

# THESE TIMES

March, 1981

## The Moral Majority movement

—will it lead to a  
merger of church  
and state? page 8

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How will God  
judge humans?

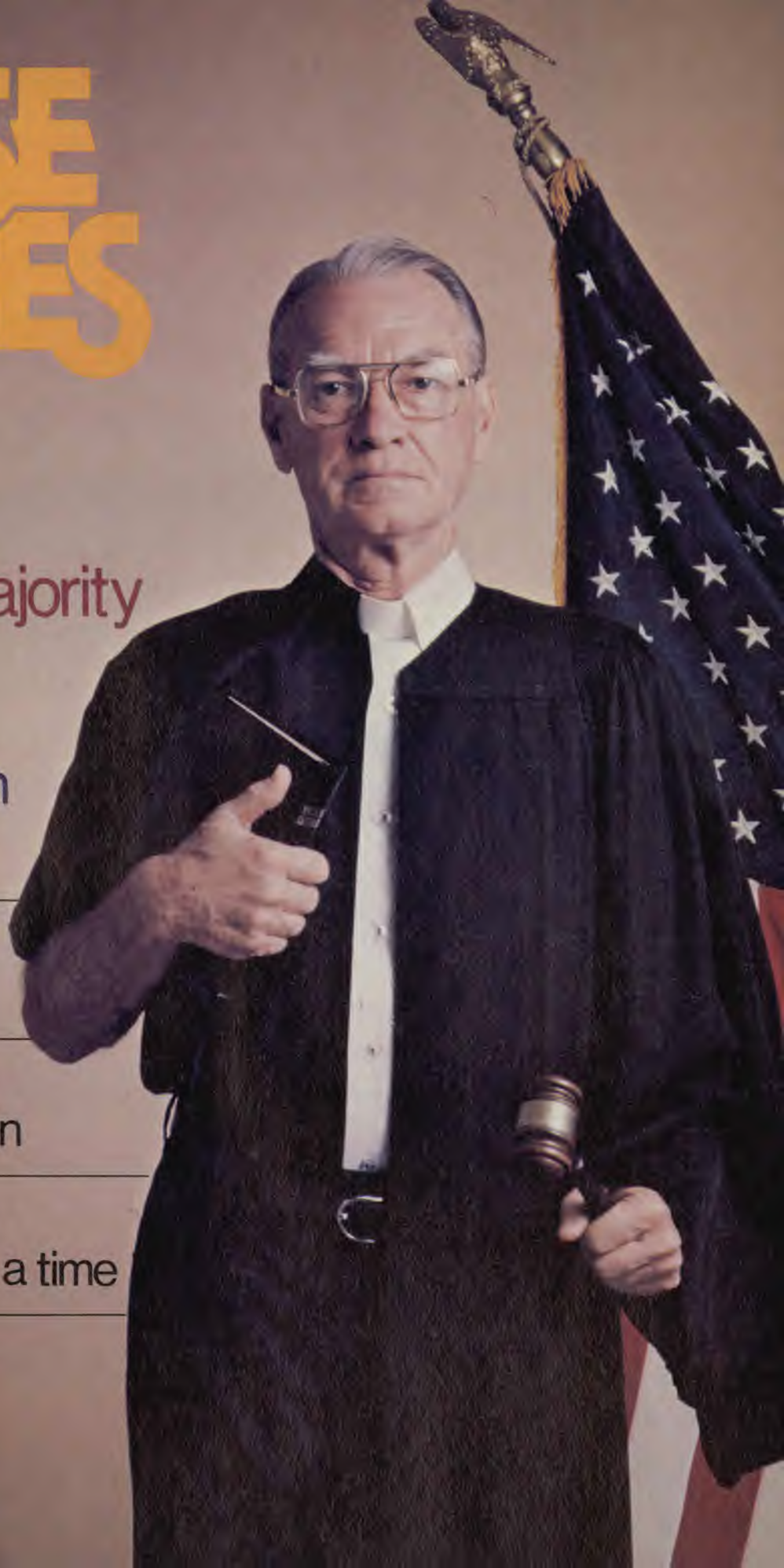
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A reporter looks  
at the resurrection

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Successful living  
—three weeks at a time

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# The greatest news story ever filed

## -A reporter looks at the resurrection

No front-page banner headline can begin to compare with one of the greatest news events to occur since the creation of earth—the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

by William Proctor



**B**IG-CITY newspaper reporters have a tendency to become jaded. They witness and write about so many earthshaking events that after a while it seems nothing is capable of surprising them or getting them excited.

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I know the feeling. After covering big elections, strikes, mob assassinations, and other such events for a few years for the *New York Daily News* I sometimes found myself dulled by a "ho-hum" attitude, no matter how exciting the story.

But every so often even the most cynical reporter feels his heart pumping a few beats faster. The thrill of the chase courses through him as he gets an assignment to cover what tabloid journalists call "the big one"—the monumental

story that not only makes the front-page banner headline but also makes history in the process.

**Resurrection a big story.** The resurrection of Jesus Christ was just such an event. And in a very real sense first-century journalists covered it in much the same way as today's reporters gather and present their big, breaking news stories.

As I was mulling over the meaning of the resurrection recently I began almost subconsciously to look at the

Biblical accounts through the hard, critical eye of the newspaper reporter. Suddenly I saw things I had never noticed before.

Take the Gospel "reporters," for example:

**Matthew**, in a sense, had an ethnic beat. He concentrated in his Gospel on the first-century Jewish people. He spoke to them as a believing Jew, stressing Old Testament prophecies and traditions in his effort to lead them to Christ. He also met the arguments of the Jewish leaders against the resurrection in Matthew 28:11-15. In that passage he revealed that the chief priests and elders paid the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb to say that they had fallen asleep and that the disciples had stolen the body.

**Mark** was the prototype of the tabloid journalist. He stressed action rather than deep theology and got his points across in clear, hard-hitting prose. Tabloid papers, like my old alma mater, the *New York Daily News*, are known for their ability to tell a complete story in few words, and Mark, of course, is the shortest of the four Gospels. Mark also contains the shortest account of Jesus' resurrection. But his point certainly comes across loud and clear when the angel, or "young man," in the empty tomb tells the women on Easter morning, "Don't be alarmed. . . . You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has arisen! He is not here" (Mark 16:6, N.I.V.).\*

**Luke** was the foreign correspondent of the Gospels. It's generally accepted that he was the "good physician" who was Paul's friend and traveling companion, and he may well have been from a Greek cultural background. He addressed his Gospel to Theophilus, whom some scholars believe was a government official connected in

some way with the trial of Paul in Rome. The broad, international impact of Luke's message comes across clearly in these words of the risen Christ to His disciples: "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46, 47, N.I.V.).

**John** was more like the interpretive reporter, the columnist who specializes in "think pieces." In terms of style and approach, James Reston, the premier columnist for *The New York Times*, might be John's journalistic counterpart today. John was out to convince his readers with the strongest factual arguments he could muster. He made no bones about his purpose when he said, just after his description of the resurrection, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31, N.I.V.).

**The Gospel writers** have always appeared to me to be journalists as much as they were historians. All the resurrection stories were researched and written while people who had known Jesus were still living, so there's a great immediacy and excitement—an air of "current events"—that permeates each account.

Also, each man has characteristics of three major reporter-types found on many big-city papers. First of all, there's the regular street reporter who goes out and gathers news, either from his own observations or from eyewitnesses. Luke says at the beginning of his Gospel that he plans to rely on eyewitness accounts. His description of the encounter of the risen Christ with the two men on the road to Emmaus is unique to his Gospel and has the ring of a first-person report that was

related directly to him.

The second newspaper type is what's called the "rewrite man." This person usually stays in the main office with his typewriter and headphones at the ready. He takes calls and then writes stories for one or more street reporters who may be so caught up in the action of a big assignment that they don't have time to put it all together before the deadline.

**Used a rewrite man?** There are strong indications that the Gospel writers may have used this technique themselves. For example, many scholars believe that Mark relied heavily on first-hand information from the apostle Peter in writing his account of Christ's ministry. Such collaborations on modern newspapers have led to the tradition of a double by-line in some cases, with the street reporter's name listed first and the rewrite man's name second. So if the second Gospel had been written in 1980, we might call it "The Gospel by Peter and Mark"!

The third type of newsperson these days is the investigative reporter, who takes off weeks and sometimes months to research and write up one big story. In the process of putting a piece like this together, the reporter may well become involved in the events himself and help to shape their outcome.

If one contemporary type of journalism fits the Gospel writers' approach, it would probably be this investigative style. John, for example, devotes two long chapters to the resurrection and its aftermath, and he is a major participant in many of the events he describes. He is probably the "other disciple" referred to in John 20:4, whose immediate decision to believe in the resurrection demonstrates the dramatic impact of the event. And he goes into minute detail describing the conversations between the risen Christ and Mary

\* Texts credited to N.I.V. are from *The Holy Bible: New International Version*, Copyright © 1978 by the New York International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.



**The stone was rolled away from the door, not to permit Christ to come out, but to enable the disciples to go in.—Peter Marshall.**

Magdalene and Thomas. His eye for detail is particularly striking when he mentions that Peter pulled from the sea a net containing precisely 153 fish as the disciples prepared to breakfast with Jesus on the shores of Galilee (John 21:11).

**Tests of good reporting.** But no matter how much you may look like a reporter, you can't be considered a truly good one until the work you produce meets certain standards. Here are four common tests for any good news story, including the Good News account of Christ's victory over death.

**1. Independent reporting.** Some have tried to argue that, because the Gospel writers vary in the way they present the resurrection, they must be unreliable. But actually, any good reporter knows that if four journalists from four different papers gave exactly the same accounts of the same story, at least three of them would be fired for plagiarism. Some facts are bound to be the same, but four different people will always see the same set of events through

different eyes.

I can recall many times, when I was covering the New York City Criminal Courts for the *Daily News*, that my stories would differ from the three other reporters on the *New York Times*, the *New York Post*, and the Associated Press. We would interview different people, and we would select different sights and arguments from the courtroom scenes. Yet *each of our published stories would be completely accurate!*

The same principle applies to those first-century reporters who gave us our accounts of the resurrection. Matthew, for instance, says Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" went to Jesus' tomb; Mark says it was the two Marys and Salome; Luke records simply that "they" went to the tomb; and John mentions only Mary Magdalene. Each account is different, but at the same time why shouldn't each be entirely accurate? Certainly, Luke's "they" could include all three in Mark's account. And Matthew and John may have omitted mentioning the entire company because they

regarded one or more of the extra people to be unnecessary to the particular point they were trying to make. Modern reporters present their stories in this way; they don't mention the name of every fireman at a fire. So why shouldn't first-century journalists be given the same leeway?

**2. Accuracy.** One of the first things I was told when I went to work for the *New York Daily News* was that accuracy is the most essential element in reporting.

"If you're wrong, it doesn't matter how well you've written a story," one seasoned old reporter told me. "Inaccurate reporting isn't reporting at all—it's fiction."

Here are some questions to help you determine whether a story is accurate or not:

Does the writer mention names and cite sources? Stories attributed to "an informed source" may well be accurate, but it's always best to tie specific facts down to specific people. You can be sure that if a person is quoted directly by name he'll come forward if the quotation is inaccurate. The Gospel writers are exemplary on this count. Thomas, Peter, Mary Magdalene, Cleopas on the road to Emmaus, and many others are mentioned. Any modern journalist would assume that if the accounts involving them were inaccurate they or someone who knew their true story would have rushed to the city room of the *Gospel Gazette* and demanded a retraction.

