The more he thought about going to Africa and living among the natives, the more he realized he could not go simply as a missionary or teacher. He would have to become a medical doctor. In 1905 he reentered Strasbourg University as a medical student. Everyone thought he had lost his mind. "You are throwing away a great career on a whim," they said. While a medical student, he continued to write books, give organ concerts, and lecture on theology to raise the five thousand dollars necessary to finance his trip and pay for drugs and surgical equipment. "Never had I known such fatigue as I knew in those days," he wrote later.

After seven years of study, when he was about to graduate as a physician and surgeon, he found himself involved in what might have been an enormous complication. He fell in love. His friends thought that would be the end of his impractical project in Africa. But Hélène Bresslau knew about his plans. Albert told her bluntly, "I am studying to be a doctor for savages. Would you spend all the rest of your life with me in the jungle?" And she answered, "I shall become a trained nurse; then how could you go without me?" They married in 1912; early in 1913 they left for Africa. Albert Schweitzer was thirty-eight years old and just beginning a new career. En route they went to Paris, where on Easter he played the organ at Saint-Sulpice for the last time. At that time the Bach Society presented him with a lead-lined piano, weighing three tons, for his long service to Bach in France, and they shipped it along with his other possessions to Lambaréné, Africa.

When the Schweitzers arrived, they had an unhappy surprise. The Paris mission had promised to have a small

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hospital ready, but it was not there. The only available building which could be used as a makeshift was a chicken house. Schweitzer borrowed a broom and, with the help of the natives, swept floors, washed walls, installed shelves for his medicines, and secured a camp bed to use as an operating table. The chicken run became his consulting room, surgical room, and dispensary. The heat was unbearable; stench, flies, mosquitoes, roaches, and spiders were everywhere. But the "hospital" was finally ready. "Let's get to work!" he called; "bring the sick people here." The savages clustered around. Their skin was painted and tattooed in bright colors, and some toted spears and broad-bladed knives. Before this menacing audience, Dr. Schweitzer confronted his first patients—hardy souls who volunteered to try the white man's magic.

From the first day patients came crowding to him, suffering from malaria and dysentery. Natives trudged from afar, eager to be helped. Dr. Schweitzer operated on boils, hernias, tumors, and large tropical ulcers growing on naked feet. The variety of illnesses frightened and appalled him; there were more patients than he could cope with.

In the first nine months he treated nearly two thousand patients. In the first year he relieved hundreds of people, and not one patient died. Chief assistants were his wife and one amazing man, Joseph Azoawama, who came as a patient and stayed on as a guide and spiritual counselor to the sick.

The most pressing need was for a real hospital; one had to be built before the rains came. So with the help of the natives during the next few months, Dr. Schweitzer built a hospital ward with corrugated iron walls and roof, large windows, and concrete floor. In another month he had a waiting room and a shed for outpatients. The building continued throughout the entire first year. After long days of seeing misery and suffering, plus the physical work of helping to build the hospital, Dr. Schweitzer allowed himself an occasional rest by playing the piano given to him. He seemed to work better after an hour with his music. "I have a passion for music," he told one of his associates, "like other men's passions for tobacco and wine."

Sixteen months after Dr. Schweitzer's arrival in Africa, World War I broke out. One August morning in 1914

French officers appeared at the hospital doors and said he could no longer run his hospital because he was a German. He and his wife had to go back to Europe and be confined in an internment camp.

By the time the war ended, both Dr. Schweitzer and his wife had become ill. In 1919 a daughter Rhena made her appearance. Doctors warned them never to return to Africa. But Albert Schweitzer had different ideas. He wanted to return to his jungle. After three years of recuperation, he felt well enough to barnstorm Europe, giving organ concerts and lectures to raise enough money to return. He saved every cent he could, and by 1924 he returned to Lambaréné alone, his wife not well enough to accompany him. Schweitzer was fifty years old, and once again he had to start from the beginning. The heat and the ants had destroyed nearly all he had built in his early years. Once more he worked as a doctor in the mornings and as a builder in the afternoons, trying to weather the loneliness and the sickening heat. Again grateful natives pitched in to help with the rebuilding.

Help came the next year in 1925. A new doctor and a nurse joined him. Things improved, and in January, 1927, the new hospital was ready. Soon Dr. Schweitzer could write his supporters in Europe that death in Africa had decreased, but his constant plea continued: "Send us medicine, send us food, for the love of God." Some years later, Hélène rejoined her husband in Lambaréné; prospects looked better. They had a 300-bed hospital, a dispensary, a modern operating room, and a laboratory.

Again war exploded in Europe, and they worried about what might happen. It was Hélène who said, "We must not try to escape. The poor sick blacks depend upon us. It is a matter of conscience." This time no one disturbed them. The war years were difficult, strenuous years, but again Dr. Schweitzer came through, with the help of many organizations throughout the world. By this time he had become a famous personality, receiving urgent invitations for lectures. Many universities in Europe constantly pressed him to accept honorary doctorates. On his seventieth birthday in January, 1945, the BBC announced a special broadcast in his honor. "Alas, for the work I have to do, I should be thirty years

old, not seventy," Dr. Schweitzer commented.

The hospital still kept going on credit. It had survived two wars, but there were not enough doctors or nurses. Once again Dr. Schweitzer faced the possibility of having to close the hospital. About this time his fame in America went through a rebirth. Money and help began to come from Americans as well as from Alsace and Switzerland, where he was widely known. At age seventy years Schweitzer suddenly found himself overwhelmed with visitors and reporters. In 1949 officials invited him to give a speech in America at a bicentenary celebration of Goethe's birthday. He did not relish the prospect, but he accepted because the five-thousand-dollar fee offered him would help the hospital. It was Schweitzer's first and only trip to America. America feted him, garlanded him, and showered ovations and awards on him. He received international honors, many doctorates from universities throughout the world, and in 1952 he became the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. This made his hospital a global point of interest and sparked a number of monetary contributions.

Schweitzer's own example of dedication brought men and women, many medically trained, to his hospital for varying periods of service. The substantial Nobel award enabled Dr. Schweitzer to begin construction on a leper hospital about a quarter of a mile from his original settlement. In the 1960's, his hospital with a staff of thirty-six white doctors, nurses, aides, and many native workers, could house five hundred patients at any one time.

Essentially Albert Schweitzer was a simple man. He had disdain for appearances but possessed a sense of humor. He gave the impression of being a gruff, heavy man with a thick mane of unruly hair. Once Schweitzer appeared as the guest of honor at a reception during one of his visits to Europe. Upon arrival at the designated house, the doorman haughtily directed him to the service entrance. Without a word, Schweitzer obligingly made his way through the back of the house while, to the embarrassment of his hostess, the guests coming in to meet him were being formally announced at the front door. And on another occasion, when the chairman at one of his lectures asked Dr. Schweitzer how he would



like to be introduced, Schweitzer replied, "Just say the fellow who looks like a Scottish collie is Dr. Schweitzer." Once in his early days in Lambaréné, someone asked, "Aren't you afraid you might end up in a cannibal's pot?"

"If I do," he replied laughingly, "I hope they will say, 'Dr. Schweitzer was good to the end!'"

In the last years of his life, Albert Schweitzer emerged as a world citizen. When in 1957 his wife died, his friends and associates hoped he would return to Europe, but he vowed that Africans were his people and they would not understand if he left them

and died on foreign soil. He had given his life to the hospital, and here he wished to die.

The hospital continued to grow. Gone were the days of building and remodeling. Dr. Schweitzer became more of an administrator than a practicing physician, but at eighty-three years of age, he still ruled the hospital he founded in 1913. In 1965 he died quietly. Simplicity marked his interment. He left instructions that it should be so. At the time of his death, one of the natives spoke for Lambaréné: "We thank God that He sent Dr. Schweitzer to us and that he was the good shepherd

who gave his life for us, stayed with us, and was buried in our soil and under our palm trees."

On the one hundredth anniversary of his birth, the name of Albert Schweitzer is a legend. As a citizen of the world, thousands of magazine articles and hundreds of books have been written about his work in Africa and his unusual concepts of life. His own words perhaps express most eloquently what made Albert Schweitzer the great man he was.

"It's not enough merely to exist. . . . I'm earning enough to live and support my family—I do my work well—I'm a good churchgoer. That's all very well, but you must do something more. Seek always to do some good somewhere. You must give something to your fellowman. Even if it's a little thing, do something for those who have need of man's help, something for which you get no pay but the privilege of doing it."



Is your Christianity on again off again?

Too many Christians ride a spiritual roller coaster between victory and defeat. How can you stay at the top?

by Joe Crews

EVERYWHERE weak and discouraged men and women are longing for the power-energy of God to break chains of sin in their lives. In this age of pampered indulgence the "won't power" of the average American has dropped almost off the lowest register of the scale. Conformity to the popular permissive way of life has diluted the Christian witness of multitudes who are miserable with their compromise. These people have, at times, experienced just enough of the Holy Spirit's power to make them conscious of the exhaustless supply. They know it is there waiting only to be tapped—waiting to overpower sin in all its mighty manifestations; waiting to turn defeat into victory through its life-

changing energy.

