

# GOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY



(THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD)

## YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

**COMPILED BIBLE QUIZ TEXT  
FOR**

**YOUTH FELLOWSHIP *ASSEMBLY* 2022**

---

# Table of Contents

1. Can the Living Talk With the Dead? .....	1
2. Integrity.....	5
3. Was Jesus the Only Child of Mary?.....	9
4. Did Christ Come for the Jews Only?.....	13
5. The Lord's Supper.....	16
6. Jesus Christ Has Come – But Where is He?.....	21
7. The Purpose of Christ's Second Presence.....	24
8. How Are Saints Made?.....	28
9. Reincarnation and Transmigration.....	31
10. Facts About Covering of Hair in Worship.....	36
11. Birthdays As Seen Through the Holy Bible.....	43
12. The Power of Knowledge.....	48

## 1. CAN THE LIVING TALK WITH THE DEAD?

**OWING to the frail nature of men, which always make them seek supernatural aid, they are easily influenced by beliefs most of which are misguided. One of such beliefs, which the devil has been using to hoodwink or mislead men, is born out of the idea that death is merely a change from a lower to a higher plane of existence.**

The belief that "the human personality continues to exist after death, and that it is possible for living persons to communicate with those who have died", is ancient and very wide-spread. In various parts of the world there are people who claim to have special powers by which they hold intercourse with the dead; they are known as spiritualists. And today, believers in spiritism hold to it as a sort of religion, a science and a philosophy.

It is believed that a spiritualist can be a medium (which means a "go-between") through whom "the souls or spirits of dead persons" can send messages to living persons. Under the heading of SPIRITUALISM, the *Illustrated World Encyclopedia* (volume 18) has this, among other things, to say: "Usually spiritualists assemble in a meeting called a seance. The medium goes into a trance or deep sleep. During this trance, the spirit of the dead person supposedly enters the medium's body and talks to living persons, or gives signs by knocking on tables or in some other way."

### Superstition

Many of the fears to which men have been subjected are either the figments of imagination or the devices of the devil aimed at alienating mankind from the purpose of God. One can but agree to a large extent with David Hume, a British philosopher, in his conclusion that "weakness, fear, melancholy, together with ignorance, are the true sources of Superstition".

Among many African tribes as well as some other nations, it is generally believed that as soon as a person dies he assumes supernatural powers which he can exercise - for good or evil- over the living. Hence there is the threatening statement by some people: "If you don't help me, I'll haunt you after my death."

There are people who worship their dead parents and pray to the dead to bless them with the good things of life even though they know that their parents in their life-time lived in abject poverty.

Some who claim to be Christians share some of these wrong beliefs and practices. When certain Galatians Christians turned to heathenish rites in the days of St. Paul, he warned: "Howbeit then, **when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.** But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, **how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?**" - Galatians 4: 8, 9.

### Dead Fathers

When some people find themselves in certain unfavourable circumstances, they develop a bad state of mind, and **fear even their own shadows.** For this reason they are prone to believe everything which seems to give them temporary relief or false hope and they seek aid from witch doctors, magicians, dead fathers or relations and so forth.

There is a story of someone who was said to have struck a bargain with a spiritualist so that he could talk with his dead father. The spiritualist assured him that it was quite possible and that the venue would be at a burial ground. The man, as the story went, paid a handsome sum of money to the spiritualist. On the appointed day, both of them went to the burial ground where another fake posing to be the "dead father" had earlier gone into hiding. And it was about

midnight. As soon as they arrived at the cemetery and, of course, the spiritualist having recited some incantations, the fake dressed in white flowing robes emerged with a cane. The man was so frightened that he was trembling as the whole thing looked like a nightmare to him. Worse still, his so-called father came close to him and started to administer severe strokes of the cane on him. He screamed and ran away under agonising pain without getting his "father's" advice. The spiritualist blamed the failure of the mission on him for being unable to bear the strokes of the cane which were a prelude to the blessing the "father" would have bestowed upon him.

It is the stupid and simple folks that enrich the purses of quacks. The *Illustrated World Encyclopedia* states: "Many people honestly believe in spiritualism. Unfortunately, there have been many professional magicians and others who use **trickery** to make themselves appear to be mediums." (*Emphasis ours*).

### "Surely Die"

Now, turning to the Holy Bible the belief that "the human personality continues to exist after death" and that there can be communication between the living and the dead, is without foundation; it is devilish, and true Christians discard it.

God commanded Adam in the Garden of Eden that he must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "for in the day that thou eatest thereof **thou shalt surely die.**" (Genesis 2: 17) It is quite clear that to "surely die" means to cease to exist, pure and simple. But Satan, in his characteristic opposition to God, went subtly to Eve, Adam's wife, in the guise of a serpent and deceived her saying: "Ye shall not surely die". This was a blatant lie which gave "the mother of all living" a false hopes and led her to sin.

Concerning the devil, Jesus Christ said: "When he (satan) speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; **for he is a liar, and the father of it.**" (John 8: 44) In his efforts to sustain his lie, the devil whose disposition for deceit had earned him the notorious title of SERPENT, has been influencing the thoughts of men into thinking and believing that when a man dies, he is not completely dead. Also to this end, he with the assistance of the demons has been working in men to invent unfounded dogmas and warped notions about the dead, and to inspire bad dreams, false visions, hallucinations, and such like.

The truth of the Bible is that when a man dies, (the breath of life having left him) he is completely out of existence. He does NOT take any other form or shape nor does he go anywhere to live. He is absolutely unconscious and is turned to nothing: "Vanity of vanities," said the Preacher, "all is vanity." The next stage according to God's promise is RESURRECTION- and then the dead raised shall be judged. Said St. Paul: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." - Hebrews 9: 27.

### Abel

Some people sometimes refer to St. Paul's statement about Abel at Hebrews 11: 4, that "he (Abel) being dead yet speaketh". This does not mean that Abel was talking after his death. Rather the apostle was explaining how by Abel's illustrious example of faith, which made him offer a better sacrifice than Cain, he is being spoken of up till today as a righteous man to teach people about faith in God and the doing of things that are pleasing in His sight. The paraphrased epistles, *LIVING LETTERS*, by Kenneth N. Taylor, renders the text thus: "It was by faith that Abel obeyed God and brought an offering that pleased God more than Cain's offering did. God accepted Abel and proved it by accepting his gift; **and though Abel is long dead, we can still learn from him about trusting God.**"

### Witch of Endor

Another account in the Bible often cited by certain people to show that the living can talk with the dead is the story at I Samuel 28: 3-25, about King Saul and the witch of Endor. At that time, Samuel the prophet was dead and had been buried in Ramah, his own city. And Saul the King drove out of the land all the witches and wizards.

But Saul because of his unfaithfulness, was not in favour with God and the Philistines had marshalled their forces and were set to war against Israel. As Saul saw the host of the enemies, he was troubled in heart for fear. And when he enquired of the Lord there was no answer, "neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets". It was in this desperate state that Saul went to consult a witch. Shame to him! In order that he might not be recognised by the witch who was one of those ousted from Israel, he had to disguise himself by changing his royal robes. He went to the woman in the night - yes, the dark night is most suitable for this sort of dirty, shameful and ungodly business.

Saul requested her to use her witchcraft power to bring up Samuel so that he might consult the dead prophet in regard to the war of the Philistines. When the woman under demoniacal influence divined, Samuel who was purported to have been raised was not seen by Saul. What he did was to ask the witch: "For what sawest thou?". And she answered: **"I saw gods ascending out of the earth."** (Verse 13) The dialogue continued. "And he said unto her, what form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself." (Verse 14)

It does not even require a specialised knowledge of the Bible for any clearheaded person to know from the narrative that the whole affair was under the command of an enemy of God - Satan the devil. In the first place, Saul himself testified, *"God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams."* (Verse 15) And secondly, by going to consult a witch he was contravening the law of God which said: "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God." - Leviticus 19: 31; see also Deuteronomy 18: 9-12.