How many sources does the reporter use to corroborate important facts? It's a good practice for investigative reporters to try to get at least two independent sources to confirm key points they are making, and the Gospel reporters follow this practice consistently with the resurrection. Several women discovered the empty tomb. Two men saw and ate with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. Jesus appeared to groups of His disciples on several occasions. As a result, if there was a problem with the credibility of one eyewitness

ness there would always be one or more to back him or her up.

Is there any physical evidence that the events reported actually occurred? Again the Gospel accounts measure up. Jesus made Himself available to the touch of Thomas, as well as the other disciples, in the news stories written by Luke and John. Also, the tomb was physically empty by all accounts. Even though we have no absolutely certain physical evidence of the resurrection remaining for us to touch and examine, there is solid archeological support for many New Testament events, including those leading up to the resurrection. For example, an inscription referring to Jesus' Roman trial judge, the procurator Pontius Pilate, has been found in the ruins of a Roman amphitheater near the ancient seaport of Caesarea.

Before we leave this discussion of accuracy let me make one very important point about how to read a news story. If the accounts of the resurrection are really examples of reliable, first-class reporting they should be read as such.

I read the entire Bible, including the resurrection narratives, just as I would one of the three daily newspapers I devour each day. I assume, so long as the tests of accuracy are met (and they always are in the Scriptures), that what I'm reading is true and factual as presented. In other words, the words really mean what they say.

If my newspaper says the local courthouse burned down last night, then I wouldn't assume that really means a hotel was destroyed by a tornado. Or if I'm reading an article on how to fix an electric light socket and the writer tells me to keep my fingers away from certain live wires, then I wouldn't interpret this to mean I should stick my fingers in there and get shocked.

This approach to reading newspapers is almost too self-evident to

## "Only Thy forgiveness I ask!"

COPERNICUS was a great mathematician. His studies and calculations revolutionized the thinking of mankind about the universe. When he lay dying, his book *The Revolution of the Heavenly Bodies* was placed in his hands. It had just been printed. At death's door, he saw himself, not as a great scholar or astronomer, but only as a sinner in need of the Saviour.

On the tombstone at his grave at Frauenberg are carved the following words which he chose for his epitaph: "I do not seek a kindness equal to that given Paul. Nor do I ask the grace granted to Peter. But that forgiveness which Thou didst grant to the robber—that, earnestly I crave!"

mention. But many people, including a surprising number of theologians, will try to argue that the Bible—and especially the resurrection accounts—really don't mean what they say. In other words, this argument goes, Christ didn't really rise from the dead. Instead, there's some "deeper" symbolic meaning the writers were trying to convey—a meaning that apparently can be completely understood only if you've read certain theologians or gone to certain seminaries.

That would be a silly way to read a newspaper, and it seems an equally silly, elitist way to read the Bible. The apostle Paul says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17, N.I.V.).

**3. Balanced presentation.** It's impossible to be completely objective in writing a news story, because the writer always has a point of view that's bound to come through. John, as we've seen, presented his own biases in a straightforward way in John 20:31. But a good reporter will still tell all sides of the story, the good, as well as the bad. And once again the Gospel reporters pass the test.

The doubts of the disciples about whether Christ had really risen are probably the best example of the "dirty linen" that the four Evangelists air for all the world to see.

Luke reports that the women who came to tell the disciples about the empty tomb were scoffed at: "But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense" (Luke 24:11, N.I.V.). And then there's the classic case of doubting Thomas, who required evidence of Christ's wounds before he would believe.

**4. Significant events vividly and clearly presented.** The Gospels speak for themselves here. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ mark the major turning point of all history. Many reporters, after reading about the Watergate investigations and resulting fame of Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein have muttered with a touch of envy, "If only I could have gotten that particular assignment—it's the dream of a lifetime."

Yet the resurrection story is so much greater! The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the pivotal event in human history—in fact, of all eternity. And the exciting personal encounters with the risen Christ, presented in crystal-clear prose, meet the final requirement for good journalism with flying colors.

So there's no doubt in my mind, as I review the Gospel accounts of the risen Christ through a newspaper reporter's eyes, that I'm looking at a fine piece of first-century journalism—a narrative that has to be ranked as "the greatest news story ever filed." □

# NEWS

1. One out of every seventy children is held in a detention facility.

2. Another one out of every seventy children there is considered a runaway.

3. One million children are victims of abuse or neglect every year.

4. One child out of seven has no regular source of medical care.

5. One child in three has never seen a dentist.

6. One child in ten gets only thirty-five cents' worth of food on an average day.

7. One school-age child out of seventy is not even enrolled in a school.

8. Well over one tenth of its seventeen-year-olds are functionally illiterate.

## Name this nation (if you dare)

### Cartoonist's Bible to be published

This cartoon entitled "Noah's Ark," by Robert Churchill, is featured in a collection of his works, *The Cartoonist's Bible*, soon to be published by St. Martin's Press. Mr. Churchill, a British artist, is a regular contributor to *Punch*, *New Yorker*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and other publications.



Sorry, folks, that is the report on the United States prepared by a special commission during the 1979 International Year of the Child projects. According to the *Boston Globe*, there is no governmental agency to deal with these problems. (!?) Apparently there is no lobby for children, and, of course, they can't vote. Perhaps some antiabortion groups will take an interest in the plight of all these ex-fetuses that are going down the drain figuratively if not literally.

### Capital punishment is rejection of Jesus' teaching

Don't be bored if we bring up capital punishment. It is an old theme, but it is urgent again. Daniel H. Benson spent eighteen years in American criminal law as a prosecutor, defense counsel, military judge, and teacher: "I am satisfied that the death penalty does not promote respect for human life . . . but fosters contempt for human life in teaching by example that killing people is an acceptable way of dealing with problems that arise between human beings

in our society.

"I insist that a Christian does not have the option of participating in, or approving of, capital punishment. To judge another human being, whom God loves in exactly the same way and to exactly the same degree as He loves each one of us, as being utterly beyond redemption, as being unworthy to continue to live, as being unworthy to have opportunity for repentance and growth, as being unworthy of compassion, is not to follow but to *reject* the teaching of Jesus that we are to love one another as He has loved us. Capital punishment, involving that kind of rejection of the teachings of Jesus, may be what the U.S. wants, at this particular hour, it may even be what most people who identify themselves as Christians want, but it is still wrong just the same. It may be approved by institutional Christianity and the church, but it is contrary to the teachings of Jesus" (*The Reformed Journal*).

### Hooked on spiritual junk food and lollipop theology

Seminary president Howard G. Hageman worries about the lack of *thinking* in America and its Christian circles these days. He quotes Colgate-Rochester faculty member (and pastor) Leonard I. Sweet: "The purveyors of popular religion have disseminated a patois void of sound theological content, allowing Christian minds to idle in neutral, unengaged for the unnerving, grueling challenges of life that await the Samaritan adventurer on the modern freeway where

the turns are sharp and hidden, the pace is fast and frenzied, the directions unclear. . . . When each sermon becomes a children's sermon, the taste for spiritual junk food expands until faith is a lollipop and theology a Twinkie."

Hageman reminds himself and his readers of a time when the Reformed tradition, for instance, was accused of overintellectualizing the Christian gospel. "Surely that time has long since passed." Today religion is almost entirely dependent on "feeling right," and that includes religion on campuses, too. "The late C. S. Lewis was probably one of the last Christian thinkers with whom the college mind could identify—and a lot has happened since his time." Next time someone complains to you that there is too much thinking, too much intellectualizing in religion, be sure to ask that person by whom? where? when? how?

### **East Germans still Christian after thirty years of Communism**

After more than thirty years of Communist rule, 10 million citizens—or more than half of the population—still register themselves as Christians. According to the Evangelical Church Federation in the German Democratic Republic, eight million are members of one of the eight provincial churches of the federation, 1.2 million are Roman Catholics, and the rest belong to free churches and other religious groups. The current population of East Germany is 16,700,000.

### **Can the gospel be heard without children present?**

At least in Australia, according to Pastor Stan Stewart, there is evidence that "the common denominator in sick and dying churches was that children were consistently segregated and sent off to another place." Those that encourage all ages to take part in worship generally enjoy growth. Stewart: "I am not preaching a gospel of children, but I question whether the gospel can be heard in congregations that refuse to allow the children's presence. . . . Unless young children are made welcome in worship services, babies and toddlers included, they will never see themselves as part of the whole congregation."

### **Is religion invisible in modern life?**

Documentation for the point that religion may be present but seems marginal and invisible in modern life: Columnist Bob Greene wrote a column defending himself against Jesse Jackson's attack on Greene for writing as he did because he was Jewish. Greene says, "Yeah, I'm a Jew. . . . I haven't been to a house of worship in more than ten years, and when I get biographical forms to fill out and get to the blank marked 'religion,' I generally write in 'newspaperman.'"

So far the column is ordinary smart cracking. Then: "The three men I work for are named Maxwell McCrohon, William Jones, and Michael Argirion. . . . I have no idea what their specific religious orientation is," even though they worked together intimately for a decade. It just didn't come up. □

### **The New King James Bible**

A new translation of the Bible, *The New King James Bible*, has recently appeared from the presses at the Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN, which makes the 1611 King James Version even better.

Since the "Authorized" or "King James Version" of the Holy Bible first appeared 370 years ago in England, the English language has undergone a dramatic revolution. Old words and expressions which once bore deep meaning are now obsolete and archaic. Yet many of the new translations on the market today have digressed so far from the traditional that many Bible students have difficulty recognizing the original passage.

Consequently, in 1974 an international team of 119 scholars, editors, and church leaders began updating the



"Authorized" version without destroying the beauty of the original K.J.V.

The result is *The New King James Bible*. Thus far only the New Testament has been published (see photo above), with the entire volume scheduled for delivery in the spring of 1982.

No verse is missing. No words have been changed unless the change improves the understanding of God's Word for our day and time. Words such as *thee*, *thou*, *shouldest*, *doeth*, and other obsolete phrases have been replaced with contemporary terms. And direct quotes now have quotation marks for easier identification. Those who enjoy the beauty and majesty of the traditional version, yet find the archaic expressions awkward, may find this version the perfect alternative to the many new translations on today's bookshelves.