But the great question is how to appropriate the heavenly stockpile. Why does it seem to operate only in sporadic, unpredictable patterns? Should a Christian expect to receive anything other than the limited on-again, off-again witness of the Spirit? And what about the promises of total victory in the writings of Paul? Is there some secret meaning, some hidden reservation, in those promises of Romans 6? Paul does not speak uncertainly or hesitantly about the Christian conquest of sin. He leaves absolutely no doubt that willful sin is to be eliminated from the life of a child of God. The language is not only unambiguous; it is almost extravagant in its assertions. Many people are afraid of the Book of Romans because it describes the perfect work God wants to do in delivering us from sin. Romans

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6 contains these amazing assurances:

"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (verses 1, 2).

"That the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (verse 6).

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin" (verse 11).

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (verse 12).

"For sin shall not have dominion over you" (verse 14).

Notice the superlatives which Paul uses in other epistles to describe the Spirit-filled life of a believer:

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14).

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Hebrews 7:25).

According to these verses we do not serve a God who sometimes but "always" causes us to triumph. He makes us not only conquerors but "more than conquerors." He not only saves, but He "saves to the uttermost." Paul further testified that this wonderful Saviour has power to "do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20).

Who can read these texts and believe that there is any tolerance allowed for sin to continue operating in the life of a Christian? If the promises mean what they seem to say, then most people are only living in the twilight edges of their glorious possibility and potential. How can we make the promised available power a practical reality in our daily lives? This is an urgent subject which demands our attention.

Evidently the vast majority of church members have rationalized their alternating victory-defeat type of experience. Apparently many of them have accepted periodic defeat as normal for Christian living. They reason that, since sanctification is the work of a lifetime, victory over sin will come along in its appointed growth stage of the future. Even though defeat persists now, those bad habits and sins will be taken care of later on. We can wear them out or outgrow them as we get older.

What about this evolutionary doctrine concerning victory? Is it Biblical?

Of course, some people *have* grown away from sinful habits over the years. Old age has given them deliverance on many points of fierce struggle and temptation. But, even though this is true, time is not God's perfect plan for giving victory over sin. He has a more beautiful, effective way of breaking the power of sin. When the Pharisees dragged an adulterous woman before the Master and asked Him to pronounce sentence against her, Jesus dismissed her self-righteous accusers with one searching comment: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). Then He said to the woman, "Go, and sin no more." He didn't suggest that she would have to taper off on committing adultery, or that she should gradually limit the amount of sin in her life. That very moment she heard the command of Christ and received the power of Christ, never to indulge in that sin again.

Is it God's desire to give us this kind of instantaneous victory over sin today? Without question! This is why Paul argues so eloquently against harboring or practicing sin. If there were no remedy to bring *immediate* deliverance, then Paul would have given instruction on how Christians can gradually reduce their sinning over a period of time. Through struggle and effort the sinner could yield less and less to the temptations until the victory would be complete.

Why will such a plan not succeed? Why can't we fight the devil for a few months and finally drive him away? Because the devil is stronger than we are. We could fight him for a year, but he would still be stronger than we are at the end of that year. Trying will never break the power of sin in a single instance, because we're facing an enemy who will always be stronger than we are.

What, then, is the answer to our weakness and defeat? This question leads us to the sweetest and most sublime secret in the Word of God. We need to study it thoughtfully and with much prayer.

First of all, we must understand that all of Heaven's gifts are available to us through the promises of the Bible, and we receive them by faith. Peter describes the "exceeding great and precious promises" and assures us that "by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). The promises of God have mighty power stored within

themselves to enable everyone who claims them in faith to actually receive the promise. So few are willing to believe that the promised blessing becomes theirs the very moment they believe it. Why is it so hard to really believe that God will do what He promises?

Consider these four simple Scriptural steps that any believer may take in claiming God's power. Four texts illuminate the amazing transaction. *First*: "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). Allow your mind to savor the fantastic message of these words. *Victory is a gift!* We do not earn it by our efforts, or deserve it because of any supposed goodness. The only thing we need do is ask for it, and the victory will be given to us freely by Christ. He is the only one who has ever gained the victory over Satan, and if we conquer, it will have to come as a gift from Him.

Let me ask you something. Do you need victory in your life over some binding, miserable habit of sin? Some are slaves to appetite, to alcohol, or to tobacco. Others are struggling helplessly against impurity, anger, or worldliness. The Bible says you may have the victory as a *gift* through Jesus Christ! Do you believe He will give you that power if you ask Him? How certain can you be that God will answer your prayer for victory immediately? You can be just as sure as Christ's words are true!

The *second* text is Matthew 7:11: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

Is it a good thing when you ask for victory over sin? Of course it is! And you don't even have to ask if it is God's will! He has already told us in the Bible that it is His will to destroy the works of sin and the devil. If we pray for more money or a better job, we should always ask according to His will, but the victory over sin is promised to every one who asks in faith.

Will God give the victory when we ask Him? Jesus said He was more willing to give us this good thing than we are to feed our children when they are hungry. He is waiting to honor our faith and to "supply all our . . . need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). These assurances are so open ended and unlimited

that our minds stagger at the thought. Why have we been so reluctant to apply for the provisions of grace? Why is it so hard to believe that God means exactly what He says? He will keep every promise.

Here is the next question. How do we know we have the victory after we ask Him? We know simply because He said we would have it. We know God does not lie. We can believe His promise. The very moment we ask, we should accept the fact of fulfillment, thank Him for the gift, get up and act as if it has been done. We should not demand or expect any kind of feeling or sign from God. The self-fulfilling power in the promise is released in response to our faith alone.

This brings us to the *third* text, found in Romans 6:11, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The word *reckon* means "to believe," or "to consider it done." Every particle of faith should be focused on that one request for victory, and then it should be considered as done. Do you remember how Peter walked on the water? He asked Jesus if he could step out of the boat onto the raging sea, and Jesus told Peter to come. But how long did Peter do the impossible by walking on the water? The Bible says, "When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me" (Matthew 14:30).

What was Peter afraid of? He was afraid of sinking and drowning. In spite of Christ's assurance that he could safely walk on the water, Peter began to doubt the word of the Master. When he doubted, he began to sink. As long as he believed the promise of Jesus and acted in faith, he was safe, but when he doubted, he sank.

Now what is the impossible thing as far as you are concerned? It is not walking on water. It is overcoming that sin. And Christ invites, "Come to me. I will give you victory." As long as you believe that you have been delivered, you will have the victory. It's as simple as that. The very moment you ask for victory, God places it in your life as a reservoir of power. You won't feel it, but it is there. It will remain there as long as you accept it in faith.

For some people the deliverance is so dramatic that they lose even the appetite for the sin. Tobacco addicts have

sometimes been delivered from the craving. *But this is not the usual way God does it.* Usually the desire remains, but, in the moment of temptation, the power to walk past the temptation springs forth from within. Faith accepts the fact of deliverance and constantly claims the victory.

Our *fourth* text, Romans 13:14, describes the final step to victory. "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." We must have such a strong confidence in the appropriated power of God that we give no consideration to falling under the power of that sin again. Under the old "trying" plan, we actually made provision to fail in most cases. We acted like little Jimmy. Jimmy was in trouble because he had gone swimming against his mother's orders. When Mother asked him why he disobeyed, he replied, "Because I got tempted." Mother then said, "I noticed that you took your swim suit with you this morning. Why did you do that?" Jimmy answered, "Because I expected to get tempted!" How typical this answer is of those who do not quite trust their own strength to win the victory. They make provision to fail.

But under the "trusting" plan, we have no reason to fear failure on the grounds of our human weakness. The victory does not depend on *our* strength, but on *God's* power. He can never fail. And so we abandon any plans that might involve any degree of compromise.

Someone might raise the objection that this could be discouraging. Suppose the person does fail? Even Peter began to sink. Would it not shake confidence in God if the victory was not maintained? No. Peter's sinking had nothing to do with the failure of divine power. It did not change Christ's will for him to walk on the water. It only pointed up Peter's need of stronger faith to enable him to obey Christ's command. Our faith could weaken. We might need to be reminded of our total dependence upon His strength. But this does not diminish from God's beautiful plan to impart power and victory through "the exceeding great and precious promises" of the Bible. Without faith by the receiver, not even God's promises can be appropriated. The limits are clearly defined in the words of Jesus: "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29).

Now we come to the part which involves you. The plan *does* work. It has turned defeat into victory for millions who were willing to take God at His word. It can change your life also. Perhaps you are thinking right now of a certain habit or weakness or sin that has plagued your life for years. You hate the tyranny which transgression has imposed on your life. Often you have longed for the authority of sin to be broken so that you could be "free indeed." Here is your opportunity. Grasp it now.