### Devil's Tricks

Moreover, Saul did not see the so-called Samuel; he merely "PERCEIVED" from the woman's description that it was he. And the witch herself said that she saw "gods". How could Samuel alone turn to be gods? There lies the tricks of the devil, which are frequently manifested in the works of sorcerers and all kinds of demon-possessed characters.

**The fact is that it was not Samuel that came up but demons who put up the appearance of an old man like Samuel. They are also known as "seducing spirits", and it is they that impersonate the dead and make appearances or sounds that are seen or heard by spiritualists.** St. Paul stated that Satan as well as his visible and invisible agents could change himself into an angel of light but that in the end all of them would get every bit of punishment their wicked deeds deserved. -2 Corinthians 11: 13-15; see also 1 Timothy 4: 1; Revelation 16: 13, 14.

Since it was made clear that God had forsaken Saul and refused to answer to his inquiries either "by dreams or by prophets", there is no ground, therefore, to believe that Samuel, a faithful prophet of God who was already dead, could come back to be a party to the sins of the apostate Saul.

By the way, why is it that any communication between the living and the dead is never through any genuine prophet of God but through witches, wizards, occultists and what have you? The plain truth is that the idea or practice did not originate from God. And the Lord warned: "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and mutter: **Should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?** To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word (God's word), it is

because there is no light in them." - Isaiah 8: 19, 20.

### **Christian Hope**

To show that the dead are absolutely unconscious and that they cannot be in communion with the living, the Psalmist declared: **"For in death there is no remembrance of Thee (God): in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?"** "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; **in that very day his thoughts perish.**" - Psalm 6: 5; 146: 3, 4; see also Psalm 30: 9; Isaiah. 38: 18, 19.

What is more, King Solomon stated: "For the living know that they shall die; **but the dead know not anything**, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. **Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished...** Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; **for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.**" - Ecclesiastes 9: 5-6, 10.

**We advise you, dear reader, not to go to those people who are parading themselves as diviners or spiritualists when you are in trouble or in need of anything. Please, turn to God Almighty and pray to Him. If you earnestly pray with faith, and exercise patience, God the Merciful and Gracious Father will certainly grant you the desire of your heart.** (Proverbs 10: 24; Matthew 21: 22; Philippians 4: 6) God Himself said:

*"Look unto me, and be ye saved,  
all the ends of the earth: for  
I am God, and there is none  
else." - Isaiah. 45: 22.*

On the whole, the highlight of the Christian hope about the dead is the consoling, divine promise of resurrection. And until the resurrection takes place the dead must remain silent and unconscious in the grave, and no one living can talk with them. Read Job. 14: 13-15; Psalm 115: 17; John 5: 28, 29.

## 2. INTEGRITY

**WHATEVER the achievements of any man – in scholarship, position or material wealth- he can never command the respect of decent people in society if he has no integrity. According to the Scriptures, integrity is a safe guide to those who have it. A man of integrity is a man of noble character and of an excellent spirit.**

The word *integrity* is defined as meaning uprightness of character-that is, the state of being honest, just, honourable and sincere. Figuratively, it is the controlled realisation of all the component aspects of one's personality.

From the definition given, we can at once understand that it is lack of Integrity that makes men and women commit acts of immorality, dishonesty and such like even though they know that it is evil to do them.

### **Practical Example**

Esau, one of the twin sons of Isaac, is a practical example of a man who has no integrity. He gave himself to carnal things, and for a mess of pottage when he suffered from hunger he sold his birthright to Jacob, his younger brother! (Genesis 25: 29-34) If he were a godly man who had integrity, he would rather have preferred to die of hunger than, for a single meal, to part with his birthright.

Christians are warned against the ungodly conduct of Esau. In his epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul stated: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God...lest there be any fornicator, or **profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.** For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance though he sought it carefully with tears." - Hebrews 12: 14-17.

Today, there are people who behave like Esau. Because they lack integrity they often conduct themselves improperly at social gatherings or on other occasions whenever meals or drinks are served. They look at the dishes or bottles of beer with greedy eyes" and as soon as the table is declared open they eat and drink without any sense of moderation or dignity, and manifest all the traits of a glutton.

But people who have respect for themselves always like to maintain their integrity. They are temperate in all things: in speech they are moderate and in behaviour they show self-control. For all these they are held in high esteem. It is clearly shown in the Scriptures that temperance or moderation is a Christian virtue. St. Paul stated that the fruit of the Spirit is temperance (Galatians 5: 22, 23); and he admonished: "Let your moderation be known unto all men".- Philippians 4: 5.

In a certain town in one of the African States, there was a man who for lack of integrity was made an object of ridicule. He was depraved in character-he sexed lawlessly with young and even old women and seduced ungodly married women from their husbands. He was often penalised and made to pay damages because of his evil deeds. In the long run he died young. However, there was an aspect of his life which needs be pointed out to teach others some lesson. When it became known that the man had no integrity being an immoral character he was always suspected of sinister motives or indecorous manners whenever he was found talking to any woman even if his intentions were good. This man, until his death, was never a happy soul.

### **"Useless Bosses"**

Integrity is a very good thing, and every Christian is required to be honest and upright in the service of God. King David, in his song, prayed to God: "O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in Thee. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on Thee." (Psalm 25: 20, 21) There was need for him to pray for integrity because he knew what he suffered for seducing his neighbour's wife. (2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12).

There are some people who are highly placed in this world but because they have no integrity they are not given their due respect. An executive officer who is often found flirting with his female secretary or typist or known to be making immoral advances to loose women is selling away his honour. Responsible, decent women who work with executive or senior officers of such a character see them as "useless bosses". This same opinion was expressed by a lady secretary as published in the *SPEAR* magazine issue of April, 1969. About "making love in the office", she said: "This is very true. A few girls who are not efficient in their work try to appease their bosses by offering their bodies so that they can still be kept in the office. And once these **useless bosses** get enjoyment and satisfaction there will be no complaint."

There are complaints that certain heads of departments are fond of demanding bribes or "tips" from the workers under them. By their indulgence in bribery such high officers are not only committing sin but are also making themselves very mean.

The Psalmist said in his prayer: "Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide...Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men. In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity, redeem me, and be merciful unto me." - Psalm 26: 1,9-11.

### Uprightness

Despite the shortcomings of David for which he fully repented, God was pleased with him because of the integrity of his heart. To Solomon, the son of David, God said: "And if thou wilt work before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments, then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, there shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel." - 1 Kings 9: 4, 5.

Job was also a man of integrity. Although the devil subjected him to severe temptations he did not deny God neither did he turn away from righteousness; rather "still he holdeth fast his integrity". (Job 2: 3) When his faithless wife became despondent because of the severity of the test, she said to her husband: "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die." But Job's answer reflected faith, manliness and real integrity. He told her bluntly: "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lipss." - Job 2: 9, 10.

What is more, Job himself declared: "All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils; my lips shalt not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. **Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go.**" - Job. 27: 3-6.

Is it not true that certain so-called Christians become lukewarm in their religious devotions when they fall into temptations of the devil? Do some not resort to idolatry when they or their children are sick? And when for some time they get no employment, do they not consult oracle men or occultists contrary to God's laws? (Deuteronomy 18. 10-12, Isaiah. 8:19).

A certain man, because his beautiful wife died, said that there was no God. It was his opinion that God ought not to have allowed his wife to die if He existed. His temptation was not in any way comparable to that of Job but since he had no faith or integrity he fell fiat. Whereas in the case of Job, his faith, integrity and patience brought him abundance of reward. "So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning" (Job. 42: 12-17) And St. James wrote: Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." - James. 5: 10. 11.

We as Christians should always maintain our integrity by doing things in the fear of God and with faith. We must not allow the devil through ungodly friends or relatives to turn us from the



path of rectitude or the faith of Christ. Said God through Solomon: "My son, if sinners, entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause. Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole as those that go down into the pit. We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil. Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse. My son walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path. For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood." - Proverbs. 1: 10-16.