# Wake up, America!

*While the Moral Majority movement may have many honorable and justifiable motives, the end result of the church's merging powers with the state could be a drastic loss of religious freedom for us all.*

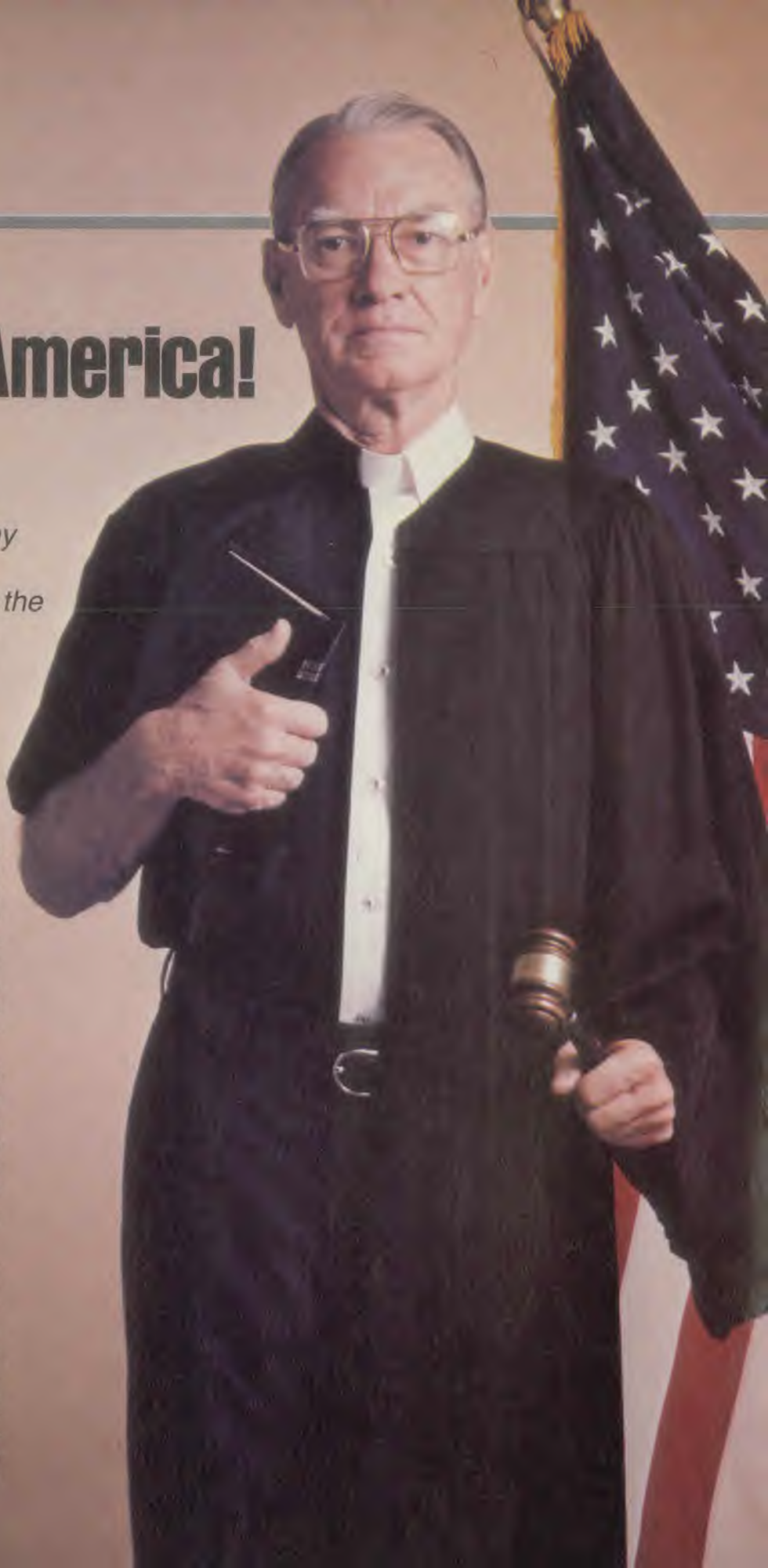
**by Norman Gulley**

**I**N 1979 pornography in America grabbed 4 billion dollars. Sex with children flaunted itself across 270 publications. Photos of sex with animals vaunted themselves in the market place. And *Newsweek* warned, "Nearly half of the nation's 15- to 19-year-old girls have had premarital sex, and the age of initiation keeps dropping."

The same year brought nearly 1.5 million abortions, a 16-billion-dollar loss due to shoplifting, dangerous drugs that penetrated deeper into grade schools, the FBI Abscam that uncovered bribery and corruption of many Washington politicians, and a national deficit of 74 billion dollars.

Homosexuals received recognition in the Democratic platform itself. While evolution is the only explanation of man's origin taught in most public schools, moves are afoot

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to make attendance at kindergarten compulsory and to exert a greater interference of government in the area of parental responsibility. America stumbles headlong toward the final precipice. Tripped on the downward road called immorality, she plunges with ever-increasing momentum toward the point of no return.

**Evangelical conservative** right-wing preachers sprang to the rescue. Speakers of the electronic church, such as Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and James Robison, launched a campaign to arouse 50 million Christians, and they—like a sleeping giant—are awakening and could become the single most potent force ever in American politics.

These leaders point to the breaking of the dam in 1963, when Atheist Madalyn O'Hair won the Supreme Court ruling banning the recitation of the Lord's Prayer and Bible readings in public schools. They claim that this unleashed all the moral corruption since. For this is a "nation under God," yet we threw Him out of the schools, and even some liberal theologians pronounced Him as dead during the same decade.

On CBS Evening News, August 22, 1979, Robert Grant, leader of the Christian Voice, a California-based Christian movement, declared, "We get the feeling that American people—Christian people—are just plain sick and tired of the way trends are going. They're sick and tired of immorality in government. They're sick and tired of being betrayed. They're sick and tired of having their moral convictions trampled underfoot by political—by professional—politicians. And they're just ready to stand up and have their voice heard."

Terms such as "holy war" (*Chicago Tribune*), "a war of Christianity versus godless humanism" (*Washington Star*), and "new force in American politics" (*New York Times*), speak for themselves. If the wars for

independence and for saving the Union were nationalistic, then so is this one. Humanism and immorality are classified with Communism.

Pat Robertson, founder and host of "The 700 Club," and president of CBN TV Network, challenges Christians to get into the political arena so we can "place this nation under God." For "we have, together with the Protestants and the Catholics, enough votes to run the country. And when the people say, 'We've had enough,' we are going to take over."

Churches that were split asunder now stand welded together like a nation at war with an enemy. "The threat to the family has caused leaders of various denominations to put aside their sectarian differences and, for the first time in decades, agree on basic principles worth fighting for."

In a June, 1979, letter to the 700 Club members, Robertson urged, "Unless Christians desire a nation and a world reordered to the humanistic/hedonistic model, it is absolutely vital that we take control of the U.S. Government away from the Trilateral Commission and the Council on Foreign Relations." He also speaks in the same letter of turning to God "to galvanize Christians to political action."

James Robison, chairman of the committee to get prayer back into public schools and perhaps the most fiery evangelist in America today, wrote, "Are you not sickened and disturbed at what is happening to this great country God has given us? I am urging you to join me as a mighty army marching to turn this nation back to Christ." He is taking his program, "Wake Up, America. We Are All Hostages," all over the country, just as Jerry Falwell, president of the Moral Majority, is airing his program, "America, You're Too Young to Die." These programs stir the people across the land, mobilizing them into an all-out attack against liberal politicians.



*Dr. Jerry Falwell, minister of the 17,000-member Thomas Road Baptist church in Lynchburg, Virginia, and speaker on the "Old-Time Gospel Hour," claimed to have recruited more than 70,000 ministers on the side of the Moral Majority. He also once said he had been responsible for registering some two million voters for the November, 1980, elections.*

Dr. Bill Bright, leader of Campus Crusade, sponsored by the Billy Graham Association, warned, "I believe God is giving us a last chance." Pat Robertson cries out, "We must transform society," and Robert Grant declares, "If Christians unite, we can do anything. We can pass any law or any amendment. And that's exactly what we intend to do." On television Grant said, "We can do anything. We can amend the Constitution. We can elect a President. We can change or make any law in the land. And it behooves us to do it. If we have to live under law—as well we should—we should live under moral and Godly law."

And speaking of godly law, Dr. Jerry Falwell, in an interview with



Evangelist James Robison, speaking with President Ronald Reagan (right), is chairman of a committee to place prayer back in public schools. In Springfield, Illinois, a Moral Majority demonstration (below) attempts to point Americans back to God.



Eternity magazine, showed how the Moral Majority got underway—the largest movement of those pressing for change. “George Gallup said his findings indicate that a whopping 84 percent today in America believe the Ten Commandments are valid for today, so we began putting together that Moral Majority.”

**Plan of attack.** Their strategy calls for total mobilization of the 108,000 evangelical ministers and the 110,000 evangelical churches to get a 100-percent voter turnout in every national and local election.

Their strategy involves long-range

plans. Churches have become issue-oriented. Morality and saving America stirs the people. James Robison claims that 70 percent of Bible-believing Christians did not vote in the 1976 national election. And the *Chicago Tribune* speaks of as many as 25 million evangelicals not even registered to vote.

Whichever way you look at it, these people have an overriding sense of urgency. They have almost a messianic zeal to save the nation now before it is too late. Jerry Falwell’s letter to me, dated August 18, 1980, is signed off, “Working to Save America.”

**How much time** do they think they have? *Life* magazine reports, “During dinner with the Governor and first lady of Alabama, Falwell confided, ‘America has less than a thousand days as a free nation, unless there is divine intervention.’”

In his letter sent to me, Dr. Ronald S. Godwin, vice-president of the Moral Majority, said, “Some of the most knowledgeable military leaders in our nation are saying that we have less than 1,000 days to save our country. I do know this; I have a sense of urgency today as I have never experienced before. I am convinced that we must be very, very determined to influence every legislative race possible between now and 1982 and that, perhaps, the freedom of our nation will depend on how successful we are at registering and informing conservative voters between now and 1982.”

Pat Robertson predicts to his millions of viewers “that Jesus would probably be back in 1982” (*Harper’s*, August 1980, p. 34). As never before Christians sense the nearness of Christ’s return, but most look to His coming to walk on this earth, to set up the promised millennium—quite different from the Biblical view of meeting Him in the air and going to heaven at His return (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). The year 1982 is months away. This puts urgency into the campaign to make America

Christian—as if it must be completed before Christ comes.

I attended the James Robison's Greater Chattanooga Crusade on September 21, 1980. He spoke with a tremendous sense of urgency to a capacity stadium packed with people from more than eighty churches in the area. Robison spoke of the 1980s as a "decade of danger and doom," with 1980 as the "year of decision which will determine our destiny—whether we survive as a free country." A time bomb ticks away under America. A sense of "time running out" drives these leaders, and they have already gained results.

**Moral action committees** in local churches throughout the country move in high gear. In Alaska they seized control of the State Convention, where only five of the thirty-eight delegates to the National Republican Convention were not Moral Majority members or those supporting them. The *New York Times* reports, "In Gainesville, Florida forty-two members of the Southside Baptist church won seats on the Alachua County Democratic Central Committee in an election to fill fifty-three vacancies."

They discovered that Gene Keith, pastor of Southside, had enrolled for one week in a school of politics run by the Moral Majority. He then returned to Gainesville and entered the September 9 Democratic primary as a candidate for the State senate and persuaded many members to do the same. Eight of those winning seats were formerly Republicans.

The Republican Party realizes the importance of this new Right Wing and has sent a full-time worker to initiate and guide the 108,000 evangelical pastors in their political quest. The movement ousted Senator Mike Gravel, of Alaska. The moral voting record of each Congressman and Senator, put out by Christian Voice, could unseat many more leaders in the days ahead.

The Washington for Jesus rally drew between 200,000 to 600,000 people, depending upon which report one follows. Although the crowd numbered considerably less than the hoped-for one million, it nevertheless found representatives from every State and outnumbered the turnout to greet Pope John Paul II. America for Jesus rallies are planned in every major city in the States for April, 1981. What would these Christians say if Jews, atheists, or Moslems were to have a similar campaign? Would they like an America for Buddha or an America for Mohammed rally? No, they

cry out against liberal politicians who pass laws that bless perversion, drive the country toward a social state (thus causing people to look to the government instead of to people as their helper), and push the nation's national debt to a height that calls in question the very security of our existence?

What Christian would not stand up against government interference in or weakening of the family? I find myself very sympathetic with these concerns. But, I must sound a serious warning—America was founded by Pilgrims fleeing from church-states in Europe. Now

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## **If the Moral Majority fear the demise of our country unless they influence the state, I fear the demise of our religious freedom if they do.**

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wouldn't. They believe their mandate from God is to make America a Christian nation—almost the kingdom of God on earth.