But before you kneel to claim the first promise, make sure that you are willing to give up the enjoyment of that sin or habit. God will not forcefully take away anything from you. You must be resigned to the stripping away of this darling indulgence. Upon your knees ask God to give you the victory over your specific sin. Don't generalize. Then accept the fact that you *have* the victory, regardless of any feeling. Thank God for it, and get up from your knees rejoicing in victory. Do not say to yourself or to anyone else that you *hope* the victory has been given, or that you *think* it has. Say with confidence, "God has given me the victory. I know it because He said so." Finally, throw away any relics of temptation which could provide occasion to fall, and reckon yourself dead to that sin henceforth and forever.

Does this remove all the fierce inner struggle that often comes with a surrender of the will? Indeed not. But we can recognize the battle for what it really is—a battle against self. Many Christians mistake the battle against self-will for the battle against the devil. But we cannot defeat Satan in our own strength because Satan is stronger than our best efforts. Make no mistake about it, self is the greatest enemy we have, and there will be repeated bitter encounters with that self nature. God Himself does not interfere with the choices of our will. Our part in the conflict is to be willing to yield up the sin, to forfeit the shallow, fleshly pleasure that sin provides. God's part is to give the victory as we exercise faith in His promises. The subjection of self requires daily vigilance and long, stern discipline. It is not achieved once and for all, but is a daily reminder that our sovereign choice, our willingness to give up sin, provides the basis for Christ's victory to be imparted to us through faith.



The West through Eastern eyes



WE STOOD ON THE EDGE of California and watched the Pacific Ocean glitter toward us in long, lazy swells that melted into foam at our feet. We had fulfilled a dream, our family of seven, to see America together. Not really *all* of America, of course. She's a vast, mysterious land, harboring a thousand secrets with which to beguile the chronic wanderer, but surely we'd seen the top ten wonders of the West, with still more to go.

Before we'd left home, our married daughter, Melody, firmly rooted in San Francisco, said, "You're in for some surprises." And indeed we were.

Our first exposure to the Rockies left us gasping, all the attempts of *National Geographic* to prepare us having failed. A bit sadly, I thought, "This should have been last, not first. What else on our itinerary can compare?" Little did I know! The West has such a buffet of grandeur that one is gorged with wonder at journey's end.

Later, heading toward the Grand Canyon, we drove through miles of desolation, broken only by an occasional Indian hogan and strangely beautiful rock formations. I remembered Jessamyn West's comment in her book *Hide and Seek* that Easterners are often re-

pulsed by the nakedness of the Western landscape, but that she herself did not readily warm to the scruffy untidiness of the East.

Surely this land had suffered some vast abuse from which it had never healed. Riding hour after hour through a barren landscape broken only with unfamiliar vegetation and grotesque rocks, the old story of Noah and the Flood, at which the great minds scoff, did not seem at all funny to me. Something awesome and frightening had certainly touched this place, leaving it ravaged and unfit for human habitation. Only our slip of highway unrolling among the cactus spoke of civilization. I was fascinated but uneasy. I, who had always loved isolation, found this too big to handle. And I, who abhor commercialized vacation centers, found the tourist atmosphere of the Grand Canyon a relief. Perhaps because it was at a pleasant pre-season level; perhaps because Arizona cannot be gulped down on an unfamiliar stomach.

In the evening when we sat quietly in the dusk along the rim of the canyon it had an ageless, dreamlike quality that made one realize how silly the scurrings of man must appear in the sight of eternal God. We celebrated Kim's six-

teenth birthday by buying milk shakes on the way back to our lodge.

Entering Death Valley we saw a small post with a box attached which said, Hot Weather Hints. We didn't stop. Later I wished we had. The scenery became more desolate. We noted small white shrubs glittering along the highway. Stopping to investigate, we found that they were plastic in appearance like a white fake-leather holly. The air-conditioned car felt unusually good when we got back in.

The road led gradually downward toward stifling salt flats where sand rose in odd, unexpected miniature storms. No houses and maybe one car every hour. Just the heat-shimmering highway and the forbidding land. An unfamiliar apprehension hung unspoken over us. The temperature gauge tiptoed up to hot. We didn't like this place. We sensed it would be very easy to die in Death Valley even in 1973. We checked the radiator. There was water, but in such heat, no cooling action. The temperature gauge clung to its peak. This was no place for humans. The valley was properly named. My mind kept seeing wagon trains winding into these oven flats, women tightening their lips against the fear, wetting the faces of whimpering children, knowing their men would not turn back. That it was useless to ask. Knowing the wagons would roll on until they faced the sea; that only death could stop them, and that in this strange inferno it well might. They would have scorned my fears in an air-conditioned car, those pioneer wives of long ago.

Coming up out of the valley at last, between canyonlike walls, I thought about women, those brave women of the past and women of today. The Indian woman in her hogan. What does she think about there, alone with the land, the searing sun, and the great upturned teacup of blue above her? Does she rise up in the morning with joy or resignation? The woman on an isolated Colorado ranch—can she build a world from fences, cattle, and her man's need of her? Is she lonely, or does beauty fill the void? I've often wondered about that. How much can nature compensate for loss—any kind of loss? Soon I would be with our Melody, a sophisticated urban young woman. We are quite an assortment, we women of America. I wish there had been time to stop along the way and say Hello.

(To be concluded next month)

Should you join a small church?

ABOUT 40 MILLION Americans will move this year. In his book *A Nation of Strangers*, Vance Packard says that such massive mobility is robbing us of a basic human need: a sense of community.

If you are one of these 40 million persons, your search for new roots and a sense of belonging may lead you to the church. The question is, How do you find the right church? There are no "church brokers" listed in the Yellow Pages to assist you. There are no economic barriers to limit your selection. Should you, therefore, seek out the most imposing edifice? or should you consider joining a small church?

When my husband and I recently moved from a middle-sized city to a small town in a neighboring state, we left a church with seventeen hundred members and joined one with forty members. In the sudden adjustment I experienced a type of "cultural shock."

I remember the first time we stepped into the small, green-shingled building which was to be our new church home. In the vestibule two or three people greeted us warmly and then immediately asked me, "Do you play the piano? Our pianist is not here today." I involuntarily gasped. It had been sixteen years since I had played hymns for a congregation, but, after warning them of my lack of musical ability, I played. That experience at the piano was my first lesson in what it means to move from a very large church to a very small one.

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by Jane Thayer

Some advice from a Christian who moved to a 40-member church from a congregation of 1,700.

The physical facts of our new church—the small and simple building, the quality of its piano, the lack of an organ, the half-empty pews, the participation that is demanded of us—caused me to ask myself basic questions about the church and what it means to assume membership in a church.

Why had we chosen this small church when the town has several large, prestigious churches that would have eagerly welcomed us? Before I could answer that question, I had to learn again what a church is supposed to be. I began to look for church buildings as a naturalist looks for wild plant life, classifying, analyzing, admiring. I found architectural beauty and variety contrasted with stereotyped drabness of style. Buildings displaying meticulous

care made mute comment about those carelessly neglected or totally abandoned. From the buildings I probably learned something of the congregations who owned them, but I found no answer to the question, What is a church? I did, however, learn that it is easier to discover what a church is *not* than what it is. Certainly it is not a building.

Nor is a church an Aeolian-Skinner organ or stained-glass windows executed by Tiffany. Although these audiovisual luxuries enhance the atmosphere of worship for any congregation who possesses them, they are not the church. When you join a church, you do not make a commitment to the organ or to the stained-glass windows.

With a large and magnificently furnished place of worship usually



comes a large and influential congregation. How comfortable, how self-applauding, how advantageous it must be to worship together with such an impressive group. But a church is not an organization for economic or social advancement. What draws such people together? I have never let myself believe that a person would choose a church solely because of the prestige of that church's congregation, but I have wondered how many people have refused to consider membership in a small church on the sole basis that it could count no one of economic power or social prominence among its members.

If a church is not buildings or furnishings or a place to meet the "right" people, what is it? Searching in the New Testament I began to find the answer. As I studied the work of the disciples and apostles for those first Christian believers, a picture of the church began to emerge as a group of people banded together by their belief in Jesus Christ and their desire to share the Good News about Him. Membership in such a church was a commitment to Christ and to His command: "Go ye." The primary function of the church was, and is, to explain the teachings of Christ to its own members and to impart this life-giving knowledge to others. For me to base my choice of a church on any other criteria—"What does this church teach about Christ?" and "How does this church meet its obligation to tell others the Good News of Christ?"—is to base my choice on irrelevant data.

This probe for the meaning of "church" was prompted by my encounter with smallness. I could not silence my questions in the ritualistic proceedings of a large congregation. I know that there is no more theological virtue in smallness than there is in largeness, but I have found that the influence of the size of my present church, a church which I believe is fulfilling its Christian commitments, has made me a different kind of church member.