No one can lead a true Christian life without integrity. The Bible says: "The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressor shall destroy them," (Proverbs 11: 3) Again it is written: "The just man walketh in his integrity; his children are blessed after him" – Proverbs 20:7.

A woman of integrity will never because of the love of carnal things like money, gold, silver, clothes, cars, ultra- modern flats and so on, run away from her husband to "marry" another man. It is a foolish and ungodly woman that does so, and God will certainly punish her except she repents enough. What is important in a woman is not wealth, worldly fashion, beauty or her education but the fear of God and integrity which must be reflected in good manners. King Solomon stated: "A gracious woman retaineth honour..." (Proverbs 11; 16) And he further said: "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband; but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones." - Proverbs 12: 4.

### **Clean Hands**

A man or woman who is poor but has integrity is better than a rich man or woman who is of a shady or dubious character. A man may ride in cars or live in a beautiful house and yet will not inspire respect if he has no integrity. Said King Solomon: "**Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.**" - Proverbs 28:6."

To have clean hands and keep a clear conscience is very good indeed. It inspires self-confidence. If you have no guilty conscience, you sleep well and good in the night and will not be haunted by the fear of law officers. Whenever you come across a policeman you will have no cause to fidget or quail in heart. Yes, the Bible says: "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known." - Proverbs 10: 9.

Some highly placed persons are sometime asked to relinquish their offices because of what is often termed an abuse of trust. They usually start well, but later succumb to evil influences owing to their lust for filthy lucre which makes them throw their integrity to the wind, and end up in disgrace. It was Solomon who said: "Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off an evil odour; so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honour." - Ecclesiastes 10: 1. *Revised Standard Version.*

In order that we may be saved, we are required to live up to expectation in the Lord. Anyone who calls himself a Christian but goes about stealing, taking bribes, telling lies, committing fornication or perpetrating any other form of wicked act, is deceiving himself; he will be justly punished and cannot obtain God's salvation. – Proverbs 11:19,21; 2 Corinthians 5: 10; Revelation 21: 8.

As regards the qualities of those who deserve to remain in God's Organisation to enjoy His goodness, the Psalmist stated: "LORD, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury. nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved." - Psalm 15: 1-5.

And what is more, St. Paul said: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." - Philippians 4: 8, 9.

Yes, "The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them." - Proverbs 11: 3.

### 3. WAS JESUS THE ONLY CHILD OF MARY?

**THE plain truth of the Bible, which no one can gainsay, is that Joseph and Mary, after the birth of Jesus Christ, live a normal married life and had other children. But the tendency of the Romish Church to impose superstitious upon its adherents has made many people to be willingly blind to this fact.**

Concerning Mary who was described as a Jewish maiden of the house of David, *The Catholic Encyclopaedic Dictionary* states: "She was betrothed to a carpenter, Joseph...in due course she gave birth at Bethlehem to Jesus, the God-man. Both before and after her miraculous childbearing she was a virgin and so remained all her days, *according to the unanimous and perpetual tradition and teaching of the Church*". - Page 310, italics ours.

Note that the belief of the perpetual virginity of Mary is NOT founded on the Scriptures but on "tradition and teaching of the Church". Not the Church in the Apostles' days but the Church at the time of Constantine the Emperor of Rome. We shall expound more on this point as we go along.

One of the well-known authorities of Roman Catholicism was James Cardinal Gibbons, the Archbishop of Baltimore. In defence of the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary, he wrote in his book *The Faith Of Our Fathers*, thus: "The Church teaches us that she was always a Virgin - a Virgin before her espousal, during her married life and after her spouse's death...That she remained a Virgin till after the birth of Jesus is expressly stated in the Gospel. (Matthew 1: 25) It is not less certain that she continued in the same state during the remainder of her days; for in the Apostles' and the Nicene Creed she is called a Virgin, and that epithet cannot be restricted to the time of our Saviour's birth. It must be referred to her whole life, inasmuch as both creeds were compiled long after she had passed away..." (Page 138).

From the works of Cardinal Gibbons no one could doubt his brilliance in scholarship but the moment one sets about to defend the indefensible - especially as opposed to the troth of God's word - one cannot escape from running into absurdities. The cardinal knew very well that the so-called Apostles' Creed was a formula of profession of faith which came into existence long after the death of all the early apostles of Jesus Christ.

The Roman Catholic Church has admitted that the "Apostles' Creed" was based on tradition and that "it was drawn up after the death of the Apostles' and assumed its present form in the 5th century". (Vide the *Catholic Voice* of June 1955, page 280) Since they knew that it was not the work of the Apostles, why did they entitle it *Apostles' Creed*?

The Nicene Creed was drawn up at the first council of Nicaea convened by the Emperor Constantine with the sanction of Pope Silvester I, in 325 A.D. That council which sought to blend pagan superstitions with the Christian truth was mostly responsible for the obnoxious errors which have led Christendom astray. Neither the "Apostles' Creed" nor the Nicene Creed is authoritative. *The Catholic Encyclopaedic Dictionary* has this to say: "**No one of the so-called 'historic creeds of Christendom' is a complete and final statement of the Christian faith nor was such, nor intended to be such, even at the time of its first drawing-up.**" (page 138)

So, for Cardinal Gibbons to rest his assumptions of the perpetual virginity of Mary on those invented creeds in the way he did is, unfortunately, delusive.

#### **The Truth**

The truth is that Mary was a virgin until she gave birth to Jesus Christ. This was so in order to fulfil the prophecy which God caused Isaiah to utter to the effect that a virgin would conceive and bear a son whose name would be Immanuel. - Isaiah. 7: 14; cp Matthew 1: 23.

After Mary had been espoused to Joseph she became pregnant while she was still a virgin. But Joseph suspected her of immoral behaviour and so, being a man of stern principle, he decided to divorce her but in a quiet manner so as not to disgrace her publicly. While he thought

over this issue, an angel of God appeared to him in a dream, saying: "**Joseph**, thou son of David, fear **not to** take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost (Spirit). And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name **JESUS**: for he shall save his people from their sins." – Matthew 1: 18-21.

Joseph received the Lord's revelation in good faith. Therefore, in obedience to the angel's counsel, he shelved his decision and retained Mary as his legal wife. But the point is that, because of his fear of God, he had no sexual dealing with her until she had given birth to Jesus Christ. As it is written: "Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name **JESUS**." - Matthew 1: 24, 25.

**In the first place**, if God had ordained that Mary should remain a virgin forever Joseph would not have been permitted to marry her. What the angel told Joseph is quite clear: "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife." It is unreasonable to imagine that Mary was merely a "traditional" wife who had not the experience of conjugal relationship with her husband.

**Secondly**, the Gospel account shows vividly that Joseph had carnal relationship with Mary but after the birth of Christ. St. Matthew's record states that Joseph "took unto him his wife: **AND KNEW HER NOT (that is he had no sexual knowledge of her) TILL she had brought forth her firstborn son.**" (Matthew 1: 24, 25) *The New English Bible* tenders the text thus: "He (Joseph) took Mary home to **be** his wife, but had no intercourse with her until her son (Jesus) was born." This in truth means that after the birth of Mary's firstborn son (Jesus) Joseph had carnal knowledge of her. And he was perfectly in order; he did not violate the instruction of God, rather he complied with the divine mandate.

If Joseph had no sexual dealing with Mary at all there would have been no need to limit the period of time he had no sexual knowledge of her with the clause "till she brought forth her firstborn son".

**And thirdly**, if Jesus Christ was the only son of Mary, it would have been unnecessary to refer to him as "her first born Son". *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines "firstborn" as the "eldest child". This, precisely, is the understanding given in the Holy Bible. We talk of an eldest child where there are other children. Hence in the ordinances in regard to the consecration of the firstborn God said to the Jews: "The firstborn of thy **SONS** shalt thou give unto me." - Exodus 22: 29.