Before last Labor Day the voting record of every incumbent was mailed out to evangelicals, and the Sunday before the election there was a mass "leafleting." The church has become a powerful political precinct. The CBS Evening News, August 22, 1979, stated, "There is a ready-made outlet for the born-again lobby: the nation's dozens of Christian television stations, hundreds of Christian radio stations, thousands of cable stations hungry for program material." A new potent political force, whose day has come, moves out to take a nation.

**How does** one fairly evaluate this new Right Wing in politics? What Christian would not be against unnecessary abortion, pornography, homosexuality, groups that tear down the family, and drugs that crush our children even in grade schools? What Christian would not

America could soon become herself a church-state.

James Dunn, director of the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said, "We need to be connected with reality. What is their vision? Someone suggested that what they really want—and you can listen to the preaching of the electronic church and hear that what they really want is a theocracy. They don't want a democracy of free people, a pluralistic society; they want a theocracy, and if you listen very carefully to the number of times the first-person-singular pronoun is used, they not only want a theocracy but each one of them wants to be Theo."

I listened to most of the speakers who addressed the National Affairs Briefing in the Reunion Arena, Dallas, August 21, 22, 1980. Church leaders of this new political Right Wing spoke, together with some State governors, senators, congressmen, and Presidential Candidate Ronald Reagan. Pat Robertson spoke of God's commission for men

to have dominion over the world. Repeatedly speakers referred to Christian influence as "salt" and "light" in this world.

Gary North, director of the Institute of Christian Economics, referred to America as a nation "under the Covenant" from which

greatest freedom of all—the freedom to vote and choose their leaders."

Then-presidential hopeful Reagan considered that "under the pretense of separation of church and state, religious beliefs cannot be advocated in many of our public institutions, but atheism can." Reagan went on to

riding on the state and portrays this union as illegitimate, calling the woman a harlot (Revelation 17:3-5). The church, as Christ's bride (Matthew 25:1-10), joins with another husband, the state.

Have the Moral Majority proponents considered the results of this immoral union? You see, it's perfectly right for Christians as individuals to be good citizens, but when they band together as a church to control the state, we have a different situation. The Bible warns against this.

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**According to the prophecies of Revelation, humans one day will be unable to buy or sell unless they possess the mark of the beast. Is that awful day creeping near our doors through the present movements of the church to influence the state?**

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we have been breaking away since the Civil War. And Jerry Falwell said that America is "a nation under God" to bless the world, having a divine mandate just as Israel did. And a part of that mandate is to protect Israel. Falwell asserted, "We established this nation on the Judeo-Christian ethic." America is a "Judeo-Christian state."

All through the speeches I noted a heavy reliance on Old Testament passages and a claim that the gospel is not just the New Testament, but the whole Bible, with an oversimplistic comparison between America and Israel. They challenged Christians to awake and wrench back their land from liberals and humanists and to make this a Christian country.

But what about the separation of church and state in the First Amendment? What did they say of this? James Robison declared, "There is no possible way you can separate God from government and have a successful government. God is the ultimate authority." Governor William Clemons, of Texas, asserted, "We in the United States strongly believe in the separation of church and state, and this is right. But it does not mean that thinking citizens should not participate in the governmental process and exercise their

say, "The First Amendment was written, not to protect the people and their law from religious values, but to protect those values from governmental tyranny."

**We must never forget** that the Pilgrims fled from church tyranny—not government tyranny. We must never forget that the National Reform Association, at Xenia, Ohio, in 1864, supported a religious amendment to the Constitution and backed Senator H. W. Blair (R.-N.H.) in his 1888 National Sunday bill in Congress, and Americans were persecuted under Sunday blue laws.

We must never forget that the Supreme Court even ruled this country as "a Christian nation" in 1892. We must remember that the Bible in Revelation 13 and 17 foretells persecution to come to America when the church (the woman, Jeremiah 6:2; Matthew 25:1-13; 2 Corinthians 11:2) and the state (the beast, Daniel 7:17; Revelation 17:7-10) join together.\*

The Bible pictures the church

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\*For more details about these prophecies see "The Amazing Prophecies of Daniel and Revelation" (a special issue of THESE TIMES published in April, 1979), pp. 52-55 and 68-71. (To obtain a copy send \$1.00 in check or money order to THESE TIMES, 6856 Eastern Avenue NW., Washington, D.C. 20012.)

**In Daniel's day** the state forced the worship of Nebuchadnezzar's image on the plain of Dura (Daniel 3:1-26). Church and state were one in this decree. Citizens had to bow down or be thrown into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:6).

America faces a similar state law concerning worship. According to Revelation 13 an image to the beast will be developed in the States (verses 11-18). It is true that the beast power in this chapter (verses 1-10) is the Papacy (with a union of church and state at the Vatican and the Pope serving as leader of both a state and a church); then an image to this beast will be a similar uniting of church and state in America. In minimal terms this will be government enforcing church policy. The decree concerning worship will result in a death penalty for those not complying (verse 15). The church tyranny of Nebuchadnezzar's day will become a reality in America.

It is interesting and necessary to compare the two images mentioned above. The image of Nebuchadnezzar constituted a man-made substitute for God's image shown in a dream to Nebuchadnezzar. Whereas God's image contained only a head of gold (Daniel 2:31-44), Nebuchadnezzar's was made of gold throughout (Daniel 3:1). Nebuchadnezzar rejected God's prediction that his empire (head of gold, Daniel 2:38) would be superseded by

the Greek empire (silver chest, Daniel 2:32, 39). He therefore portrayed the entire image as gold. This man-made substitution became a focus of worship at pain of death.

God gave man Saturday, the seventh day of the week, as the day for worship (Genesis 2:2f, Exodus 20:8-11; Luke 4:16; Acts 16:13; Hebrews 4:4, 9-11). Man's substitute is Sunday, the first day of the week. In America the church will influence the state to enforce this substitute. It will become a focus of worship at pain of death. History will be repeated. We must never forget the dangers of church tyranny.

I wrote to H. Edward Rowe, executive director of the Religious Round Table, which convened the National Affairs Briefing that met in Dallas. I asked him, "If it is time for the Moral Majority to let their influence be felt in government, could this also include influencing legislation to make Sunday a day of worship in our country?" His reply: "Legislation and proclamations by Presidents to *urge* (underlining his) it—yes."

Bill Gothard's seminar for ministers, held in Washington, D.C., last spring (1980) found Gothard giving forceful backing to the idea of urging Sunday sacredness and acceptance of America as a Christian nation. My ministerial friends in attendance told me of the fervent reception the ministers gave to these concepts.

But to promote Sunday is inconsistent with the other Ten Commandment emphases of the Moral Majority. For if they oppose abortion as man's substitute for the sixth commandment and oppose ERA as a human substitute for the fifth commandment, then they should logically oppose Sunday as man's substitute for God's Saturday Sabbath in the fourth commandment (see Exodus 20:8-11).

**Danger ahead.** In view of the Biblical scenario, I must warn of the danger ahead to Christian freedom.

If the Moral Majority fear the demise of our country unless they influence the state, I fear the demise of our religious freedom if they do. I agree with Stan Mooneyham, editor of *World Vision*, when he said, "I am as scared of an evangelical power bloc as I am of any other. Worldly power in religious hands—Islamic or Christian—has hardened into more than one Inquisition."

I concur with *Eternity* magazine when it stated, "The other aspect of the Falwell ministry with which fellow Christians may feel uneasy is the merger of conservative Christianity with pro-American, Right Wing politics. Those of us with a sense of history will recall that we've made this trip before and have the scars to prove it."

Senator John Dansworth (R.-Montana), an ordained Episcopal minister, warned, "The business of trying to approach matters as a concerned Christian is one thing. It is quite another thing to purport to be the arbiter of political positions in the name of Christ. That's a usurpation of Christianity for political purposes."

Dickinson Rathbon, manager of the Christian Science Committee on Publications, warned, "Problems begin to balloon when a particular church or religious group seeks to influence members of government with nonreligious impositions of secular political power. No church has either a God-given or a constitutional right to impose its teachings upon anybody. Membership in a church is an individual choice. The members of a church who agree to submit to a church's authority constitute the absolute limit of that church's legitimate authority." The recent missive from Catholic Cardinal Maderis, of Boston, to his diocese telling his members to oppose candidates who vote for abortion funding should be insight into what churches could legislate if given the opportunity.

America needs to awaken not only

to the tyranny of the immoral but to the tyranny of the moral. Religious crusades in the Middle Ages ravished the Moslems in the name of morality. Centuries later George Washington assured Moslem leaders in the Treaty with Tripoli in 1796, "As the Government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion; as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility of Musselmen; and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mehomitan nation, it is declared by the parties, that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries."

**George Washington** understood the genius of America. The separation of church and state constituted the only way of shutting out the possibility of the tyranny of religion from which the persecuted Pilgrims fled, and offered the only way to maintain a land of freedom to which all persecuted people could escape—whether running from religious or political tyranny.

Roland Hegstad, editor of *Liberty* magazine, in his September 19, 1980, letter to me, expressed it well: "There has never been a time when the majority has been moral. There have, unfortunately, been times when the majority thought it had been moral. I say unfortunately because history is a record not of bad people trying to make other people bad, but of good people trying to make other people good. And when the majority perceives itself as moral, and political, and powerful, and 'called,' the minority is in for a bad time. But was it not Jesus Himself who said, 'The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service' "? (John 16:2).

Wake up, America—before it's too late! □

When this author learned that she could break a bad habit and start a good one in its place in just twenty-one days, it changed her whole outlook on life.

# Successful living —three weeks at a time

by Ann Bateman

I REALLY don't remember how or where I heard that it takes just three weeks, or twenty-one days, to form a good habit. But I do remember I was fascinated at the prospect and at the same time a little doubtful.

I decided that the only way I could find out whether a good habit really could be formed in just three short weeks was to try it for myself. My life certainly possessed plenty of room for improvement with many good habits that I needed to acquire. My list of New Year's resolutions had gone the way of most resolution lists, and I wondered whether I could remember what had been on it.

After some thought I recalled that my dentist warned that flossing my teeth was just as important as brushing them, and that if I didn't begin flossing, my gum problems would get worse. I had been wanting and meaning to begin flossing, but I had put it off with the "I'll start tomorrow" procrastinator's creed.

"OK," I said to myself. "I'll give this three-week method a try." I found the first day of flossing the most difficult. On the second and third days also flossing seemed a tiresome chore. At bedtime each night I felt too tired to spend my time this way. I wanted to hit the pillow. But just past the first week, about halfway into the three-week period, my flossing

was almost becoming a part of my bedtime ritual.

By the end of the three weeks—to my amazement—flossing became as natural as brushing my teeth. I felt elated. I had formed a good habit! But the implications of my first success sent my mind reeling. If I could do it once I could surely do it again on a more challenging habit.

**I had planned** for quite a while to begin eating more nutritious foods—more fruits and vegetables, less sweets and rich gooey foods. I decided to prepare a chart listing what I could eat, and I taped it to the refrigerator. This helped me prepare mentally.

The first day, quite frankly, I felt miserable. I tried to keep busy, but I kept thinking about the chocolate cake waiting for me in the fridge and the butterscotch cookies hiding in the cookie tin. I chewed on a carrot and cut up an orange, determining that I would somehow make it through the first day.

On the second and third days my cravings felt less intense but still strong. By the fourth and fifth days the family had eaten the cake and cookies, and I was actually beginning to enjoy fruits and vegetables. Also a feeling of self-esteem began to flow through my body. At the end of the three weeks my habit had been set; craving for sweets no longer dominated my actions, and I had lost five pounds. To reach for better foods felt natural.