As part of a 1700-member church, I too often took refuge in the press of the crowd. I have always attended church regularly, but not until we joined this church with its small congregation

have I felt the obligation to attend my own church each week. Many times my husband and I have turned down weekend invitations to visit out-of-town friends. All phrases of politeness and courtesy aside, we are needed here. In the large church it was easy to find someone to take care of our responsibilities—if we had any—and leave town for the weekend, knowing that no one would miss us. But here we realize that our absence makes a noticeable reduction in attendance. We are now more consistent churchgoers.

"A church is not an Aeolian-Skinner organ or a stained-glass window executed by Tiffany. When you join a church you do not make a commitment to the organ or the windows."

I can remember the occasional announcements made in our former church requesting as many as possible to come out on a certain day for a work bee. I remember the announcements; I do not remember the work. "This church is full of professional carpenters, painters, builders. Surely they don't need my inexperience to get in the way. The next time they ask for the help of high school English teachers, I'll be the first to volunteer," I reasoned. Not long after we changed our membership, a day was set to paint the interior of the church. There isn't one professional painter among us. I know because I happen to know the occupation of every member. On the designated day my husband and I brought our paintbrushes and painted. A small church does not indulge you with the luxury of specialization.

In this church I struggle with regular jobs that I would have turned down

in fifteen seconds flat—if anyone at our former church had bothered to ask me. I spend hours looking for pictures of children or animals or flowers and more hours painting flannel cutouts, all to use in the cradle roll class which I teach. And now that I am officially one of the pianists, I take piano lessons in hymn playing.

The most important lesson this church has taught me concerns the basic challenge facing every church member: Christ's commission to "go ye." It was not easy for me to realize that the privilege of knowing Christ is one I am obligated to extend to others. It took a small church and weekly face-to-face contact with empty pews to convince me. "If the people are not here, where are they?" I wondered. And I decided to look for them.

The search for those who want to learn about Christ presents me with both joy and frustration. The joy comes from learning to depend more completely on God, because "he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Proverbs 11:25). The frustration comes from the apathy that I too often encounter. But each week I am spurred on to continue this work by the sight of the empty pews. Like the familiar things which Jesus used in His parables, the small church acts as an object lesson to those who belong to it. Members of a small church cannot be blinded by the self-deceit condemned in Revelation 3:17: "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." The church member, in feeling the needs of his church, feels a need for himself. And a sense of need is an unrelenting motive for seeking God.

If you contemplate joining a small church—or any size church—you must ask yourself: "Does this church teach Biblically supported truth?" "Is this church discharging its obligation to 'go into all the world' with the gospel message?" "Am I personally willing to become actively involved in the work of this church?" If you can answer Yes to the first two questions, you have found the right church. If you can answer Yes to the last question, you are worthy of its membership.





Hope for the future

by Kenneth Lacey

THE MOST IMPORTANT FACT in the world today is the fact that Jesus Christ is coming again. World conditions demand His return, for He alone has the answer to every question and the solution to every problem. Even to the casual onlooker it appears that mankind is plunging toward catastrophe, and seemingly within this generation. What are the symptoms? World population is increasing dangerously, our environment

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is deteriorating, our cities are decaying, our society is disintegrating, and our quality of life is declining. Time is running out; it is later than most men think.

Nearly two thousand years ago, with unerring vision, Jesus Christ foresaw the very conditions which plague mankind today. "There shall be signs," He said; "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; . . . men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth:

for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Then He adds, "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:25-28).

Once Jesus came as a Man of Sorrows, despised and rejected of men, but His second coming will be in marked contrast to His first coming. No longer the penniless Teacher from Nazareth,

Your future well-being depends not on modern technology or scientific breakthroughs, but on an ancient promise.

but sweeping down the vaulted skies with millions of heaven's mighty warriors, He will come with power and majesty as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Did you know that the Bible mentions or refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ more than two thousand times? And did you know that every great Bible prophecy has reference to either the first or second coming of Jesus Christ? Notice how the apostle Peter expresses this same great truth: "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired, . . . searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:10, 11). Just as surely as the First Advent resulted in the sufferings of Christ, so just as surely will His second coming reveal the glorified Christ.

Just to be sure, let us ask ourselves, *Who* is coming again? Jesus declared, "I will come again" (John 14:3). John the revelator testified, "Behold, he cometh" (Revelation 1:7). Paul emphasized, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). And the angels promised, "This same Jesus . . . shall so come" (Acts 1:11).

Some years ago, so the story is told, there appeared in the streets of Los Angeles, an old man with a long flowing beard and a kindly face claiming to be Jesus. A crowd gathered round, and some were ready to believe, but just then, in a nearby street, a Salvation Army band began to play that old gospel song "I shall know him, I shall know him . . . By the print of the nails in his hands." Someone shouted, "Show us your hands, old man!" Needless to say, the impostor fled. It will be the same Jesus, the One who hung upon the cross, the One with the nailprints in His hands, who comes to earth the second time.

"This same Jesus! O how sweetly

Fall those words upon the ear!
Like the swell of far-off music

In a night watch, still and clear.

He who healed the hopeless leper,

He who dried the widow's tear,

He who changed to health and gladness

Helpless, suffering, trembling fear."

—HAVERGAL.

But *where* will He come? To the Vatican perchance, or to the United Nations? to the White House, or to Buckingham Palace? Jesus tells us that "all the tribes of the earth . . . shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." When Christ returns, His feet do not touch the earth, but He catches the righteous up to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Jesus emphasized this same truth when He warned, "If they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh; . . . so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:26, 27).

But *how* will He come? "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him" (Revelation 1:7). Again in Matthew 24:30 we are told that He comes "with power and great glory." Matthew 24:31 tells us that He comes "with a great sound of a trumpet," and Matthew 25:31 adds the fact that "all the holy angels" will be with Him. What a spectacular event that will be! Nothing silent or secret about this coming, for the Bible nowhere mentions a secret rapture. On the contrary, the Bible describes a coming so visible and glorious that every eye shall see it. Not the eyes of believers only but *every* eye shall see Him: the eye of the atheist, the agnostic, the skeptic, the saint, and the sinner alike shall see Him come.


But *when* will Christ return? The apostle Peter tells us that "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise." When does the thief come? Jesus commented, "But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched," and then He adds these significant words: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:43, 44). Clearly then, the expression "as a thief" does not mean that Christ's coming will be either silent or secret, but rather that He will come *unexpectedly*. "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matthew 24:42).

Last of all, *why* will Christ return? He comes to reward His saints; to gather His elect from the four corners of the

earth. He comes to raise to life the righteous dead and bring them, together with the righteous living, to meet Him in the air. He comes to complete the work of redemption; to banish sorrow, pain, and death. He comes to restore the first dominion lost by Adam; to create new heavens and a new earth. He comes to establish a kingdom of eternal peace and to reign forever with His saints. Then shall be fulfilled those wonderful words: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

The good news of the gospel and the blessed hope of the Christian lie in the fact that Jesus is coming again. But when He comes, will we be ready to meet Him? Everything depends upon our relationship to Him, both now and in the future. The Bible says, "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Soon, face-to-face, we must meet the One who hung upon the cross; the One who was wounded for our transgressions; the One who bears the print of the nails in His hands.

"Mommy," asked a little girl one day, "why are your hands so ugly, so red and wrinkled?" The mother was silent for a moment, and then drawing the little one close in her arms, she said, "Darling, if you must know, I will tell you. One day when you were just a tiny baby, I left you tucked in your crib while I went out into the yard to plant some flowers. After a while I looked toward the house, and to my horror I saw smoke pouring from the open door. Dropping my tools, I rushed toward the door and, fighting my way through the smoke and flames, found you, snatched you up in my arms, and blinded and choking made my way back to the door. My hands and arms were badly burned, but I had saved you, and that was all that mattered." There was a long silence, and then the little girl exclaimed, "Oh, Mommy, your hands are the most beautiful hands in all the world!"

When we see Jesus, we shall see the hands that were wounded to save us. Those nail-pierced hands are the only hands that can straighten out our tangled lives and prepare us for a place in that wonderful world of tomorrow. Why not let Him do just that for you? 



Personal episode

THE BOY had fallen running home after school and skinned his left knee. It was no more than a scratch—there wasn't even a rent in his trousers—but by night the knee began to ache. Nothing much, he thought, being thirteen and the sturdy son of a frontiersman. Ignoring the pain, he knelt in his nightgown and said his prayers, then climbed into bed in the room where he and his five brothers slept.

His leg was painful the next morning, but he still did not tell anyone. The farm kept the whole family relentlessly busy; always he had to be up at six to do his chores before school. And he must be thorough about them or he would be sent back to do them over again, no matter what else he had to miss, including meals. In their household, discipline was fair but stern.