Indeed, there is abundance of evidence in the Scriptures to show that Mary had other children after the birth of Jesus Christ-her firstborn son-and the names of some of them were even specifically mentioned. When Jesus began his ministry, there was an occasion he went to his home town with his disciples and entered the synagogue on a sabbath day to teach. Those who heard him were amazed at his wisdom and his miracles. Considering that he was just a local man like themselves, they were moved to ask: "From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty work are wrought by his hands? **Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?** And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." - Mark 6: 1-4. See also Matthew 13: 54,57.

Some people say that the brothers and sisters referred to were the cousins of Jesus Christ. This view is scripturally unsustainable. Since the words "son" and "mother" in the passages (Matthew 13: 55) were used in their natural and primary sense, it will be wrong to guess that the words "brother" and "sister" in the context have meanings different from their natural sense. If they were cousins the Bible would have so stated as it does in the case of Mary and Elizabeth. When the angel of God appeared to Mary, he said: "And, behold, thy **COUSIN** Elisabeth, she hath also conceived **a son in her old age...**" (Luke 1: 36) And when Elisabeth had given birth to

her son (John) the record says: "And her neighbours and **her cousins** heard how the **Lord** had **shewed** great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her." - Luke 1: 58.

James and John, the apostles, were also brothers in the flesh. As to how they were called by Jesus Christ it is written: "And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them." (Matthew 4: 21) They were also of the same mother as shown in Matthew 20: 20-23. From this account we can very well understand the sort of relationship or brotherhood meant in reference to the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.

### **Blood Relations**

Another opinion of those who are trying desperately to maintain that Mary is a virgin forever, is that the brethren of Jesus Christ mentioned in the passages of the Gospels were his disciples. This view is also erroneous. Those brethren of Jesus Christ were his blood relations-brothers in flesh. In the days of Christ on earth they were mostly found in company with Mary. On one occasion when Jesus was addressing a crowd, his mother and brothers came and stood outside, wanting to talk with him. Someone told him: "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee." He knew that some of his brothers in the flesh did not believe in him and he was displeased with Mary for showing such disregard for his ministry by coming to interrupt his address. So, he turned to the man who brought the message and said: "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." - Matthew 12: 46-50.

This text clearly shows the distinction between the disciples of Christ and his fleshly brothers. The fact that he pointed to his disciples explains that his brethren who were outside the crowd were not among his disciples. In John 2: 12, it is written: "After this he (Jesus) went down to Capernaum, *he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples...*" Here again his brethren were distinguished from his disciple. This further confirms that the brethren of Jesus were his blood relations and not his disciples.

What is more, it is categorically stated in the Scriptures that the brethren of Jesus Christ under discussion did not believe in him; and so the point of their being his disciples does not arise in that his disciples were his followers and believers. In John 7: 2-5, it is written: "Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest...**For neither did his brethren believe in him.**"

*Well, if the brethren were his disciples they would not have told him to go to Judaea so that his disciples might see his works. This shows that they themselves were not his disciples.* If any doubt about this still remains it must be dispelled outright by verse 5 of the text which reads: "**FOR NEITHER DID HIS BRETHREN BELIEVE IN HIM.**" How could the brethren be his disciples and yet not believe in him? They were not; rather they were his brothers in the flesh born by Mary.

### **Superstitions**

Some people even worship Mary today just because she gave birth to Jesus Christ and they go as far as to saying that she was born without sin! We agree that Mary was a godly woman though she had her faults having been born in sin like David her sire and other human beings. (Psalm 51: 5; Romans 5: 12) She became the mother of Jesus as a matter of favour or grace from God. She too realised and confessed it. (Luke 1: 30,31, 38, 46-49) She therefore deserved **ONLY** the honour that was due to her but today certain religious people give her the glory and honour she did not deserve, and have associated her with gross superstitions!

Apart from the doctrine of "Mary's perpetual virginity", there are other obnoxious teachings about her such as the "Mother of God", "Immaculate Conception" and the "Assumption" which have no foundation in the Holy Scriptures. Alphonsus De' Linguori described Mary in his book, *The Glories of Mary*, at the "Mother of Almighty God"! And in an address to Mary, Anselm was quoted as saying: "O Lady, whatever all the Saints united with Thee, can obtain, Thou canst obtain alone... Thou art the Spouse of God; Thou art omnipotent Queen of Heaven and earth." Again he said: "Our Lord, O most holy Virgin, has exalted Thee to such a degree that by His favour all things that are possible to Him are possible to Thee." - *The Glories Of Mary*, Vol. I, pages 89, 122 & 127.

This means that Mary is of equal status with the Lord. But God Almighty used St. Paul to say that of all things created, whether visible or invisible, Jesus Christ has "the preeminence." - Colossians 1: 12-19.

The danger in preaching false doctrines is explained in St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians. Said he: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed..." - Galatians 1: 8, 9; see also I Timothy 1: 3, 4; Ephesians 4: 14.

There is need to point out these things so that those who love truth and righteousness may not believe in lies which lead to destruction. (Isaiah. 9: 16; Matthew 15:12-14) we have many friends who ask us questions about doctrines such as this under discussion but as the truth must not be violated or adulterated (1 John 2:21) we have taken pains to bring out the facts about Jesus' fleshly brothers and Mary's virginity. Since the Bible says Mary gave birth to children after Jesus and does NOT say that Mary remained a virgin all her life, it is wrong and ungodly for anyone to mislead the people in the name of Christianity. "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully...saith the Lord."

## 4. DID CHRIST COME FOR THE JEWS ONLY?

**HAD God Almighty purposed that the mission of Jesus Christ should be limited to the Jewish nation, Christianity, which he (Christ) founded, would not have attained with an immeasurable success its universal scope. For the salvation of mankind Jesus Christ was sent to the world. It is a denial of the divine grace of salvation, therefore, for any nation to repudiate Christianity or regard it as a foreign religion.**

In those days, especially before Nigeria's independence, certain nationalists were fond of treating Christianity with disdain and branding it as a foreign religion. It was their opinion that Christianity was of no benefit to Africans and that it was meant for the Jews-and the Jews alone! All this they did in order to achieve their political ends.

Since after Independence, we have observed that a crop of people of that school of thought are still in the country but their activities have dwindled considerably. In an article captioned "Religious Independence", which was published in the *West African Pilot* of Tuesday, July 2, 1963, the writer described Christianity as "an imported religion" and went on to advocate the cause of what he called the "Godian Church of Africa". While he expressed hate for Christianity, he urged that the "Godian Church" needed the support, encouragement and sympathy of all true Nigerians, "so that it should be extended to all nooks and corners of this Federation, nay throughout the whole length and breadth of Africa and the GLOBE".

The pity of it is that some people for lack of spiritual wisdom or the sense of judgment give credit to such extreme opinions. Let us take it for granted that such a wishful thinking becomes a reality and "Godianism" spreads to all corners of the globe, would the "Godian Church", which is a religion of Nigeria (so to speak) not **be an imported religion** in other parts of the globe? On this consideration there will be no sense therefore in spreading "Godianism" to other parts of the world.

We know that those "nationalists" who make noise of the "Godian Church" have no genuine love or desire to worship God neither do they even understand the essence of a true and undefiled religion. And so they should not be taken seriously.

### Muslims' View

Another point of view we will now consider is that of our Muslim neighbours who also hold the notion that Christianity is not for the whole world but that it is a religion of the Jews only. In support of their argument they often refer to the words of Jesus Christ to his apostles when he said: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," This text is at Matthew chapter 10, verses 5 and 6.

In defence of the Muslims' view, Alhaji Y. P. O. Shodeinde, Chief Imam of Lagos, made the following point: "Jesus Christ, after whose title the religion (Christianity) was called, claimed to be saviour only of the Israelites, and not of any other nation or race, 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel,' says he (Matthew 15: 24). When a neighbour Canaanite woman approached him begging for his ministration his reply was: 'It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs.' (Matthew 15: 26)" This was contained in Alhaji Shodeinde's article captioned "Are Christian beliefs tenable?" published in the *Daily Times*, January 24, 1958, page 5.