Wow! I thought to myself. This is really working! I even patted myself on the back and felt

elated that the three-week method really did seem to work. But now I knew that the real challenge lay ahead. I had been working on physical habits. What about other habits such as those of the heart and mind?

**Lost art of appreciation.** My husband and I had not been getting along well lately. We didn't argue, but we hardly communicated. I knew that the problem was probably my nagging. I constantly criticized Val about his faults and his lack of religious inclination. Unfortunately, I looked only at his negative traits and forgot to notice or mention the positive things about him.

I *knew* I nagged him, and I really didn't want to be a nag, but it seemed almost as if I couldn't help myself. Consequently, Val closed me out of his life, and I couldn't blame him. Could I change? Did I want to change enough?

I made myself another little three-week chart and decided I would try. Each day I would find one thing I liked in my husband or appreciated about him and mention it to him. I prayed for help.

**The first day**, again, presented the greatest problem. I noticed quite a few things I didn't like about Val. Why did he have to leave all his snack things out? How could he wear that awful shirt again? And I had a difficult time coming up with anything positive. "Is he really so bad that I can't think of one good thing about him?" I wondered. "Isn't there one small thing I can mention?"

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Why, of course! He was a fine man in many ways. When something needed repair around the house Val tinkered with it until he discovered the problem. I glanced over at him cautiously. "It's sure nice to have that light switch fixed. I'm glad you're so handy." I had tried to sound casual, but my voice couldn't hide the effort I needed to say it. Val grunted. He didn't look at me, but I could detect a note of satisfaction in his response.

The next day I tried to think of another positive trait my husband had. I told him I was glad he was patient with my faults and didn't nag me the way I often nagged him. He smiled a small, knowing

smile that angered me.

"This just isn't going to work," I told myself. "Val still isn't speaking to me or opening up."

The next few days I still found it terribly difficult to come up with good things, and I was beginning to feel a little phony, like some kind of robot, programmed to say nice things without really meaning them. But as the three weeks continued, finding good things about my husband began to come easier. Why, he *was* a fine man. He dealt honestly with everyone; he treated our children with patience. Why had I seen only the bad?

**By the end** of the twenty-one days I couldn't believe how easy it had

become to tell Val good things without choking or feeling embarrassment. And Val *did* seem different. He responded to me with interest and began to talk in a more open manner about his work and interests. In fact, at the end of the three weeks he mentioned that I seemed "different."

"I've been trying lately to be more positive and overcome my nagging," I admitted. "There are so many good things about you that I failed to mention. I've been so critical, and I'm sorry. You're really a fine man, and I'm glad I married you."

Val responded with emotion in his voice. "I guess that's why I've been feeling so much better about myself lately and about us. Thanks for helping. I really do need to try harder to be a better husband and a better man."

I was so touched I could hardly speak. Then I decided to confess all and tell him about the three-week plan and my adventures with it. I even told him how difficult the first few days always were. Val seemed interested and said he wanted to try it for himself.

**Since those early** positive experiences with the three-week plan I have continued trying to help myself become a better person by working in other areas of my life, such as reading better literature, studying the Bible with more love and diligence, and improving my homemaking skills and my relationships with each of our children.

I've found that if I review each week the good habits I've acquired in the past and give myself a checkup I don't fall back into old patterns. The best thing about the positive experiences I've had is this: Now I have the confidence that with the Lord's help I can improve *anything* I need to improve about myself by persisting for three weeks, or just twenty-one days.

It's a terrific feeling! □



*These sand dunes (top) are near Palm Springs, California. A prickly-pear cactus (above) stands outside of Joshua Tree National Monument; the California poppies and gold fields (right) near Lake Matthews, California; and wild daisies (far right) near Mentone, California.*



# “The desert shall . . . blossom as the rose”

*As the spring rains can convert a parched desert into a showcase of flowering cacti, so can the pure water of life transform the sand dunes of the soul into a living oasis.* **by Samuel D. Croft**

**V**AST, waterless wastelands cover one fifth of our planet's land surface. These are the deserts of earth—enormous panoramas of shimmering buttes, sculptured hills, and dusty plains where whirlwinds dance on distant horizons.

The sun pitilessly bakes the arid soil for long, relentless hours. At times massive sand dunes, rippled by the wind, give the uninitiated, casual observer the impression of lifeless sterility.

Despite its silent austerity and

strict economy, however, the desert possesses a great potential for life. Water is the key that unlocks that potential and prompts it to quickly unfold. When storm clouds bring the rains of spring the sunbaked soil begins to stir with teeming activity. Seeds that have lain in quiet dormancy, at times for many seasons, suddenly burst into life, and buds on leafless limbs explode in kaleidoscopic color.

With God's treasured gift of rain comes a transformation of the des-

ert that is miraculous both in its quickness and its completeness. The parched and naked soil that yesterday was marked by an awesome aridity is today a place of great fascination, vibrant with life and resplendent in its beauty.

**Nurtured by the rain**, the desert rapidly becomes a garden show of annuals. Flowers of a hundred species grow in rich profusion, their petals saturated with luminous rainbow hues. In the American West purple lupine, pink phacelia, and scarlet pentstemon mingle with golden California poppies, lavender and verbena, and white dune primroses to form a giant floral carpet upon the desert floor.

Scattered over the landscape, cacti of many shapes and sizes exhibit a dignified aloofness, their

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privacy protected by a host of hostile thorns. Cacti by the thousands—giant saguaro, jumping cholla, barrel, hedgehog, prickly pear, and others—luxuriate in the warm, moist soil. Many are soon crowned with brilliant coronets of blossoms with colors ranging through much of the visible spectrum—colors often so delicate that

water." Isaiah 35:1-7.

The changes in the desert that accompany the rains of spring correspond in many ways to the changes that occur in the hearts of individuals who have been refreshed by the waters from the Fountain of Life. Often, as members of the church family, we are like the unwatered deserts of

shall give him," Christ declares, "shall never thirst" (John 4:14).

In describing this experience of spiritual renewal and restoration, Christian Author Ellen G. White once wrote: "He who drinks of the living water will find that it is 'in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.' The Spirit of Christ within him is like a spring welling up in the desert, flowing to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish, eager to drink of the water of life" (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, p. 731).

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## In the quiet recesses of the heart the voice that spans the centuries may still be heard, patiently inviting all to come to Him, that they might thirst no more.

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they are virtually impossible to capture either by camera or on canvas.

Joshua trees, oversized members of the lily family, pose in attitudes of prayerfulness, while their cousins, the yucca and century plants, topped by panicles of creamy blossoms, stand like giant candles against the distant skyline. The ocotillo, growing in friendly clusters, wave from slender, wandlike stems delicate streamers of bright-red flowers.

**A symbol of re-creation.** After the rain the desert for a few glorious weeks is indeed a garden of unexcelled beauty. For those who have witnessed this marvelous transformation it is an object lesson not soon forgotten. Surely here God has granted a glimpse of that Edenic restoration described by Isaiah the prophet:

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing. . . .

In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

And the parched ground shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty land springs of

earth—dry, barren, and lifeless—a spiritual wilderness, a religious wasteland. However, it need not be so, for God has promised to "pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground"; and he shall "be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not" (Isaiah 44:3; 58:11).

To the corporate church the promise is equally glorious in the prospect of its fulfillment: "For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody" (Isaiah 51:3).

**Those who hunger** for holiness and thirst after righteousness are invited to partake freely of the "pure water of life, of which Christ is the fountain" (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 19). "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. . . ." (Isaiah 55:1). If by the prompting of faith we respond to this invitation we are assured a spiritual refreshing that is greater in its potential than our present capacity to receive it. The promise is clear and unequivocal; its fulfillment certain. "Who-soever drinketh of the water that I

**Throughout the course** of history God's dealings with us have ever been characterized by His unbounded benevolence and generosity. As showers that refresh the earth, He has poured out His love unmeasured upon His people. His promise, recorded in ancient times by Isaiah the prophet, is renewed to each of us today. He declares: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water" (Isaiah 41:17, 18).

In the deserts of earth, springs of water refresh the soil and at times transform it into fruitful oases. So also the streams that flow unrestricted from Heaven's life-giving Fountain ensure to each recipient an oasis experience in the sand dunes of the soul. Even now God is calling a people to partake of this experience.

In the quiet recesses of the heart, the Voice that spans the centuries may still be heard, patiently entreating, inviting all to come to Him that they might thirst no more. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). □

# JUNE STRONG

## The rocker that went to college



It broke so raggedly that repair seemed impossible, so the jagged ends were neatly sawed off, the headrest discarded, and the wounded chair carted off to a dark storage area in the barn. It could have been the end of the seventy-five-cent chair, but old rockers don't give up that easily.

Fifteen years or more passed, and our youngest daughter took a year of school by correspondence. Optimistically she planned to finish in May, but the summer found her still bent over schoolbooks, so off she went to the barn for the old green chair, which she planted on our small front portico. If study she must, she'd absorb some summertime while she was working at it. "It's still comfortable, even without a headrest," she hollered through the screen door.

So once more the rocker found itself back in service. Because we didn't set great value upon it, no one both-

ered to bring it in when it rained, and the paint began to peel and curl. When Amy went off to boarding school that fall I toted the shabby old relic back to the barn. And there it stayed until son Mitch, on cleaning the barn this past summer, spied it in its cobwebby retirement.

The peeling paint challenged him. He'd restore it—right down to the original wood. And he stuck to the project with amazing tenacity for one who does not like painstaking procedures. When the last coat of Min-Wax had been applied, it looked quite respectable. Our son knew every rung and groove more intimately than he had ever anticipated, so there was no question about squeezing it into the car. It had to go.

As he drove away, the rockers reared up in the back window like two horns, and I had myself a little chuckle. Momentarily, for me, the piece of furniture took on almost human

qualities. No one had asked the old girl whether she wanted to come out of retirement and go off to college to become the soother of two budding pilots and their friends. How would she accept the shirts and jackets that would surely be draped over her crippled back? and the noise? and the wrestling? I had the feeling she'd take it all in easy stride.

I was being ridiculous, of course—playing games to cover the emptiness every mother feels when sons and daughters drive away to the ivy halls of learning. But I hoped I'd given, in my own sphere, the kind of patient, willing service the old rocker had contributed to our family. I asked myself some questions:

• *Was I dealing cheerfully with the physical and emotional wounds life had dealt?* (I gave myself about a C- on that one. I do a lot of complaining about poor eyesight and the ordinary ups and downs of life.)

• *Was I open, even eager, for new areas of service, no matter how far they might lead into unfamiliar territory?* (Sometimes I swear I'll never accept another invitation to speak, because I hate leaving home.)

• *Could I endure, after I had given faithful service, the paint-peeling periods of life when no one took me seriously or was concerned about my welfare?* (I wasn't sure.)

No more questions. The old rocker had shown me too much about myself already.

Lord, make me a faithful, uncomplaining servant to those who need me . . . anytime . . . anywhere. □

LAST fall our youngest son left for college with an old rocking chair packed into the back seat of his car. He really didn't have room for it (at that point, even a toothbrush would have been an intrusion), but he'd become pretty well acquainted with the old chair over the summer, and he wasn't leaving it behind.

For a piece of nondescript furniture it had quite a history. I'd bought it years ago at an auction for seventy-five cents. Obviously it was no antique, nor was it a thing of beauty. But it was solid and comfortable, and I'd had babies to rock. With a good high headrest and a firm back support, it felt just right for a tall person. Many a night the old chair and I watched the moon melt into dawn while an ill or sleepless toddler wrestled with insomnia in my arms. Somewhere along the way, it acquired a coat of green paint to blend, as imperceptibly as possible, into one décor or another.