Two mornings later the leg ached too badly for him to drag himself to the barn. It was Sunday and he could remain behind while the rest of the family drove to town. He sat in the parlor and half dozed until his brothers returned from Sunday school.

Mom and Dad did not come home with them because Sunday was parents' day off; the boys did the housework and cooked the big meal of the week, while father and mother stayed on for church service.

But by the time dinner was ready the boy had climbed into bed. The shoe had to be cut off his swollen and discolored leg. Why on earth hadn't he told somebody? Go quick and fetch the doctor!

Mother bathed knee and foot and thigh, applied poultices and wiped the boy's sweating forehead with a moist, cool cloth. She was an intense and vital woman. Confronted with this angry infection, her manner remained serene. Mom had nursed her brood through ac-

cidents and ailments from toothaches to scarlet fever; one son she had lost, but that only made her calmer and more determined when she had to fight for the others.

Old Dr. Conklin examined the leg and pursed his lips. "It's not likely we can save it!"

The invalid sat up stiffly. "What's that mean?" he asked huskily.

"It means," explained the doctor gently, "if things get worse we'll have to amputate."

"Not me!" stormed the boy. "I won't have it! I'd rather die!"

"The longer we wait, the more we will have to take off," urged the doctor.

"You won't take any off!" The boy's voice broke with an adolescent crack, as his mother turned away, shaken. But there was no adolescence in the eyes that defied the doctor's reproachful gaze.

Dr. Conklin stalked out, nodding to the mother to follow him. As he stood in the hallway explaining to both parents about what could and probably would happen, they could hear the boy calling for his brother: "Ed! Ed! Come up here, will you?"

The brother stamped in and then they heard the sick lad's voice, high pitched with pain: "If I go out of my head, Ed, don't let them cut off my leg. Promise me, Ed—promise!"

In a moment Ed came out and ran to the kitchen. When he returned his mother said, "Ed, what's your brother asking for?"

"Fork! To bite on; keep from screaming."

Then Edgar stood outside the bedroom door, his arms folded. Quite clearly he was standing on guard.

Ed looked straight at old Dr. Conklin. "Nobody's going to saw off that leg!" he announced.

"But, Ed—you'll be sorry," gasped the doctor.

"Maybe so, Doc. But I gave him my word."

And nothing changed that.

If Ed had not stood his ground, father and mother might have yielded. They were not yet convinced that amputation was necessary; they were doubtful. The adamant attitude first of the sick boy and then of his brother was incredible, for defiance of parental authority was unknown in this household. Yet there was Ed, standing before the sickroom door.

"Guess we'll wait and see how he looks by tonight, eh, Doc?" said the father.

For two days and nights Ed stood guard, sleeping at the threshold, not leaving even to eat. The fever mounted, and the suffering boy babbled in torment, but the older brother showed no weakening of resolve, even though the discoloration of the swollen leg was creeping toward the pelvis, just as the doctor had predicted. Ed remained firm because he had given his promise, and also because he shared the frontiersmen's horror of being less than physically perfect.

The parents knew that their son would never forgive an amputation, and Ed's attitude continued to be decisive, time after time, when the doctor returned. Once, in helpless rage, Dr. Conklin shouted, "It's murder!" and slammed the front door. Nothing but a miracle could save the boy now!

Mother, father, and watchful brother Ed shared the same thought, as their anxious eyes turned from the doorway. Had they forgotten their faith in the turmoil of their fears? Why, this sick boy's grandfather, that vigorous and inspiring old farmer-minister who had been leader of the River Brethren Colony in Pennsylvania, had always believed in healings wrought by faith. Now, in this desperate hour, the three went to their knees at the bedside.

They prayed, taking turns in leading one another. Father, mother—and at last Edgar—would rise and go about the farm work and rejoin the continual prayer. During the second night the other four brothers would kneel from time to time and join in the prayers.

The next morning, when the faithful old doctor stopped by again, his experienced eye saw a sign. The swelling was going down! Dr. Conklin closed his eyes and made a rusty prayer of his own—a prayer of thanksgiving. Even after the boy dropped into a normal sleep, one member of the family after another kept the prayer vigil.

It was nightfall again and the lamps were lighted when the boy opened his eyes. The swelling was away down now, and the discoloration had almost faded. In three weeks—pale and weak, but with eyes clear and voice strong—the boy could stand up.

And Ike Eisenhower was ready to face life.

This article was suggested to us by Nancy Wardle, of Madison, Tennessee. Send us your favorite article. If we print it, you will receive \$15. In case of duplicates, the first received will be accepted for payment.

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Teen-agers discover alcohol

THE STATISTICS are irrefutable now. Today's young Americans are taller, healthier, smarter, and more capable than any generation which preceded theirs.

Youth now has everything—except one thing.

Young Americans—today's school-agers—have a higher average IQ and higher academic credentials than ever. They are smarter. Let's see if they're smart enough to recognize their one weakness and do something about that.

Wisdom and learning are two different things. The biological and intellectual improvement of young Americans has outdistanced the maturity of their judgment.

This is evidenced by disproportionate teen divorce statistics, by narcotics misuse, and, most conclusively, by teen automobile accident statistics.

Athletic record books indicate that today's young have improved reflexes, yet they are lousy drivers.

And in the states where the drinking age has been lowered to eighteen, the combination is lethal.

Michigan lowered its drinking age as of January, 1972. Since then, auto accidents involving eighteen- to twenty-year-old drinking drivers more than doubled—they increased 112 percent!

In Nebraska, the legal age for drinking was reduced to nineteen in July of 1972, and drinking-driving accidents by nineteen-year-olds have increased 37 percent in the months since.

Nebraska's Tom Ryan, director of that state's Accident Records Bureau, reported that "the teen-ager is learning to drink and learning to drive at the same time."

And, he might have added, in that state, as in most states, there are laws against drunk driving. But many or most taverns are out on some suburban or rural roadside, and the only way you can get to and from them is by car.

Massachusetts State Department of Mental Health surveyed high school-agers and found 92.7 percent use alcohol; 59.4 percent admitted they'd been "drunk" within the past year.

While most American parents have been uptight about the hard-drug cult, their own favorite drug has become their children's favorite.

Cheap wines—so-called pop wines—are sold primarily to young people, and those sales have soared from 3 million gallons five years ago to 33 million gal-

lons this year.

But most Americans—themselves accepting social drinking—do not recognize it as a youth problem until it is identified with auto accidents.

That evidence is just beginning to come in. Already 40 percent of all fatal accidents in the United States involve drinking drivers under the age of twenty-five. I repeat—40 percent!

The problem of drinking and driving is now the No. 1 killer of Americans under age twenty-five. And usage is up with each successive study.

So just being smarter than their parents is not enough. Today's young Americans have an urgent need to be wiser than their parents.—PAUL HARVEY.

America's civil religion

It is difficult to determine who stated it stronger, but both clergyman Paul Treat of Buffalo, New York, and Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon have dealt powerfully with our national sin of placing our faith in the "American civil religion." Let's listen to Hatfield first:

"Let us beware of the real danger of misplaced allegiance, if not outright idolatry, to the extent that we fail to distinguish between the god of an American civil religion and the God who reveals Himself in the Holy Scriptures and in Jesus Christ.

"If we as leaders [he was talking at a National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C.] appeal to the god of civil religion, our faith is in a small and exclusive deity, a loyal spiritual adviser to power and prestige, a defender of only the American nation, the object of a national folk religion devoid of moral content."

Treat describes civil religion this way: "The head of this religious movement in America is the President of the United States. He has more religious power than the Pope, more secular and military power than any other person in the world. The proper name for this civil religion is 'Americanity.' The symbols of Americanity are similar to those which serve the Judeo-Christian world, with these parallels:

"The Jews celebrated their exodus from the land of Pharaoh. We celebrate in the American Revolution our exodus from the European 'pharaoh' who held

us captive.

"The Jews were the chosen people of old. We ordained ourselves the chosen people of our time. As our power increased, so did our sense of self-righteousness.

"The Jew and the Christian have their sacraments of temple and table. We too have our liturgies of inauguration—Thanksgiving, July 4, and Memorial Day.

"The Torah and the Old and New Testaments of the Bible have their counterpart in our adoration of the Constitution.

"We too have those who died for us. We have our heroes such as Lincoln of another time and Kennedy of our own. From death comes rebirth."

What is the answer to our dilemma? Hatfield sees it this way: "Our prayers must begin with repentance. . . . 'If my people . . . shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; . . . then will I forgive their sin, and will heal their land' (2 Chronicles 7:14).

"We need a 'confessing church'—a body of people who confess Jesus as Lord and are prepared to live by their confession. Lives lived under the lordship of Jesus Christ at this point in our history may well put us at odds with the values of our society, abuses of political power, and cultural conformity of our church. We need those who seek to honor the claims of their discipleship—those who live in active obedience to the call: 'Be not conformed to this world; but be . . . transformed by the renewing of your mind' (Romans 12:2)."