However, the Chief Imam lost sight of the significant fact that when the Canaanite woman showed a high degree of faith in her intelligent answer, Christ granted her request. As it is written: "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." (Matthew 15: 28.) This shows that Christ did not mean that non-Jews would not be blessed with his grace or that he was never for them.

We have no doubt in our minds that the argument of our Muslim friends is based on misconceptions. If they have a clear understanding of the Holy Scriptures as to put the mission of Jesus Christ, whom they believe to be a prophet of God, in its true perspective, they will not for any reason narrow the scope of Christianity to the boundaries of the Jewish nation.

### **All Nations**

The Jews are the descendants of Abraham who was a faithful worshipper of Jehovah, the Almighty God. They were organised into a nation and God dealt with them as His chosen people in accordance with His covenant with Abraham. The Most High gave them laws to direct them in all their affairs. Moses exhorted them concerning the laws, and said: "Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." - Deuteronomy 4: 6.

Truly, in fulfillment of prophecies, Jesus Christ was born a Jew, from the tribe of Judah. It was the will of the Almighty God that he (Jesus) should begin his mission on earth at Jerusalem among his kith and kin-the Jews-before the work would in due course extend to other nations. Jesus Christ had the understanding of this purpose of his Father and he worked fully in keeping with it. He himself said: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." - John 6: 38.

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ he appeared to his apostles and opened their hearts to understand the Scriptures. He told them: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name **among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem**. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until, ye be endued with power from on high." - Luke 24: 46-49.

The point that is pertinent to our argument is struck by verse 47 of the text which states that it was ordained "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his (Christ's) name among ALL NATIONS" (not only the Jewish nation) but "BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM". This parallels precisely with the saying of Sir Thomas Browne (1606-1682) that "charity begins at home".

So when Jesus Christ said that he was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and commanded his disciples not to go to the Gentiles but to the lost sheep of Israel, he knew that the time had not come for the work to cut across to the gentile nations. With God "there is a season to everything, and a time to every purpose". - Ecclesiastes 3: 1.

Even though Jesus Christ had previously charged his disciples not to go to any city of the Samaritans, he, before his ascension, later indicated that when the apostles should have been endued with power from above, they would carry his message of salvation to Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Here is the Bible's account: "When they (the apostles) therefore were come together, they asked of him (Christ) saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, it is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. **But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, AND UNTO THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH.**" - Acts 1: 6-8.

What is more, Christ commanded the apostles: "Go ye therefore, and teach ALL NATIONS, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world. Amen."- Matthew 28. 19, 20.

In the light of the foregoing, it is very wrong for anyone to say that Jesus Christ came for the Jews only.



### Light of Gentiles

Long before the first advent of Christ, he had been referred to in prophecy as "a light of the Gentiles". (Isaiah. 42: 6) And really when he was born and was later brought to the temple, Simeon who was a just and devout worshipper of God was moved by the Spirit of the Lord to say that Jesus Christ was "a light to lighten the Gentiles". - Luke 2: 25-32.

The *Acts of the Apostles* is replete with fascinating accounts of how the apostles of Christ, after they had received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, worked hard among the Gentiles, many of whom were converted to the Christian faith. The missionary journeys of St. Paul took him to many Gentile countries where he expounded the gospel of Christ in earnest and with vigour. In fact, he stated that he was a teacher of the Gentiles. Said he: "Where unto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not:) **a teacher of the Gentiles** in faith and verity." -1 Timothy 2: 7; see also Romans 11: 13.

At Antioch, the Gentiles, in the days of St. Paul, showed greater enthusiasm and willingness to hear the gospel than the Jews. When the Jews saw that crowds gathered to hear Paul and Barnabas they were stirred by envy to argue against the truth of Christ's gospel. "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, **I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.** And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." - Acts 13: 46-48.

It is not stated that Jesus Christ is a light for the salvation of the Jews only but of the Gentiles as well. In fact, he himself said: "**I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.**" - John 8: 12.

From the Scriptural facts lucidly explained in this *Sermon*, we can see that it is very wrong for certain Africans to renounce Christianity just because some foreign missionaries misused its name to gain political objectives. The faults of any reason or group of persons who may identify themselves as a "church" cannot affect the TRUTH, the sanctity, the saving power or the universality of Christianity. Europe or America cannot for, any reason claim Christ more than Africa. Even Palestine or Israel has no exclusive claim to him. It was Africa that gave Jesus Christ asylum or refuge when Herod wanted him killed. - Matthew 2: 1-15.

The divine truth is that God Almighty ordained Jesus Christ that he should be "for salvation unto the ends of the earth". Therefore, any person in any part of the world, irrespective of colour or race, who believes in Jesus Christ and does the will of God, will be saved. And it is written: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world: but that the WORLD through him might be saved." - John 3: 16. 17.

## 5. THE LORD'S SUPPER

**IN a brief ceremony Jesus Christ, on the eve of his crucifixion, entertained his apostles exclusively to a special meal of bread and wine with thanksgiving as a memorial of himself. This meal was historic and peculiarly great because of its spiritual significance. St. Paul termed it "The Lord's Supper"**

A thorough examination of what is now obtaining in the "Christian" world as compared with the rule and example of the Scripture, reveals that some churches have deviated from what the Initiator of "The Lord's Supper" did, and taught. In this issue of *The Weekly Sermon*, we are going to take a critical view of certain wrong teachings and practices. The Bible provides for criticism and there are striking precedents. Jesus Christ himself criticised the Pharisees for their wrong doctrines and hypocrisy. (Matthew 15: 1-20; 23: 23-33). And true Christians follow his example.

We must first of all go back to the origin of the Lord's Supper. It was instituted by Jesus Christ himself at the time he and the twelve apostles sat together to eat the Passover lamb in the evening of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. St. Matthew states as follows: **"And as they were eating. Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."**- Matthew 26: 26-28; see also Mark 14: 16-25; Luke 22: 14-20.

Today, the Lord's Supper is commonly known among those professing Christianity as the Holy Communion, the Sacrament of the Eucharist, Memorial Supper or the Lord's Evening Meal. But as regards its true meaning, and as to how, when or to whom it should be administered there are disagreements among the various church denominations.

In his book *The Teaching and Practice of the Church of Rome in India*, Rev. W. P. Hares, C.M.S. Missionary, Gojra, Panjab, wrote: "We, who are members of the Church of England or of its daughter Church...are also members of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church founded by Jesus Christ and His Apostles, and as such we celebrate the Holy Communion according to the custom of the Primitive Church...Romanists also claim to be members of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, and they celebrate the Holy Communion, which they more commonly describe as the Mass, after the Roman custom; but when we compare their service of the Mass with our service of Holy Communion a very big difference appears both in doctrine and in practice." (Page 243)

### Catholic Church

Now, it will be of interest to know what the Roman Catholic Church teaches about the Lord's Supper. Defining "The Sacrament of the Eucharist", *A Catholic Dictionary* has this to say: "A sacrament of the New Law in which, under the appearances of bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ are truly, really and substantially present, as the grace-producing food of our souls... The Holy Eucharist is the *living* Christ; as a living body is not without its blood, or living blood without a body so Christ is received whole and entire under either form of bread or wine... The special sacramental effect is the spiritual nutrition of our souls analogous to the effect of food in our bodies." (page 177).

The mode by which "the wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the Body of Christ and of the whole substance of the wine into the Blood" is, according to the Council of Trent, known as "transubstantiation". (Sess. xiii, can. 2) Father Makair in his *True Christian* states: "The Priests of the Catholic Church CHANGE the bread into the body of our Lord, and the wine into His blood." (Page 72)

No one to our knowledge, has made a stronger case in defence of the Roman Catholic faith about the "Holy Eucharist" than the two well-known Catholic scholars -James Cardinal Gibbons in his *The Faith of our Fathers*, and John A. O'Brien. Ph.D. LL.D., in his *The Faith of Millions*. Cardinal Gibbons opens the chapter on "The Holy Eucharist" with this statement: "AMONG the various dogmas of the Catholic Church there is none, which rests on stronger Scriptural authority than the doctrine of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist."