Eventually there came into our home a youngster from Korea—a lad who liked action. Often the old chair found itself operating at a pretty brisk pace. One day the inevitable happened. Chair and boy went end over teakettle. Boy unhurt. Family greatly amused. Chair minus its fine high headrest.



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We Running?" She enjoys people, writing, gardening, and sewing.



# How will God judge humans?

*Are humans nothing more than numbers in a celestial computer or insignificant accounts in the colossal record books of the universe? Or does God take an interest in us as individuals and in our eternal destiny?* **by Richard W. Coffen**

**M**ARTIN LUTHER, the Protestant Reformer, along with many other serious-minded Christians, struggled with the subject of judgment. Among the other questions he faced, one in particular plagued his mind: "How can anyone be just before the Righteous Judge?"

In fact, the sharper Luther focused his concept of the judgment, the more anxiety tortured his mind. So he embraced an ascetic life-style. Perhaps by starving himself, by denying his physical drives and emotional needs, by praying in marathons, and by flagellating his body, he could whip up enough merit to face the judgment confidently. Yet,

*Richard Coffen, book editor, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., is author of Time of the Sign and Successful Bible Study. © 1981 by Richard W. Coffen.*

despite his desperate measures, Luther's terror mounted.

Of those years plagued by anxiety and frustration, Luther later wrote: "Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God. . . . Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience."

**Judgment in Scripture.** In contrast, God's Old Testament people regarded the judgment as a cause for elation, because it meant ultimate vindication. Just before Moses died he taught the Hebrews to sing: "For the Lord shall judge his people, . . . when he seeth that their power is gone. . . . Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants . . . and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people" (Deuteronomy 32:36, 43).

The psalmist too rejoiced at the prospect of God's judgment. "The Lord shall judge the people: judge me, O Lord" (Psalm 7:8). He pleaded with God, "Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment. . . . Judge me, O Lord my God, according to thy righteousness" (Psalm 35:23, 24). The prophet Isaiah similarly looked forward to the prospect of judgment. "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us" (Isaiah 33:22). Jeremiah also eagerly anticipated the judgment (see Jeremiah 11:20), and Daniel declared that when God's courtroom opened, the Ancient of Days would unroll the scrolls and pass judgment for His saints—in their behalf (Daniel 7:9, 10, 22, R.S.V.).

But somehow through the passing

centuries our concept of judgment has shifted. Now the idea of facing God in judgment often evokes within us terror like that with which Martin Luther wrestled. We envision a fastidious God who scrutinizes our lives and who will broil alive anyone who flunks His nit-picking.

But when I read about judgment in the Bible I learn three significant facts. The metaphor of judgment implies that God treats me (1) as a person, (2), as a free moral being, and (3) as an adult.

**1. God treats me as a person.** In our technological age people often feel like little more than ciphers. At first it was a Social Security number and a driver's-license number. Military service meant yet another identification number. With the arrival of widespread computerization most of us quickly became known by many different numbers. For example, a rough count of my credit cards, bank accounts, et cetera, indicates that I am infallibly remembered by some twenty different computer codes.

And have you ever tried to argue with a computer? Mr. Gene Durham, of Dallas, Texas, discovered the impossibility of such impersonal encounters after he had applied for a construction job in Chicago, was accepted, and then was notified that he had failed his physical examination so needn't show up for work.

Since Gene Durham felt physically fit, he telephoned his prospective employer for an explanation. The personnel department replied that he could not work, because he was pregnant. Mr. Durham protested that pregnancy was impossible, but the prospective employer remained firm. So Gene contacted the clinic that had administered his physical. A quick check of their files reaffirmed the Chicago company's evaluation.

For three weeks Mr. Durham

argued with the clinic's computer. Finally, a clerk discovered that a Mrs. Jean Durham had also undergone an examination at the clinic, and she was pregnant. The Chicago-based company rehired Mr. Durham, but its contract stunned him, because it withheld all maternity benefits for nine months!

Yes, the Biblical portrayal of a personal judgment sounds very refreshing in these days of computerized treatment. Admittedly, of course, the picture of angels with reed pens recording our every deed and thought on parchment scrolls is outdated. The storage of several billion scrolls in heaven boggles the imagination, and the thought of God's double-checking them all borders on the unbelievable.

It would be tempting, therefore, to update the Scriptural picture of judgment by talking about computer tapes rather than scrolls. Heaven would then operate a sophisticated computer system with a memory of billions upon billions of bytes. At the touch of a button a lineprinter could chatter a coded printout that God could review prior to making a verdict.

But no longer would Heaven judge persons—just numbers. No longer would God review the intimate details of our lives—just computer printouts. Judgment would deteriorate to an impersonal interaction between God and a baffling array of capacitors, transistors, diodes, and flip-flops.

The Biblical picture of parchment scrolls unrolled for audit must remain, because by replacing that picture with modern technology we would destroy the concept within the metaphor. *Judgment means that God deals with me personally.*

**2. God treats me as a free moral being.** Biologists sometimes talk about instincts that govern animal behavior. Moths flutter toward the nearest or brightest light. Salmon

swarm from the sea and fight their way upstream to ancestral freshwater spawning areas. Sea turtles hatched far up on the beach claw their way through sand to the ocean. It appears that animals can exert little control over those aspects of their lives dominated by instinct. Instead, one drive after another programs their behavior.

But human beings are different. According to the opening chapters of Genesis, God gave us freedom of choice. The Garden of Eden grew lush with hundreds of trees from which Adam and Eve could eat, but they were not to choose fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God did not force abstinence upon them. He merely requested it. Adam and Eve must decide to comply or not to comply.

However, a new theory called "sociobiology" challenges the Biblical doctrine of human moral freedom. Whereas Scripture defines mankind's purpose as glorifying our Creator God (1 Corinthians 10:31; Revelation 14:7), Sociobiologist Richard Dawkins, of England, claims that our genes "created us body and mind; and their preservation is the ultimate rationale for our existence. . . . We are their survival machines." We "exist solely to serve the purposes of DNA." We do not freely choose our behavior, sociobiologists argue, but instead capitulate to our genetic demands. Thus, "all human acts . . . may be ultimately selfish. Morality and justice . . . are securely rooted in the genes."

In contrast, Joshua challenged his fellow Israelites: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15).

God took a great risk when He granted us self-direction, and our freedom has important consequences for both God and man. Scripture's insistence that God subpoenas me before Christ's judgment seat reinforces the truth of human freedom. After all, why should God

call me to account for myself if life means merely doing what comes naturally? If genes are my puppet-master, then a heavenly assessment of my behavior is a colossal exercise in futility. The truth is, however, that DNA does not hold strings to

refused to accept responsibility. Adam whined, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:12). And Eve countered, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (verse 13).

nothing about writing. His sense of craftsmanship is nil. He can't spell. He's ignorant of grammar. In poetry His sense of rhyme and rhythm is atrocious.

In the Biblical picture of judgment, God bases His dealings with us on the assumption that we have not only passed through physical puberty but also through emotional and moral adolescence. And "God told me to do it" just isn't an adult answer. Morally mature persons have clarified their values, and God asks them to clarify those values before the universe.

As a teen-ager, I chafed whenever I felt that others still dealt with me as they would a child. "Why can't they treat me like an adult?" I'd mutter. Well, God respects me enough to do just that. He will not baby me in the judgment. And if I say, "The devil made me do it" or "You told me to do it," He will counter, "Come on now. Act your age." *Judgment means that God treats me as an adult.*

**Christian confidence.** "Here comes the judge!" Once the scriptural truth about Christ's mission dawned on Martin Luther, judgment no longer petrified him. It is good news to learn that "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). Luther's anxieties melted when he learned that it is not what God thinks of us that matters but what He thinks of Christ. Jesus provides our right standing before God. As a result, Luther's hatred of God turned into love, and "herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. . . . There is no fear in love" (1 John 4:17, 18).

Judgment, then, should be good news for us, too, because it means that God takes each of us seriously enough to treat us as individuals, as free moral beings, and as adults. Judgment is God's supreme compliment to human beings. □

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## Judgment should be good news for Christians, because it means that God takes each of us seriously enough to treat us as individuals, as free moral beings, and as adults.

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my mind. *Judgment means that God takes my freedom of will seriously.*

**3. God treats me as an adult.** Have you ever reprimanded two quarreling children? If so, Timmy likely argued, "But it was her fault." And Tammy retorted, "No siree! He started it." Children find it difficult to accept responsibility. Erik H. Erikson has studied the phenomenon and has concluded that eight stages lead to human maturation. The last step, according to Erikson, is "the sense of integrity." "It . . . means . . . an acceptance of the fact that one's life is one's own responsibility."

The Youth Development Center No. 3 in Brooklyn, New York, helps troubled youngsters take that final step toward maturity. Sometimes it succeeds. Sometimes not. One 13-year-old who got the message observed: "I got to face up to reality. Some of the brothers in here want to play the part of the fool, saying that being here is everybody's fault but their own. But where I am is me, nobody else."

It's not easy for most of us to make that last step in the long and sometimes tortuous path to adulthood. Remember how difficult it was for Adam and Eve to act maturely in Eden? When God called them to account for their disobedience both

**The devil made me do it?** In the heavenly assize, echoing comedian Flip Wilson's response, "The devil made me do it," will never suffice. True, for millenniums God's people have felt the lure of evil. The good that they admire can seem very indistinct in contrast with the clear siren song of that which they intellectually repudiate, and they have called the reality behind their temptations "the devil." But Jesus' victory over temptation forever settles the question of free will. With every temptation comes a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). The devil may tempt, but we do the sinning. Satan forces no one's hand. In the judgment the excuse "The devil made me do it" just won't wash.

Similarly, it will be inappropriate to affirm with the mystic: "God told me to do it."

As an editor, I often receive letters that assert, "I wrote this in the middle of the night after God told me what to say." Such authors hope to cow the editor into publishing their material. After all, even a hard-bitten editor would not dare oppose God. Furthermore, such letters absolve authors from responsibility for their mistakes and sloppy thinking.

Inevitably when I read such "God-given" manuscripts, I can only conclude that God knows

HAVE you ever stood apart from a crowd and wondered how it is possible that we can all look so different? Most of us come with standard equipment—one head, two eyes, two ears, two arms. Yet we are all unique and recognizable. Amazing!

We come in all shapes and sizes—lean ones, pudgy ones, gaily dressed ones, debonair ones. We've got corn-colored hair, cotton hair, no hair. There are the pasty-cheeked and the apple-red-cheeked. You see sad eyes, sparkling eyes, wistful eyes, bushy eyebrows and mismatched ones, flapping ears and cauliflower ones. Our mouths are mobile, cavernous, toothless, slobbering.

We don't look alike; we don't act alike; we don't think alike. Why?

What does our Heinz-57-variety appearance tell us about our Creator? For one thing, could it be that there is really nothing dry or heavy-footed about our God? When Dwight W. Morrow was appointed ambassador to Mexico many years ago, he decided to furnish his home in Cuernavaca with Mexican products, all of the furniture to be handmade by Indian carpenters. When he found a chair that was not only comfortable but reasonably priced he asked the man to make a dozen for him.

"The señor knows, of course, that if I make more than one, I must charge more, much more, for each," said the man, obviously displeased.

"More?" questioned Morrow. "In my country it costs less if one buys in quantity. Why do you charge more?"

## Heinz 57 and God



"Because, señor," was the reply, "it is so dull to make twelve chairs just alike."  
—K.J.H.