Likewise Treat urges Americans to "seek after the truth, even if we encounter the passion of civil religion in America."

There seems to be no question about where to find the remedy for our ills: the Bible. President Nixon himself has called on all Americans to make the teachings of the Scriptures "the touchstone of their lives." Vice-President Gerald Ford concurs.

What is lacking obviously is found in the unusual wording of 2 Corinthians 8:11: "Now therefore perform the doing of it." Read; then act. That's it!

How life began?

Scientists in the Christian tradition were bemused recently to read of a re-



markable science fiction sort of theory regarding the origin of life on earth. The theory called "directed panspermia" did not evolve in the metaphysical fantasies of a pot-smoking poet or philosopher. It resulted from the deliberate deductions of two disciplined scientists, Nobel-prize-winning Francis Crick, a discoverer of DNA, the blueprint molecule of life, and Leslie Orgel, a scientist at the Salk Institute in California.

Crick and Orgel suggest that life on this unique planet arrived via spaceship from some distant world far removed from our solar system. The idea did not generate in a spasm of intellectual escapism. It became to them a viable hypothesis only after optional theories about the life that surrounds us led them into conceptual cul-de-sacs.

While the belief that life began spontaneously in a vast primeval soup is taught as fact to our schoolchildren, geneticists and other biologists have found the theory unsatisfactory. In the first place, even the simplest forms of life are infinitely complex. Even more troublesome is the observation that a very rare element, molybdenum, is dominant in enzymatic actions vital to life. If life had originated on earth, say these scientists, other more common elements would probably play the key role in the molecular organization of living things. Since this is not the case, the original life patterns must have come from a planet where molybdenum is more common.

The studies of Crick and Orgel also lead them to conclude that all life has come from a single source. Why so? Because all terrestrial life, no matter how dissimilar, has the same genetic code. If life has indeed developed spontaneously as a result of the sun's action on earth's rich chemical brew, we should find a variety of genetic codes.

To creationists this theory about directed panspermia looks like a neat intellectual contrivance designed to promote concepts familiar to students of the Bible without recognizing the creatorship of a personal God. Old-fashioned Christians believe that an omnipotent and infinitely wise being from outer space did indeed visit planet Earth. They contend that He did more than simply to drop a few living seeds on a sterile planet. They hold that He created a beautifully balanced environment, teeming with a fantastic variety of living things, the most outstanding of

which is man, formed in His own likeness and image.

All of which indicates what many have suspected. True science, if it is pursued by honest men, ultimately leads to God and to a confirmation of His revealed Word. The astronomer Kepler described science as thinking God's thoughts after Him.

Directed panspermia! The intelligent, deliberate seeding of life on earth! Directed panspermia? Yes, indeed!—OLIVER JACQUES.

Letters

New Subscriber

I just recently subscribed to THESE TIMES. You sent me the February and March issues, and I have read both from cover to cover. I learned so much from them that was inspiring. Thank you.—Mrs. Winifred Hanson, Orange, California.

Letters From Pastors

I wish to thank whoever it was that sent me a copy of THESE TIMES issue of February, 1974. I never realized that there was such a paper, and I am really thrilled with the articles that you have. Was this a gift subscription, and is it to run for a year? Again I want to express my deep appreciation.—G. Allen Steeby, Pastor, Griggs St. United Methodist Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The article written by Mr. Hegstad in the March, 1974, THESE TIMES leaves just a bit to be desired. I feel he missed his whole point of contact. He mentions middle ground between rationalism and emotionalism. I feel he is both unfair and lacking knowledge of just what he is trying to say. I take offense at his verbalizing. The picture on page 15 is certainly not what I picture as either one seeking for the Holy Spirit or one who is expressing tongues. I personally neither preach, teach, nor permit such running, yelling, or carrying on, and I am quite strongly a charismatic. Thanks for listening.—Ron Cleaver, Pastor, Foursquare Gospel Church, Boulder, Colorado.

Feels "Lucky" to Receive THESE TIMES

I was lucky enough to come across your

magazine in a most unusual way. A lady gave it to my husband on the street, and he brought it home to me. I can tell you I enjoyed it front to back. It really helped me a lot since I am deep in Bible study and doing a lot of it on my own. I want to subscribe to this magazine very much. Please don't let me miss the March issue, because I was introduced to the February number and it contained the first article in a four-part series on neopentecostalism. Please don't let me miss it!—Mrs. Iristine Vines, Washington, D.C.

Soap Salesman Wants More Soap

My wife and I enjoy your magazine very much. I frequently speak of it in my daily life as it helps me keep God first. I am a detergent salesman, and the inside back cover of the March issue, "Keep It Clean," is strikingly attractive to me. I would like to know if copies are available. I want to hand it out to some of my friends and customers to mount in their homes or offices.—R. Leo Ratchford, Hunt Station, New York.

Blessed by THESE TIMES

I have really enjoyed THESE TIMES since I started taking it in September of 1973. I can feel the Holy Spirit moving within me as I read THESE TIMES.—Mrs. Nellie Stephens, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

I want to thank you for THESE TIMES. I thought I was a Christian until a dear friend subscribed for me and I began to read. I also took the Bible course, and what joy and spiritual values I got. I know I am saved now and God is leading me on to future steps. Praise God I am willing to follow!—Mrs. Teresa Ellison, Holly Hill, Florida.

Some friend of mine, I don't know who, has been sending me THESE TIMES for a couple of years. I am enclosing a check for a year's subscription. Could I know who my friend is so I may be able to express my thanks?—Mrs. Pauline Biggs, Alexandria, Virginia.

Congratulations! I have been thrilled with the April issue of THESE TIMES. I consider it to be one of the greatest of the many great issues of this dynamic magazine. An issue like this makes me wish I had five hundred or a thousand to distribute. Again my heartiest congratulations.—Adlai Esteb, Warsaw, Virginia.

Malcolm Muggeridge, British critic, on the emphasis on sex in modern literature: "There is no need to be mesmerized by the motley procession of writers, critics, crazed clerics, and other miscellaneous intelligentsia prepared at the drop of a hat to pronounce the latest outpouring of sub-standard smut an essential contribution to contemporary letters."

Miracles can be frightening

Not all miracles come from God. The Bible plainly teaches that miracles can originate from an evil source as well. by James J. Londis



WE STOOD ALONG THE WALL in disbelief. People were getting out of their wheelchairs and walking not two hundred feet from us. An elderly woman, her hands trembling, sat down in the corner near us. An attendant helped calm her down. He then escorted her to the platform, where she told the four thousand people in the Hilton Ballroom that she was hearing for the first time in over half a century. "It sounds like music," she said, and the congregation broke into song—"How Great Thou Art!" Her husband stood behind her and whispered to her: "Praise God!" "Praise God!" she replied. Her slurred speech (evidence that she had not heard in a very long time) was excited. Tears moistened her cheeks. Nuns and surgeons, businessmen and clergymen, all testified in turn that God had worked a healing miracle for them. Many could not understand it; many were not even converted believers. It did not seem possible that they were all dishonest or deluded.

Furthermore, when the healer held their cheeks in her hands during her prayer of thanks to God for the miracle, almost all of them collapsed into an attendant's arms as the "Holy Spirit" filled them.

None of us had ever seen anything like it. Authentic miracles, a "baptism" of the Spirit that collapsed even unbelievers, the radiant peace of the people around us, the intensity of involvement and commitment—was it the work of God?

No one I could see doubted it (outside of my colleagues). To the large crowd the miracles "proved" that the message was true and that God was blessing the revival. All were convinced that their religious experiences could not be misleading them. It was frightening.

We talked about what we were seeing all during the commotion of the healing service. Some were upset about the "Hollywood" flavor of the entertainment, the frequent applauding, and light humor (though the meeting was generally characterized by a lack of excitement and an emphasis on reverence). Others were disturbed by the fact that the healer

had never confronted the sick until after they had been healed, or that some who were not believers received the healing gift. (Incidentally, we saw cases of apparent believers who were not healed.)

But all of us agreed that the most disturbing aspect of all was the sermon. It used the Scriptures irresponsibly and ignored sound principles of interpretation. The speaker lifted passages out of their context. A number of statements were made to the effect that only those who had received the Holy Spirit could see the truth of what she was saying. If you disagreed, it was certain evidence you had not received the Spirit. It was an outstanding example of the dangers inherent in the view that some kinds of religious experiences are self-authenticating, that one cannot be wrong about the knowledge gained from the experience.

Someone recalled the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23, RSV: "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not . . . cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.'"

Satan will work miracles in the last days to confuse people concerning the truth of God's Word. Each person will be tested individually, so each one needs to learn to trust the Word of God supremely.