But if it is proved from the Scripture which Catholics now admit is the decider of, and guide to Christian arguments on doctrine and practice-that the Catholic teaching on this issue is wrong, then it will not be difficult to see, accept, and follow the TRUTH.

The arguments of Cardinal Gibbons and John O'Brien are similarly based on the same text with reference to the words of Christ in John chapter six. Jesus Christ said: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." The Jews who did not understand the spiritual import of his words disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Then Jesus told them more emphatically: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye, eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." - Read John 6: 48-54.

John O'Brien argued that the words of Christ in the text just quoted were not figurative but literal and that the Jews understood them to be so. He added: "That they understood Jesus to speak literally is unmistakably evident from their immediate response." (*The Faith of Millions*, page 257.) And Cardinal Gibbons stated: "But the best and the most reliable interpreters of our Saviour's words are certainly the multitude and the disciples who are listening to Him. They all understood the import of His language precisely as it is explained by the Catholic Church. They believed that our Lord spoke literally of His body and blood." (*The Faith of our Father.*" page 237.)

### Spiritual Things

To say that the unbelieving Jews and faithless disciples whose lack of spiritual understanding was not in doubt, are "the best and the most reliable interpreters of our Saviour's words", is very unfortunate. In this the Roman Catholic Church, we say with humility and sincerity, has gone astray. We agree that "the multitude" and those disciples who withdrew from following Jesus took his words as literal hence they were confused. Many of the disciples said: "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" (*verse 60*).

Jesus Christ, having known that many of his disciples took his words to be literal and so nursed some grudge for him, asked them, "Doth this offend you?" (*verse 61*) He was aware that those disciples were already carried away by their fleshly thoughts and could not therefore understand spiritual things. (Romans 8: 5, 6; 1 Corinthians 2:14) Then he said: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: **the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.**" (*verse 63*) This particular verse (which in the *Douay Version* is verse 64) explains the core of the whole matter to the effect that the words of Christ were not literal but spiritual, metaphorical or figurative. Thus the entire structure of the Roman Catholic teaching on this subject is demolished.

The words bread, meat, milk, wine and water are sometimes used in the Bible figuratively to mean the word of God or good doctrine. (Isaiah.55: 1-3; Ephesians 5: 26; Hebrews 5: 12-14) When Christ warned his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, they mistakenly thought that he meant the ordinary or literal bread; but when he explained further, "then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees". - Matthew 16: 6-12.

To eat the flesh of a man literally is cannibalism or to drink any kind of blood, even the blood of beasts, is a sin. And Christians are warned to "abstain from meats offered to idols, and **from blood**". (Acts 15: 28, 29; see also Leviticus 17: 10, 14.) How could Christ in violation of the strict law of God have asked his disciples to eat his real flesh or drink his blood literally. It is unthinkable.

Jesus Christ did not say or mean that the bread was his real and substantial living body or that the wine was his actual blood. Rather he pointed out that the wine was the "FRUIT OF THE VINE." {Matthew 26: 29} The teaching of the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine has no support of the Scriptures; it is a fiction and must be rejected as such.

**The truth is that the bread and wine were emblems or representations of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.**

Dr. Moffatt's Translation of the Bible renders Matthew 26: 26-28, thus: "Take and eat this, it MEANS MY BODY... Drink of it, all of you; this MEANS MY BLOOD..." This is explicit. The bread and wine are not his very body and blood.

In the Roman Catholic Church the practice is that they give only the bread to the communicants while the priests alone drink the wine. They teach that "Christ is contained whole and entire under each species". But Jesus Christ who is the author of the Supper separated the bread from the wine. And he gave both the bread and wine SEPARATELY to the apostles. (Matthew 26: 26-29) This is clear enough. The Roman Catholic Church is therefore wrong in their method of observing the Lord's Supper. "Transubstantiation" is nothing but superstition. Christ did not change the bread and wine into his flesh and blood and he never vested the power to do so on anyone. The apostles did nothing to change the example and pattern of Christ's institution.

### **Remembrance**

The practice of certain churches in giving the bread and wine to everyone of their adherents is unscriptural. Their explanation that the "Holy Communion" is a "nutritious food to the soul" and an "antidote for sin" has no basis in the Bible; it is a lie. It is plainly shown in the Scriptures that the purpose of the Supper was to commemorate the death of Christ until his second presence. Said St. Paul: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." -I Corinthians 11: 23-26.

It is noteworthy that when Christ instituted the Supper it was ONLY the apostles he made to partake of it. If he had intended it as food for the saving of souls or remedy for sins, he would have given it to all his disciples-both men and women. But he did not. Not even the 70 disciples of Christ who were next to the apostles in maturity took it.

The fact is that Christ intended the observance of the Supper only for the Anointed Christians who are of the class of the apostles. They are men who devote their lives wholly by giving up their secular work to the preaching of the gospel and in that they proclaim the Lord's death. Anyone who is not of this class of consecrated Christians, the Saints, ought not to partake of the Supper because it is a damnable sin to do so. In the Bible no woman or child ever took it. There Were many faithful women disciples of Jesus and children followers or admirers in his days but NONE of them partook of the bread-and-wine spiritual feast-NOT EVEN MARY HIS MOTHER. Why? It is because it is meant for the SAINTS, the ANOINTED Christians only, who are members of his body (cabinet). The danger in taking the Supper unworthily is shown in

St. Paul's epistle to the Corinthians. As it is written: "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (die)." -1 Corinthians 11: 27-30.

Those who, like the disorderly Corinthian Christians, think that the Lord's Supper is daily food which they must always feed on, should take warning and cease from gluttony over this matter which is purely spiritual. St. Paul cautioned: "And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation." - 1 Corinthians 11:34.

There is a lot of abuse with regard to the Lord's Supper among professed Christians. In the Anglican Church, Tiverton, England, a 76 year-old widow shared her holy communion of bread and wine with her terrier dog! The report states: "Mrs. Florence Fox said she had given little 'Pip,' a piece of the bread and lick of wine every Sunday for two years at the communion rail." (*Daily Times*, Nov. 22, 1966, back page.)

Moreover, the observance of the Lord's Supper was not meant to take place daily or weekly or monthly as many church denominations, Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches alike, are doing. It was a commemoration of the death of Christ (1 Corinthians 11: 23-26) which should be done but ONCE a year.

There is a point which we have always called people's attention to but which many, too, have lost sight of, and that is the fact that the Lord's Supper was not instituted to be celebrated for eternity but for a limited period of time. St. Paul said: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death **till he come.**" (1 Corinthians 11: 26).

This shows that its observance would cease at the appearing or second presence of Christ.

### Watchtower

The Watchtower Society whose members call themselves "Jehovah's Witnesses" is aware of this fact. But because of their inconsistency, though they believe that Christ has come in spirit, they continue to celebrate the Lord's Supper up till now.

Recently a crazy man even celebrated it with them by actually eating the bread but not drinking the wine in their hall in Warri. This, obviously, is a case of desecration. They may say that the responsibility is upon the madman but why should the Watchtower men have allowed it if carelessness or over-zealousness had not overshadowed their sense of propriety?

In their book *Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God*, they wrote: Since the antitypical Passover Lamb Jesus Christ died on Nisan 14 in the year 33 C.E. well over nineteen hundred anniversary dates have presented themselves. However, the annual celebration of the Lord's evening meal is not to continue on endlessly as long as this earth endures. The apostle Paul said that by this observance the true Christians would proclaim the Lord's death only until he arrives. (1 Corinthians 11: 26) Of course, at the time that he arrives and is present, there is no need to hold an observance 'in remembrance of him, for he is no longer departed and absent, but he is returned and is in company with his disciples." (Pages 134-135).