### Can you top these?

Folks who fill out accident forms for insurance companies seem to have a gift for explaining how someone with such great driving capabilities as they possess could get involved in a little old accident! *Automotive Retailer*, in a recent issue, offered these ingenious, but actual, explanations of accidents:

"I knocked over a man. He admitted it was his fault, as he had been run over before."

"I collided with a stationary bus coming the other way."

"To avoid a collision I ran

into the other car."

"I had to turn sharper than was necessary, owing to an invisible truck."

"I collided with a stationary tree."

"The other man altered his mind—so I had to run over him."

"I told the other idiot what he was and went on."

"I can give no details of the accident, as I was somewhat concussed at the time."

"A pedestrian hit me and went under my car."

"I blew my horn—but it would not work, as it was stolen."

"I thought the side window was down, but it was up, as I found out when I put my head through it."

"I misjudged a lady crossing the street."

"Coming home, I drove

into the wrong house and collided with a tree I don't have."

"The other car collided with mine without giving warning of its intentions."

"I left my car unattended for a minute, when by accident or design it ran away."

Aren't they doozies? I like the one that reads, "Coming home, I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I don't have."

These fanciful excuses remind us that one day each of us will be called before the great Judge of all mankind and be asked for an accounting of our lives. It will be an awesome experience, for in that day we will stand face to face with eternity. The world's pleasures, riches, and honors will not seem so important then.

The days of our probation are closing fast. The end is near. The words of Holy Scripture read, "Take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare; for it will come upon all who dwell upon the face of the whole earth. But watch at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:34-36, R.S.V.).

Happily on judgment day we need not wrack our brains for ingenious explanations of our shortcomings. Hymn Writer Augustus Toplady put it well when he wrote, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling."

"Thou must save, and Thou alone."—K.J.H. □

**T**HE HEAVY door separating the psychiatric ward from the rest of Fairview Hospital whooshed shut with an audible sigh, followed by the faint click of the lock. A blue-jean-clad nurse slid the carefully guarded key from the lock, returned it to her pocket, and walked the short distance back to the brightly lit nursing station. She grumbled under her breath as she began the tedious job of identifying, counting, and preparing for destruction the more than two hundred pills removed from my purse at the time of my admission.

In my room I fell heavily across the bed, my drugged mind struggling to deal with the reality of my

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situation and surroundings. The heavy dose of pills that I'd taken just prior to my admission made thinking difficult. I rolled over, pulling a pillow across the bed. I stuffed it under my head, then pressed my fingers hard against my eyes and temples, hoping to interrupt the pain that served as a constant reminder of the abuse I had inflicted upon my body.

It had all crumbled—the carefully constructed façade that I'd created to hide my pain, inadequacy, and needs from the world.

"Who is the new patient?" Craig, a new orderly, asked the registered nurse, still engrossed in her pill counting.

"Oh, we've got another woman who has messed herself up with diet pills. She's been taking more than 100 milligrams of Dexedrine every day along with a pretty

impressive assortment of other stimulants, barbiturates, and sedatives. This is her second hospitalization."

"Will we be able to help her?" Craig queried hopefully.

Julie Norton, R.N., paused momentarily before answering. She hated to dampen his enthusiasm for this new work assignment. It was hard enough to keep help on the psychiatric ward.

"Don't count on it," she answered softly, "though we'll sure try. Amphetamine abusers are hard to work with. The sense of

# Free at last!

*A housewife with a drug habit?  
That's right! And it took the power  
of God to free me from the prison  
I had built with my own hands and  
fashioned of my own wrong choices.*

**by Carole A. Sheron**



power, self-confidence, and exhilaration artificially induced by amphetamine abuse seems so pleasant and the fatigue and depression that follow termination of the drug so severe that a user faces a terrible temptation to revert

to the drug. Most do. Right now she doesn't see pills as a problem.

To her they are a solution.

Unless

she's lucky she'll probably be in and out of the hospital over and over until she either kills herself, dies of an accidental overdose, or becomes so psychotic she'll have to be committed to a State institution for the rest of her life."

She paused to write the count of the last batch of pills onto a form. It would go along with the pills to the pharmacy, where they would be destroyed. "It's really too bad," she continued.



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## When God changed my life He changed everything. Forgiveness took away my guilt, peace replaced fear, and depression gave way to joy.

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"Her history says that she's married, with—would you believe—six children. Some of them are quite young, not yet in school. She seems so respectable. I wonder how she got all these pills. They would cost a fortune on the street."

"Probably from a doctor. You know the statistics. Doctors prescribe twice as many mood-altering drugs for women as they do for men, and the estimated number of women drug abusers for this country of 4 to 5 million is considered by most experts to be optimistically low." Craig shrugged. "I heard that during orientation."

Craig's guess was right. The drugs had been obtained from doctors, not one, but several. Manipulating, playing one against the other, outright lying when it was necessary, using different pharmacies for different drugs, had provided the medication needed to develop a fifty-pill-per-day habit. Now the grim game seemed to be over. Unable to support my habit, I'd been forced into a hospital for withdrawal and detoxification.

**It had all begun** innocently enough. Compulsive overwork arising from the need to achieve, a desire dating back to childhood to be the best at everything I did, and an inability to deal with my emotions had driven me to drugs in an attempt to cope with and control myself and my environment. My therapist had dubbed my compulsive personality "Superwoman."

It had been so easy at first. Popping pills when I got home from work kept me from getting tired before bedtime; however, the resulting late hours made it difficult to drag myself out of bed in the morning. Thus pills became a part of my morning routine. That seemingly innocent beginning had quickly grown into a heavy pattern

of abuse as my need for pills steadily grew.

Because I couldn't sleep at night, I began taking sleeping pills along with the diet pills. Barbiturates and other sedatives are frequently used along with amphetamines in a chemical attempt to regulate the sleeping-waking pattern, as well as to take the edge off the jitters.

**A pill for everything.** I had in the form of my precious pills the means for making myself feel any way that I wanted. If someone hurt my feelings I just took a pill, and somehow it didn't matter anymore. If I felt tired and had extra work to do I just took another pill and stayed awake and going until I finished it. When I needed to sleep I had a pill for that. What a thrill to be so "in control."

Gradually, however, the effects of abuse began to show in my personality, thinking, and health. I slept little, usually only a few hours each night, and ate only when it was necessary to keep people from becoming suspicious of why I was losing so much weight. My hands shook, and my head ached almost unbearably. All day I swallowed aspirins along with the other pills in a futile attempt to control the pain.

In a vain effort to eliminate the painful muscle spasms in my back, shoulders, and jaws that resulted from my extreme tension, I increased the dosage of "downers." Thinking and communicating became difficult. I could no longer trust my memory, and I began to have irrational thoughts. Most of the time I felt nothing. My life revolved around getting and taking drugs.

It became more and more difficult to function both at work and at home. In spite of all the pills, I got farther and farther behind. I was constantly active, but unproductive. One night, however, a

wonderful idea pushed its way through the confusion of my thoughts.

"I just need more time." If I could take enough pills to stay up all night long one night a week without sleeping at all, I would have added an extra day to the week. How clever I am! I would create an extra day. For days I gloated over my secret that would make me different in a very special way from everyone else.

It worked for a while. Then the delusions, hallucinations, and nightmares began—terrifying confrontations with evil, satanic powers that left me nearly paralyzed with fear. Many mornings it took hours to get out of bed, because I couldn't stop the hallucinations long enough to get to the bathroom to take the pills that could control them. As my intake of drugs increased, so did the frequency and vividness of the hallucinations.

**With medical** and psychiatric help, I successfully withdrew from drug dependence. For the moment my body was free of chemicals, and after three weeks in the hospital my doctors discharged me. This was the second in a series of hopeful beginnings, subsequent failures, suicide attempts, accidental overdoses, and irrational behavior.

Three long years passed in this manner—painful, anxiety-filled years for me and my family. Years marked by multiple hospitalizations and long absences. One by one, family, friends, and even therapists began to lose hope. Perhaps Julie Norton's long-ago prediction was to come true.

Perhaps it would have, except for one incredibly beautiful fact. I had a loving heavenly Father who earnestly longed to rescue and deliver me—to set me free from the living death into which I had fallen.

One problem was that I didn't know very much about Him, and most of the ideas I did have were erroneous. How could that lack of knowledge be breached by the reality of Him? I no longer read the Bible or attended church. I didn't have much use for preach-

ers. Where could He begin? How could He speak to me and begin to undo the years of misconceptions and erroneous thinking patterns.

**My introduction to God.** It was at that time that He sent to me—miserable, defeated, and alone in a psychiatric hospital for the fifth time—a representative of His love. He sent someone who cared enough to come and share for a little while my overwhelming, all-encompassing pain; someone who would hold my hands and pray with me and who by his actions began to introduce me to the loving, healing, forgiving Jesus.

In her book *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White elaborates, "There are souls perplexed with doubt, burdened with infirmities, weak in faith, and unable to grasp the Unseen; but a friend whom they can see, coming to them in Christ's stead, can be a connecting link to fasten their trembling faith upon Christ" (p. 297).

An observer would not have seen any change as a result of that visit, but a seed had been planted, and later it would grow into a desire to better know the One that he represented.

Once again a hospital discharged me. Life continued to be a struggle to survive between therapy sessions. A desire for drugs and thoughts of suicide plagued me. Fear dominated my life. A nameless dread hovered over me like a cloud. Psychiatrists call it "free-floating anxiety." Since I had ended my dependence on drugs, that dread had been my daily unwelcome companion.

Without the false confidence and feelings of superiority artificially induced by drugs, the responsibility of running my life terrified me. I hated making decisions. What if I made the wrong one? I agonized over the simplest choices and hated the person I had become. Through intensive therapy I had rid myself of the tyrannical Superwoman, but now nothing was left.

**How I missed my pills!** They were my comfort, my security blanket, my confidence, my answer to everything bad life had to offer. In

fact, they were my god.

Even though I knew how they destroyed my life, I still wanted them desperately. Used to being high all the time, I couldn't adjust to the normal feelings of everyday life. I turned the house upside down, searching through closets, drawers, linings of purses, anyplace where I might find some overlooked pills.

How I longed for them! Shiny green capsules filled with magic. What a feeling of power and control I would experience as they slipped down my throat with a sip of water! I would have only a short wait until the miraculous transformation began from the scared, tired, unhappy person I had become into Superwoman. How I missed her. How was I ever going to cope with life now?

My newest therapist tried to reassure me. "Superwoman wasn't the real you," he insisted. "I don't think you have any idea who you are."

Day after day I struggled with mindless, unreasoning fear.

"Is this all that life has to offer?" I asked Brad during one of our weekly therapy sessions. "Am I to be like this for the rest of my life? I don't even ask to be happy. I know that isn't possible. I just want to stop hurting so much. This has been going on too long, and I'm so tired. If this is living, what's the point? Please, please! Somebody help me!"

**Ready to listen.** "You are lost," God pointed out now that I was finally ready to listen. "Somehow we must get together."

"You are right," I sobbed. "I will never know any peace until somehow things are right with You." Where would I start? If I was going to "find God," then to me the logical place to start would be in His house.

Thinking of the local elder who had visited me when I was last in the hospital, I made the decision to join his Bible class. It was in that class through his presentation week after week of Bible truths that spoke of the character of God, and through the discussions that followed, that I discovered the

truth about my heavenly Father. I came to see Him as a wise, loving, trustworthy Father who cared about me in an intimate, personal way.

I began to love and trust God. And after that nothing would ever be the same. My new knowledge of God and of salvation as a free gift, the role of obedience as a fruit of salvation rather than as a means of earning it, made it possible for me to surrender my life to God for the first time. I was born again!