We who witnessed this service saw clearly that we must ultimately rely on the objective truth found in the Scriptures. The Bible writers experienced a unique relationship to God in which they received divine enlightenment. Some had faced what we face now. Moses saw miracles in the courts of Pharaoh. Sorcerers existed in Paul's day. Only God's inspired writers can tell us how to evaluate what we see. And this is what they say: "Is it consistent with the truths of God's Word revealed to prophets and apostles?" "Can the message preached be harmonized with the clear statements of Scripture or not?" Only the Word of the Lord is sure, enduring forever. (See Psalm 19:7; 1 Peter 1:25.)

James Londis teaches in the department of theology, religion, and philosophy, Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.



What about marriage in heaven?

Are there any scriptures besides the one in Matthew dealing with marriage in the future life? Jesus seems to imply that there are such in His answer to the Sadducees: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29).

To my knowledge there are no specific passages dealing with marriage in the eternal world other than these which relate to this particular encounter Christ had with the Sadducees (Matthew 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-38).

The context suggests what Jesus meant. The Sadducees made up a hypothetical situation in which a woman was supposed to have been married in her lifetime to seven different men. The question was: Whose wife would she be in the future life? The question did not reflect any sincere interest on their part about the marital situation of the woman, as the Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection (Matthew 22:23). For the Sadducees death was final—an oblivion.

Christ's answer seems to have been aimed largely at the problem of their disbelief of the resurrection, but He does not dodge their framed question.

In the words "Ye do err, not knowing . . . the power of God," He was referring to what God will do for the redeemed in the future life. Divine power will evidently set up a different order of life. He cites no scripture on this point, nor does He go into detail. He briefly answers the test question (saying in effect, "God will take care of such matters; leave it to Him"), and zeros in on their erroneous belief concerning death which they held in opposition to the teaching of God's Word.

What does Jesus mean by the words "abomination of desolation" in Matthew 24:15?

This statement composes part of Jesus' conversation with His disciples in which He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (Matthew 24:1, 2). The verse in question reads: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains" (Matthew 24:15, 16).

The phrase "abomination of desola-

tion" is explained in Luke's parallel account to mean foreign armies. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains" (Luke 21:20, 21).

Among the Jews an idol or other heathen symbol was often termed an "abomination" (compare 1 Kings 11:5). The expression in this context would indicate that idolatrous armies would invade and desolate the nation. The Saviour's words and Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:26, 27) were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Roman armies in AD 70.

Would you explain Deuteronomy 23:2: "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord." Doesn't the Lord love the illegitimate child?

He surely does. The divine invitation is extended to every person regardless of his origins: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

A reading of this passage, Deuteronomy 23:1-6, indicates that there were several classes of persons who were forbidden to "enter into the congregation

of the Lord"—persons who were mutilated such as eunuchs, persons of illegitimate birth, Ammonites, and Moabites. However, we find that God expressly invited the eunuchs to come within the folds of His salvation (Isaiah 56:3-5), and we have the example of Ruth the Moabitess who was welcomed to the faith of Israel and who became an ancestress of Jesus (Ruth 2:11, 12; Matthew 1:1, 5). From these two facts it may be inferred that the phrase "shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord" meant exclusion from the Jewish sanctuary where the congregation worshiped through rite and symbol but not exclusion from salvation as a part of spiritual Israel.

We can only surmise why the eunuch or the person of illegitimate birth was excluded from participation in the rituals of the Old Testament sanctuary. Part of the answer may lie in the fact that Israel as a nation was to be a symbol of Christ. They were called to be a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:5, 6). Priests were not only to be blameless in character but were to be free from all physical blemishes—thus denoting the physical and spiritual perfections of the coming Messiah (compare Leviticus 21:17-23). Hence, certain persons such as eunuchs may not have been permitted to participate in the rituals lest the symbolic aspects be marred.

The Hebrew word translated "bastard" may refer to one born out of wedlock or to one born of an incestuous union. It is possible that Moses had in mind children who were born from the pagan practice of "sacred" prostitution.

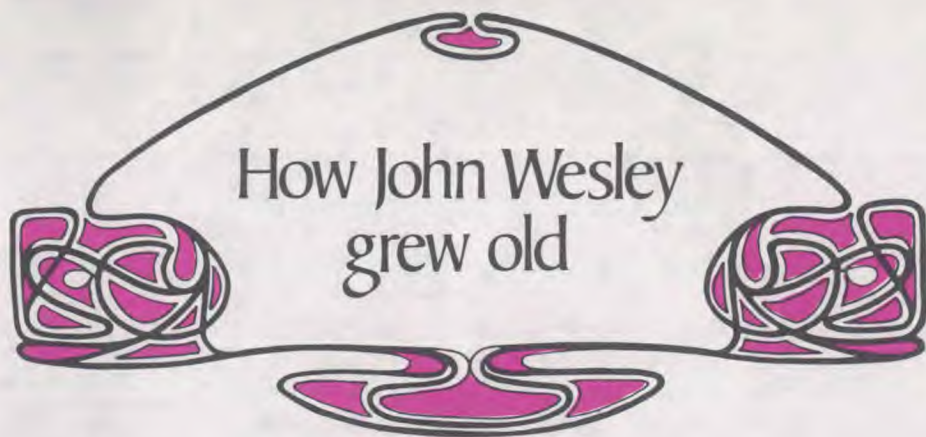
Religious prostitution was common and widespread in the nations of antiquity. The heathen temples had both male and female prostitutes, and the gods were worshiped through degrading, immoral rites. There must have been many children born of these unholy unions. To have permitted such to have full privileges in the sanctuary of the true God, in the setting of the times, would have tended to place an endorsement upon this degrading practice. However, this exclusion did not mean that such persons could not be saved or could not live useful lives.

Jephthah is an example of one illegitimate child whose prayer God heard, and who became a judge in Israel. He is also listed among the faith-heroes in the Bible's "Hall of Fame" (Judges 11, 12; Hebrews 11:32).



In this column Pastor Frank B. Holbrook answers questions regarding spiritual truth, ethical behavior, and Biblical understanding. Write to him c/o THESE TIMES, Box 59, Nashville, Tennessee 37202. Names are confidential. If a personal answer is desired, please send an addressed envelope. Only questions of general interest are published.





How John Wesley grew old

by Vincent Edwards

The famous preacher thrived on his activities, and found in them the secret of healthful longevity.

IF JOHN WESLEY were around today and heard people complain, as they so often do, how decrepit and tottering they feel at sixty years of age, the chances are he would break out with a loud chuckle.

The founder of Methodism obviously knew the secret of healthful and happy longevity, since he remained active until his death at almost eighty-eight years of age. His old-age vigor stemmed from early years of intense physical activity. Speak of athletes! In his heyday—and up till his sixty-ninth year—John Wesley was unquestionably one of England's greatest horsemen. In rain or shine, he was continually on the road. At all times—by lantern light on wintry mornings, and late at night and all day long—at the Foundry, on Kensington Common, at Gwennap Pit, in markets, on fairgrounds, at the mouth of coalpits, amid crowds, and at times facing bitter persecution—he never stopped proclaiming the doctrine of grace.

In his annual preaching circuit, John Wesley covered more than forty-five hundred miles on horseback, a record in itself. It is no wonder that Poet Robert Southey once declared that Wesley paid more tolls over England's roads (nearly all of which had tollgates), than any other citizen of his time. When Wesley neared his seventieth birthday, some friends provided him with a carriage for his travels, and he kept right on with his preaching engagements, disappointing none of his followers if he could help it.

The famous preacher thrived on his activities. When Wesley had grown very old, a friend once wanted to know how he had managed to live so long and keep

so well. The answer was like a sermon. Putting it quite simply, Wesley ascribed it all to his life outdoors, to his constant rising at four o'clock, to his never having lost a night's sleep in all his life, to his regular habits of preaching—particularly at five o'clock in the morning for upward of fifty years—and to his contentment of mind. "By the grace of God, I fret at nothing," he once remarked.

Some idea of his stupendous industry can be gathered from certain figures. George Whitefield, his contemporary, preached eighteen thousand sermons, or more than ten a week for the thirty-four years of his ministry. But John Wesley far surpassed this. He actually preached forty-two thousand sermons—an average of more than fifteen a week for the fifty years he traveled all over England!

At the age of eighty, most men are ready to retire and sit by the fireside in quiet leisure and contemplation. Not so with the Grand Old Man of Methodism! On the day he reached the fourscore mark, Wesley wrote, "Blessed be God, my time is not labor and sorrow." He said he felt no more pain or infirmity than if he had been twenty-one. A few months later he made a tour of Holland, where he preached a number of sermons.


When Wesley became eighty-three, he recorded in his vigorous handwriting: "It is eleven years since I felt such a thing as weariness." He still found an intense delight in nature and the outdoors, and he kept up his interest in the Italian classics and current literature.