But the Society says that physical facts - already seen may be taken "as competent and reliable evidence establishing the fact that Christ Jesus came to his temple in the spring of the year 1918." (*The Harp of God*, page 247) If Christ arrived since 1918, why do the Watchtower witnesses continue to celebrate the Lord's Supper till now? Is this not a glaring instance of inconsistency and contradiction on their part? There is need, therefore, for people to be critical

and to be wary in accepting the doctrines of religious groups because of the spiritual dangers involved in swallowing falsehoods. In this matter of the Lord's Supper, many people have been led into errors by their religious leaders (Isaiah. 9: 16) owing to their ignorance of the Scriptures. However, there is still room for them to repent and follow the truth, which Jesus says would make the believers free. And we are praying for them.

## 6. JESUS CHRIST HAS COME – BUT WHERE IS HE?

**OUR Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has already fulfilled his glorious promise to come again. Indeed he has returned! But the pity of it is that the majority of those who profess the Christian Faith do not know this revelation of great importance in our age. Therefore, they continue to wait, expecting to see him in the sky coming down some day, while the signs of his presence are in fact staring everyone in the face.**

The second coming of Jesus Christ is one of the fundamental truths contained in the Holy Bible. He himself stated positively during his first advent on earth that he would come again. He said to the apostles: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." – John 14:1-3.

The apostles were greatly inspired by the Lord's promise. Their hearts were filled with joy, their hopes were heightened and their faith in him was implicit. As a matter of fact, the second appearing of Christ was the pivotal point of doctrine in the teachings of the apostles, and they were unremitting in their efforts to propagate it.

St. Paul wrote to exhort Timothy as to the great gain in godliness. He charged him to fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life. He added: "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Timothy 6:14) In his second epistle to Timothy he stated: that Jesus Christ would judge the living and the dead at his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:1) And giving instructions to Titus, he stated among other things: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." – Titus 2:13.

James the apostles as well exhorted the Christians of time to be patient until the coming of Christ "for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James 5:7,8) And St. Peter also wrote about his appearing. – 1 Peter 1:7.

What is more, Jesus Christ in the conclusion of his revelation to John the apostle in the Island of Patmos confirmed his promise when he said: "Surely I come quickly." And John did answer: "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." – Revelation 22:20.

From the foregoing, there can be no question as to the certainty of his coming again. But the issues on which opinions and interpretations of people are widely different are (1) how will he come? (2) will he be visible to all persons? (3) when will he return? (4) has he come? and (5) the purpose of his second coming.

### How He Comes

In the book *GOD'S ANSWERS TO MAN'S QUESTIONS* the authors, W. E. Straw, J. C. Rogers and D. E. Robinson expressed the view of the SeventhDay Adventists and some other Church groups in the form of questions and answers as follows:

Question: "What is the purpose of His second coming?"

Answer: "'That where I am, there ye may be also.' Verse 3, last part.

Question: "Will our Lord return in the form of a person, or only like a spirit?"

Answer: "Christ was the 'Son of man' while on this earth, as also He was the 'Son of God.' He was a real man with flesh and bones even after His resurrection. 'Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself...for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.' Luke 24:39.

Question: "How many will see His return?"

Answer: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.' Revelation 1:7." (Pages 83-4)

Thomas Williams, founder of "The Christadelphian Advocate" stated in his work *The World Redemption* that "when we say Christ's return, we mean His return in a real, tangible, personal sense, with no mystic or so-called spiritual meaning attached". (page 144).

In *the Plain Truth* magazine of Herbert W. Armstrong (August, 1962) it was published: "The visible bodily return of Jesus Christ is not a mere theological 'idea'. It is a fact soon to be revealed – an absolute NECESSITY for a world on the verge of *human annihilation*."

It is a pity that the belief in the visible bodily return of Jesus Christ, which is held by majority of professed Christians, is based on nothing but misconceptions. This is not a highly spiritual nature and Christ had said that except the people were spiritually vigilant, understanding what the will of the Lord is, they would not know of his presence.

Without fear of criticism and without mincing words we must say that Jesus Christ would never appear

in the flesh or in a tangible bodily form as to be seen by man on earth any longer. This is the truth of the Holy Bible, and any view to the contrary is erroneous.

As to how Christ would come some clergymen, theologians and evangelists often made reference to the words of the two angels who appeared at the time of his ascension. Here is the record: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. – Acts 1:9-11.

There is nothing in the utterance of the angels that gives the understanding that Jesus would come again in the flesh or in a bodily form. What they said is that he "shall so come **in like manner** and not NOT "he shall so come in like form or shape or appearance". And what was the manner in which he went up to heaven? It was quiet, it was without any fanfare, and it was unnoticed by the world. Those who saw him ascending were his 11 apostles whom he had just addressed. – Acts 1:1-13.

So what we should understand from the statement of the angels is that the second coming of Jesus Christ would similarly be quiet and would not be marked by a flourish of trumpets nor would he be visible to the world. It was for this reason Christ said he would come as a thief in the night and that those who did not watch would not know when he would come. But those who watch by studying the Scriptures prayerfully and diligently to understand prophecies and the signs of the times, said he, are blessed. – Revelation 3:3; 16:15.

If it were true that Jesus Christ would come in a fleshly body for THE WORLD or all men to see, there would have been no need for his disciples to ask for the signs of his presence as recorded in Matthew chapter 24, verse 3, or for anyone to watch. Christ told his apostles: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John 14:19,22) The apostles would see him because they in their resurrection at the second coming of Christ would be changed to spirits to be like our Lord. On this score, John the apostle, speaking on behalf of himself and others of his class, stated: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2 see also 1 Corinthians 15:50-52) The apostle did not say world would see Christ; rather he said, "WE shall see him." This point is clear enough.

Jesus Christ came to this world during his first advent as a human being, having flesh, blood and bones, and having been made lower than angels in order to taste death for humankind, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil". (Hebrew 2:9:14) He died in the flesh but was raised from the dead a Spirit which enabled him to preach to the disobedient spirits or angels who had been imprisoned by God since the days of Noah. (1 Peter 3:18-20) St. Peter further stated that the resurrected Christ "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." (Verse 22) **That the glorified Lord would lower himself again to take human nature of flesh and blood is unthinkable because it has no basis in the Scripture.**

St. Paul categorically stated that Christ would not come again in the flesh. Said he: "Wherefore, henceforth we know no man according to the flesh. **And if we have known Christ according to the flesh; but now we know him so no longer.**" – 2 Corinthians 5:16, Douay Version.

It is because Jesus would never appear again in the flesh among men that he warned his disciples: **"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not."** – Matthew 24:23-26.

If Christ would come down and make Jerusalem in Palestine his seat as Herbert Armstrong and some others are teaching, why was Jesus so blunt in his warning, "Then if ANY man shall say unto you, lo, here is Christ, or there (Jerusalem inclusive); BELIEVE IT NOT"?

Now let us turn to some of the texts on which those who are hoping to see Christ face to face in the flesh base belief. First is St. Matthew's cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." - Matthew 24:27.

This text is no authority that Christ would come in a visible bodily form. Certainly not. Rather it explains the fact that at the second presence of Jesus Christ who is the light of the world (John 8:12) men would be spiritually enlightened as to have the accurate knowledge of God that would make them know of Christ's return. But this knowledge would not cover the whole world instantly but by gradual process just "as the lightening (or sun) cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west". In the long run the



whole world would know of his presence through the preaching of the saving gospel and by reason of the works he would do among men through his faithful worshippers, especially his anointed servants.

Another text some people often cite is that at Revelation 1:7, to wit: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

Many people lay emphasis on the clause "every eye shall see him" and give it a literal interpretation. It is wrong to interpret the text literally. When it is stated that "every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him" are we to understand that those who literally pierced him during his crucifixion would still be living at the time of his second coming as to see him face to face again?

The clouds shows spiritually that he would be invisible. For instance on the occasion of his ascension it was a cloud that that received him out of the sight of the apostles. (Acts 1:9) The eyes that would see him are not ordinary eyes but figurative ones which St. Paul also termed "eyes of your understanding" (Eph. 1: 17-19) The world see also means understand, discern or learn by search or inquiry or reflection. Therefore the expression, "every eyes shall see him" means in a plain language that everyone would discern or understand that Christ has come through the gospel or by reason of the events that would symbolize all opposers of truth and righteousness who are persecuting the work of Christ or those preaching his truth in these last days. It is all such ones Jesus Christ would make to wait when he shall execute vengeance upon them.-2 These. 1:7; 2:8-12.