**Being born again** isn't just a nice theological symbolism. It really happens. I know, because it happened to me. In one instant He did what I had been unable to do. I was changed, made brand new.

Forgiveness took away my guilt, peace replaced fear, and depression gave way to indescribable joy. I was set free! God made me into a new person. I had been reunited with my Father at last and born again into His family. Someone special had come into my life and swept away the dark shadows of sin surrounding me and had let in the light. I had an overwhelming awareness of God's love for me. I was filled with joy. A peace that I had never known before took possession of my soul. I was so happy that I was afraid I might explode. It seemed impossible that I could contain the joy.

It was an exciting and emotional moment, but the good feelings were not the experience. Rather the excitement, the peace, and the joy *resulted* from it. It wasn't because of what I felt that I knew I was saved. Instead, I felt the way I did because I *knew* I was saved.

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32), Jesus declared. Knowing the truth about the kind of person God is, I was able to surrender my life to Him. As a result I was set free from my past, my guilt, my fear, and my depression. I was free from the terror of total responsibility for my life. Because I had invited Him in and given Him control, God was in charge now. My future was in safe hands. By giving up so little, I had gained everything. I was free at last! □

# FRANK ANSWERS

**It seems to me that the observance of Saturday is for the Jews. Why do you Adventists (who profess to be Christians) observe the seventh day?**

The Sabbath is rooted in Creation and can never be divorced from it. The record is plain: "And on the *seventh day* God ended his work which he had made; and *he rested* on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And *God blessed* the seventh day, and *sanctified* it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Genesis 2:2, 3). (Italics supplied.)

Here at the close of Creation week—before the existence of a Jew and before the entrance of sin—the Bible describes the Creator's threefold action in regard to the Sabbath: He Himself rested on that day; He blessed it; and He sanctified it, that is, He dedicated, or consecrated it for a holy use. For whom? Jesus explained that point when He was here. "*The sabbath was made for man,*" He declared—made for man's spiritual and physical blessing (Mark 2:27).

When we realize that God created all things through Christ (this is the testimony of the New Testament. See

## Does the Sabbath belong to the Jews?

John 1:1-3, 10, 14; Colossians 1:16, 17; Hebrews 1:1, 2), then we see that the seventh-day Sabbath is in a very real sense the Christian Sabbath—made by Christ Himself for the blessing of mankind and observed by Him also during His life on earth (Luke 4:16).

Moreover, the Lord saw fit to place a precept regarding the Sabbath in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11)—the moral law, which all Christian bodies recognize as obligatory on humankind. These precepts define man's duty to God and to his fellow men and are therefore permanent by their very nature. Again, the fourth precept is stated in such a manner that all can see it is tied in a special way to Creation and the Creator.

The Sabbath lies at the very foundation of human worship of God. The basis for worship is the fact that God is the Creator and we are His creatures. Therefore, we owe Him our love and allegiance. As long as the fact remains that God through Christ made us, so long will the seventh-day Sabbath remain as the memorial of that fact. It continually points us back to our roots—our origins. It reminds us that we are not like some piece of forgotten driftwood, floating around

aimlessly on the restless gray seas of life. But rather, we belong to the family of the heavenly Father, who has a plan and purpose for our lives.

The Sabbath also reminds the believer that it is the Lord who sanctifies him—separates him from sin—saves him from sin (see Ezekiel 20:12). It not only memorializes the believer's rest of grace through the merits of the Saviour, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:9, 10), but it also assures him of God's power to re-create a new life within. Thus the seventh-day Sabbath continually reminds us that we belong to the God who made us through Christ and who has redeemed us through Christ, who made us physically and who remakes us spiritually.

**Does Acts 16:31 teach that if one person in a family of unbelievers is a Christian, then the non-Christians will be saved?**

The passage in question is the response of Paul and Silas to the Philippian jailer's question, "What must I do to be saved?" Their answer was "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house*" (Acts 16:31).

The phrase in italics, "*and thy house,*" is an abbrevi-

ated sentence. It simply means, "and thy house(hold), if they believe, will also be saved." That this is the correct sense of the phrase is evident from the following verse: "And they [Paul and Silas] *spoke* unto him [the jailer] the word of the Lord, *and to all that were in his house*" (verse 32). The jailer and the members of his family believed the gospel message presented by the apostles, for the record reads that he "was baptized, he and all his, straightway" (verse 33).

Although the presence of a Christian in a family of unbelievers does not automatically save any of them, his or her godly life may influence some, if not all, to choose to be Christians. The lot of such an individual may at times be very difficult, but none can deny the tremendous influence of a consistent life lived in Christ.

The thrust of Peter's counsel to Christian wives who carry a burden for their non-Christian husbands and children in religiously divided homes may also be applied to Christian husbands and young people: "You wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior" (1 Peter 3:1, 2, N.A.S.B.).\* The apostle is pointing up the fact that the greatest argument for Christianity is a loving and lovable Christian. □



In this column Pastor Frank B. Holbrook answers questions about spiritual truth, ethical behavior, and Biblical understanding.

Write to him c/o THESE TIMES, 6856 Eastern Avenue NW., Washington, D.C. 20012. Names are confidential. If a personal answer is desired, please send an addressed envelope. Only questions of general interest are published.

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# THESE TIMES

Presenting Jesus Christ  
in all His fullness to all the world.

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and the coming Christ to be our only hope  
as the world nears its cataclysmic end.

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# THIS TIME

"THERE IS practically no scenery on earth which impresses the soul more overwhelmingly with the omnipotence of God than the desert." So wrote Erich W. Bethmann in his book *Bridge to Islam*. "Here nature in its bareness and nakedness shows its primeval grandeur. There is no living creature—no tree, no bush, to arrest the eye. Nothing is here to which the soul can cling for refuge—nothing except a lifeless sea of sand, and dunes, and ranges of eroding rock.

"Here, in this vastness of space, in this extreme solitude, life's most cherished dreams and ambitions suddenly appear trivial and meaningless, and from the depths of the being comes the cry: 'God! God—Almighty, omnipotent God! in Thee alone is life, and Thou alone knowest its meaning!'"

In Samuel Croft's article and photos on page 16 he has tried to capture another side of the desert—its exquisite beauty as it comes to life following the rains of spring. "As I see the changes that occur," he writes, "I am constantly reminded of the restorative power of God's love and the changes it makes in the life of the individual." In "The Desert Shall . . . Blossom as the Rose" Croft expresses some of the sentiments that have prompted him to visit the desert and semidesert areas of southern California on many occasions. Croft shares the beauty of the desert in slide shows to warm and enthusiastic audiences.

No political phenomenon of the past two decades, with the possible exception of the "Wallace Movement," has attracted as much media attention as that now being bestowed on the so-called "New Right." Several books, scores of magazine articles, and countless feature stories in newspapers and magazines all over America examined, attempted to define and assess the significance of this political force in the 1980 presidential campaign. Closely allied with the secular New Right, by virtue of a commonality of political interest, is the so-called "Christian New Right." A dozen or more Protestant ministers who through the medium of television evangelism are national religious figures have recently become political activists.

Norman Gulley in "Wake Up, America!" page 8, calls into question the linkage of powerful religious forces and partisan politics. He joins with other analysts in pointing out that religious liberty is always threatened when religion is made the handmaiden of a particular ideology.

*Kenneth J. Holland*

# Soar like the birds

—but do it right

*Two familiar birds—the sea gull and the Canadian goose—characterize two different approaches that humans often take toward life.*

by Philip Yancey

**S**EA GULLS get a lot of attention. You see posters of them soaring high to blot out the sun, wings flung out in a glistening cross against the sky. After breaking sales records in the seventies as hero of a best-selling novel, Jonathan Livingston Seagull still adorns sweatshirts, notebooks and gold lapel pins.

It's not surprising that people like the sea gull. I've sat overlooking a craggy harbor and watched one. He exults in freedom. He thrusts his wings backward with powerful strokes, climbing higher, higher until he's above all other gulls, then coasts downward in majestic loops and circles. He constantly performs, as if he knows a movie camera is trained on him, recording.

In a flock, though, the sea gull is a different bird. His majesty and dignity melt into a sordid slough of in-fighting and cruelty. Watch that same gull as he dive-bombs into a group of gulls, provoking a flurry of scattered feathers and angry squawks, to steal a tiny morsel of meat. The concepts of sharing and manners do not exist among gulls. They are so fiercely competitive and jealous that if you tie a red ribbon around the leg of one gull, making him stand out, you sentence him to execution. The others in his flock will furiously attack him with claws

and beaks, hammering through feathers and flesh to draw blood.

**The gull** teaches me some things about my life. As a Christian I need to be daring and adventurous, soaring higher and higher, exercising my spiritual muscles for God, taking risks. But that's not enough. If I simply model after the gull, I'll be one more warrior in the competitive scramble to feed my own ego and trounce everyone else's.

And so I turn to another bird: the goose. Geese don't get any high-powered press coverage like sea gulls. They're seen as dull, ordinary birds which attract notice only twice a year during migration. Then you'll hear a faint honking drifting down through the clouds.

I've been to a wildlife refuge in Wisconsin during migration days. Standing on the edges of the swamp is like reliving the paratrooper assault on D-day. Wave after wave of V-shaped strings honk their arrival, circle in preparation, and descend in perfect formation. They kick up an arch of white spray as they touch water and glide out of the landing path.

On certain weekends in October, 150,000 of the giant birds zoom down for a rest stop at this one swamp. Watching them, you almost forget that the V-shapes are composed of individual birds. Like the Blue Angels, they fly wingtip to wingtip. You see blurs of V's because of their perfect unity. Just before they touch down you can hear the beat of their wings whistling through the air in unison—*whoosh, whoosh, whoosh*. None misses a stroke.

**Strength in unity.** And that's the secret of their strength. Some

flocks fly from Hudson Bay to the Midwest at a powerful 70 miles per hour . . . *nonstop!* Think of the stamina that involves. It's possible, though, only because of the V-formation. Together, cooperating as a flock, geese can fly a 71 percent longer range than when a solitary goose tries to make it. The lead goose cuts a swath through the air resistance, which creates a helping uplift for the two birds behind him. In turn, their beating makes it easier on the birds behind them, much like the drag of a race car sucked in behind a lead car.

There is no hero goose who commands the flock and overwhelms all with his strength. Each bird takes his turn at being the leader. The tired ones fan out to the edges of the V for a breather, and the rested ones surge toward the point of the V to drive the flock onward. Scientists even think the incessant honking is a way the stronger ones encourage the lag-gards.

If a goose becomes too exhausted or ill and has to drop out of the flock, he's never abandoned. A strong member of the flock will follow the flailing, weak one to his resting place and wait until he's well enough to fly again.

**The sea gull** teaches me to break loose and fly. But the goose goes farther: he teaches me to fly "in a family." With the support of friends and Christians who care for me, I can far outstrip the aeronautical feats of any sea gull. I can fly farther with the family than I ever could alone. And as I fly, my effort helps each other member of the family.

Also, if I fly in the family, I am not plagued with fears of rejection. I will not be left to plunge from the sky alone, ignored. Another will support me.

Once, Jesus' disciples were arguing like a bunch of squalling sea gulls over which one of them was greatest. Jesus' reply was terse and to the point: "For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great" (Luke 9:48). □

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Photography by Bruce Coleman (**top**), Ralph Blodgett (**bottom**)

# Who cares for me?



**Nobody cares about me. I feel like a tiny, insignificant speck trapped in the turbulence of humanity, tossed back and forth by forces beyond my control.**

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