At eighty-seven John Wesley had to admit some slowing down. He was not quite as agile as formerly, and he had occasional twinges of rheumatism, and suffered somewhat from dimness of sight. Nevertheless, his spirits held up;

in fact, he was more cheerful than ever. "Blessed be God," he wrote, "I do not slack my labor, and can preach and work still."

Wesley lived to see the day when all of Britain was ready to do him honor. From being one of the most hated, he had become one of the best-loved men in the land. At Cork, in Ireland, where he had once been mobbed and burned in effigy, he was met by a cortege of mounted horsemen, chosen to escort him with special honors. At Falmouth, where he had been the victim of a mob "roaring like lions," he was greeted by high and low, who lined the street from one end of the town to the other. They showed their love by many acts of kindness and hailed him "as if the King were going by."

How children loved this gentle old man whose hair was white as snow and whose smile was like sunshine through dark clouds! At Oldham, a whole street was lined with admiring girls and boys who closed around him and would not let him go until he had shaken each one by the hand. John Wesley's heart was especially open to the youth of his country. In his eighty-eighth year he preached a special sermon for children.

To the very end, John Wesley's days were full of sunlight. One can hardly imagine a more affecting picture than this Grand Old Man at the close of a life that had meant so much to his country and the world at large. He had always loved nature and riding up and down the green hills of England. Now in his final years he reveled in the beauties of God's creation. An entry he made in his journal reflects his life. After exclaiming about the lovely countryside, he wrote, "Nevertheless, the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor ever shall be till it see the King in His beauty." 

Vincent Edwards is a free-lance writer living in Poughkeepsie, New York.



THIS TIME

When I finally reached him by phone, Joe Crews, speaker on the "Amazing Facts" religious radiocast (see page 18), was enjoying a few days of vacation in Florida. I apologized for disturbing him, but I needed a series of six evangelistic, Bible-based articles right away, and I wanted a commitment from him. Apparently I caught Joe in a relaxed, receptive frame of mind, because he agreed.

A short while later the first of the series appeared on my desk. One doesn't have to read very much of his writing to realize that Joe Crews tells it like it is. There is no doubt where this Bible preacher stands, and in this age of nonchalance toward sin, it is refreshing to hear him say it is wrong to lie, to steal, and to commit adultery.

Actually this series of six articles might well be called "The Best of Joe Crews," for he has come up with a minievangelistic series that incorporates the basic messages he presents over the radio and during his crusades.

Joe has a Master's Degree in Systematic Theology. He has served pastorates in Tennessee and Texas. He spent five years as an evangelist in southern India and Pakistan. Since 1965 radio evangelism has occupied his time; his daily fifteen-minute broadcasts are heard over one hundred stations in the United States and Canada. He is married and is the father of two sons.

Crews, in addition to his duties as a daily broadcaster, spends at least six months each year in personal evangelistic crusades across America, meeting "Amazing Facts" listeners and friends and sharing the joy of hundreds who have found new life in Christ through his ministry.

Kenneth J. Holland

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in all His fullness to all the world.

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Signs! They interest me. Yet they are so demanding.

"Please Stay On The Path" I read at the beginning of one of the trails while in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. "Oh, well," I thought, "that doesn't bother me. I'm sure they put that there for inexperienced people who happen to walk on this trail. I imagine there are lots of people who get lost or hurt just because they didn't read the sign. Now of course I've been hiking many times, and I've never been hurt or injured. I'm sure that sign isn't meant for me." That's just the trouble. Although I didn't venture off the path this time, I got to thinking: I, like many people, apply such signs to everyone else, and, as a result, we are accident-prone because of overconfidence about our abilities in the out-of-doors. Just in the past two years God has taught me the same realization about His Word.

"The Bible! That's for the people to study who are inexperienced about spiritual matters," I thought. Of course I knew the Bible stories since I was a kid, I had read the Bible occasionally and had studied it some, but I didn't pick it up and look for a personal message from God. Through the Holy Spirit's influence a few questions began to bother me. Step by step He began to teach me. Christianity became real. I realized just how human I was and that the Bible did answer real questions. Not only did the Bible become real, but Christ became a positive living person to me.

Perhaps you've got an idea of what Christianity ought to be and perhaps have a few questions of your own. Member of a church or not, you've probably recognized that most people, including yourself, need help in their day-to-day life. You may have met discouragement or failure at some time or other.

Christ can help you.

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The cigarette.

Questions & answers.

1. Has anyone really proved that smoking can kill me?

The most recent medical statistics, compiled from hospitals across the United States, reveal that if you smoke, your chances of dying from lung cancer are 700 percent greater than those of someone who has never smoked on a regular basis.

2. What about smoking and emphysema?

It's one of the fastest-growing health problems in the country. And smoking intensifies the problem. Even if the emphysema patient quits, his lungs will never heal completely.

3. OK, so it's not good for my lungs. But it won't hurt anything else, will it?

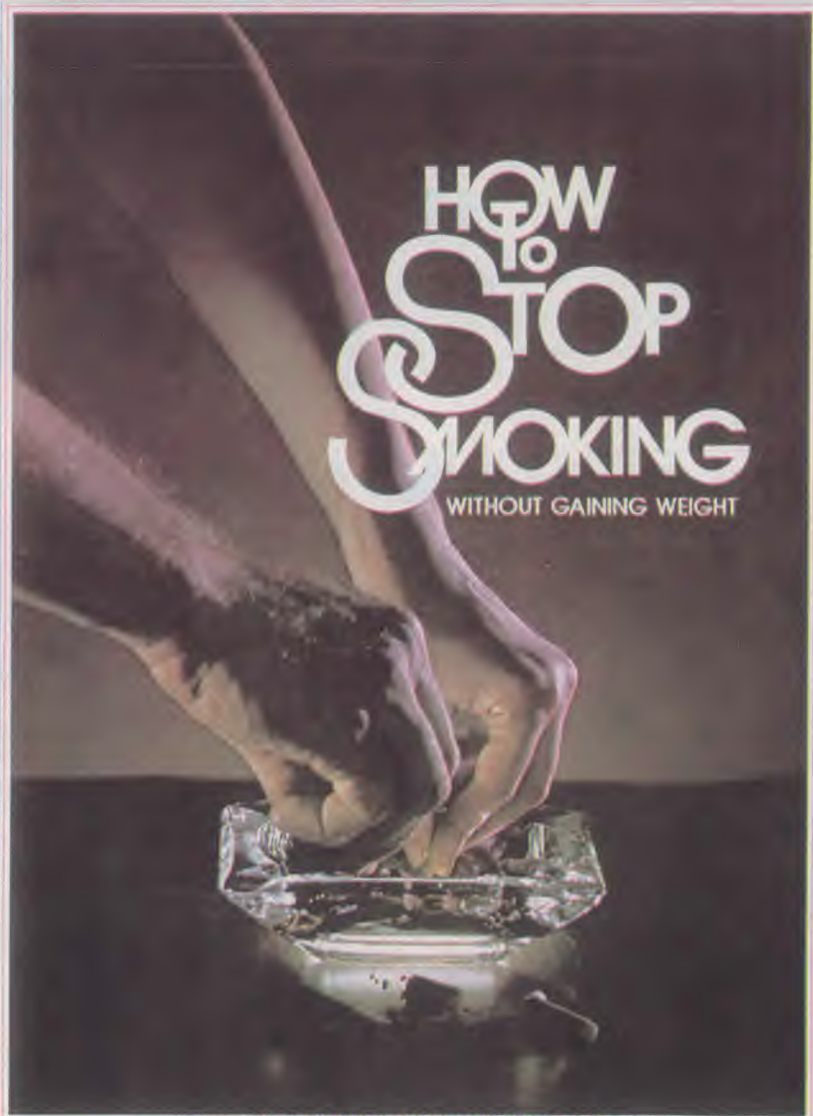
Unfortunately, it will. Because it cuts your oxygen supply, smoking also contributes to the buildup of cholesterol in the blood vessels. This makes the smoker very susceptible to brain damage, strokes, and paralysis.

4. So much for the bad news. How about some good news?

The good news is that you can kick the habit in just five days. A group of experienced physicians has developed a simple plan which has helped hundreds of thousands of people quit smoking. All you do is follow the program they have set up.

5. But won't I gain a lot of weight?

Not if you follow the plan. There is a diet included which has been developed particularly for smokers who are trying to quit—low fat, high protein, and enough food so you won't starve to death.



A SUPPLEMENT OF THESE TIMES

So how do I get started on this plan? A special magazine, **HOW TO STOP SMOKING**, is available which describes the entire plan in detail. Just write, or fill out the coupon, and we'll tell you how you can obtain your copy of **HOW TO STOP SMOKING**.

SMOKING, Dept V, PO Box 59, Nashville, TN 37202

I've had it with the cigarette! Please send me _____ copies of HOW TO STOP SMOKING @ \$1.00 each.

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