### **Signs of His Presence**

The next issue to be tackled is whether Christ has come or not. From the fulfillment of Bible prophecies, there is no doubt that Jesus Christ has come. The Holy Bible plainly shows that he promised to return in the last days of this evil world in which we are now living.

In Matthew 24:3, it is written: "And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" in his answer he first warned them against false prophets who would be many and went on to tell them of wars and rumours of wars which would precede the end of the world. But as regards the signs of his coming, he declared: "" For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."

This prophecy of Jesus Christ began fulfillment when nations of men were engulfed in a global battle-World War 1. This was followed by a wide-spread epidemic-the Spanish Influenza- and famines and earthquakes in different parts of the world. These signs already seen are conclusive proof of the second presence of Jesus Christ.

The moment anybody interprets these signs and other to be those that should precede the coming of Christ, he steps into error. Ellen G. White in his book *the Great controversy*, stated that the signs of the coming of Christ "Were witnessed before the opening of the nineteenth century" and dated the occurrence of the first signs back to "the year 1755". (page 348) Up till today some Christians are saying that Christ is coming and that his arrival is near.

## 7. THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S SECOND PRESENCE

**THE restoration of all things in accordance with the divine purpose to the pleasure of the Almighty Father forms the very central part of the second coming (arrival or presence) of Jesus Christ. This task of vital importance with which he has been entrusted would certainly occasion the doing of a lot of things not only those that would give everlasting joy to the faithful but also those that would bring tribulation and anguish to all evil-doers.**

In the last week's issue of *The Weekly Sermon* it was made abundantly clear that Jesus Christ would never appear physically or in the flesh for all men to see any more; and it was proved beyond every shadow of doubt that he has already come but in spirit in fulfillment of his promise. As a matter of fact, the purpose of his second coming does not at all call for his taking again a human nature of flesh and blood.

The reason why Christ came into this sinful world in a human body or was made flesh during his first advent was made quite clear by St. Paul in this vein: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (Christ) also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Hebrews 2: 14, 15) Jesus did shed his blood to redeem mankind only but once. As it is written: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE for all. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." - Hebrews 10: 10-13.

That the age of the second presence of Jesus Christ is the most significant in all periods of the history of the world is an indisputable fact. It is the time when Christ whom the Father has commanded to rule in the midst of his enemies would fulfill age-long promises.

### Times of Restitution

Addressing the men of Israel in the apostolic age, St. Peter said: "But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, *he hath so fulfilled*. Repent ye therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began ...Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." -Acts 3:18-24.

The apostle's description of the period of Christ's presence as the "times of refreshing" or "times of restitution of all things" explains the purpose of his second coming. It is to restore all things to perfection according to the will of God Almighty. And this work of restoration is bound up with other important duties such as the gathering of his sheep-thus setting up God's Kingdom, judgment of the living and the dead, the glorification of the Church, the reward of the Saints, the resurrection of the dead, the destruction of all the forces of unrighteousness and the deliverance of God's people. These were the things the holy men of old saw with eyes of faith and which the early disciples of Christ were given to understand that aroused enthusiasm in them and made them look to or earnestly hope for the return of the Lord.

In Matthew 16:27, it is written: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." The first class of people to receive their reward are the saints who constitute the "Little Flock" or "Church of the Firstborn" who are all anointed. (Luke 12: 32; Hebrews 12: 22, 23.) The twelve apostles were the foundation members of these anointed ones. To them Christ said: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." - John 14: 1-3.

It is a revealed truth of the Bible that Jesus Christ has already come to raise the dead saints-the dead anointed ones of the Christian era - and to choose from different parts of the world through his angels the remnant of the saints or anointed Christians to preach the gospel of his kingdom to all nations. - Matthew 24: 14,31; Acts 15: 6-17.

The Bible shows clearly that while the resurrected saints are changed to spirits to meet Christ in heaven those living on earth (the remnant) will continue to champion the cause of truth and righteousness until they will in due course be changed as well to meet him above. To men-especially the carnal ones-these things are mysterious and "unbelievable" but they have been revealed through the Holy Spirit to those who serve God with faith, understanding and humility. And St. Paul said: "Behold, I shew you a

mystery; we shall not all sleep (or die), but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (the anointed ones) shall be changed." (1 Corinthians 15: 51,52) And concerning this wonderful event scheduled to take place at Christ's return, the apostle Paul further wrote: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." - 1 Thessalonians 4: 16, 17.

St. Paul was fully equipped with the knowledge that they (the saints) would receive their reward at the second presence of the Lord. And so he wrote to Timothy when he had accomplished his mission: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." - 2 Timothy 4: 7, 8.

The establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth is one of the important things Christ has come to do. This is also shown in the second epistle of St. Paul to Timothy. He wrote: "And so I solemnly urge you before God and before Christ Jesus-who will someday judge the living and the dead **when he appears to set up his Kingdom.**" - 2 Timothy 4: 1. *LIVING LETTERS.*

Jesus Christ likened the kingdom to a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. Although it is the least of all seeds, it grew to be the greatest among herbs and became a tree with branches where birds took shelter. (Matthew 13: 31, 32) These things are happening in our time but many people have not the spiritual understanding to know of them. However, in order that men may have the opportunity to know of the establishment of his kingdom Christ gave this instruction. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations: and then shall the end come." - Matthew 24: 14.

### Judgment

Another work that Jesus Christ has come to do and which is now in progress is that of judgment by which he is separating the sheep from the goats. He said: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." - Matthew 25: 31-33.

Some people think that Christ would come down in the flesh to sit at Jerusalem where the whole world would appear before him and everyone would then give account of himself. This is a wrong idea. Today, Jesus Christ is sitting upon the throne of his glory in heaven and the entire world is before him. The process of his judgment is unlike what obtains in the law courts of the world. He is judging the people by the truth-God's word-as contained in the Holy Bible which his servants are preaching or publishing in obedience to his command. Jesus himself said: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." - John 12: 48.

Whoever receives the gospel with joy, believes it firmly and joins others to serve God in the true Church organisation where the truth of God's word is preached unadulteratedly marks himself as a sheep. But anyone who rejects and opposes the truth wittingly and remains outside God's organisation is a goat spiritually who does not deserve the favour and salvation of God.

Christ added: "Then shall the King say unto them (the sheep) on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." (Matthew 25: 34- 36) The sheep who, by reason of their faithful service, are the righteous would reply: "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them. Verily I say unto you, **inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.**" (Verses 37-40)

The very opposite of this experience of the sheep would be the case of the goats who are the wicked. They would also enquire as to when they saw Christ and did not minister to or help him. And they would be told by the Lord: "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Verses 41-56)

Can anybody show from the Bible that Christ during his second coming (presence) would be hungry, thirsty or be a stranger as to be fed, or given water to drink, or received by people? Would he be naked, or sick (like sinners) or be imprisoned as to be clothed, or visited by anybody?

Jesus Christ knew that he would never appear in the flesh among men any longer but would have

representatives or ambassadors who are his servants that would carry his message to the people of the world. Any good turn done to such ones is done to Christ who has chosen them as his ministers. Similarly, whoever derides, opposes or persecutes them is kicking against Christ. We can better appreciate this if we take our minds back to what Jesus told his apostles and the 70 disciples: "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth Him that sent me." "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that dispiseth me despiseth Him that sent me." - Matthew 10: 40-42; Luke 10: 16; see also 1 Thessalonians 4: 8.

We have heard and read so many speculations by professed Christians about the second coming of Jesus Christ. Richard W. De Haan of U S.A. wrote in his *Radio Bible.. Class Newsletter* dated January 1970: "The one thing that would surely make 1970 the best year ever is the coming of the Lord! It could well be that this is THE year. We cannot know for certain. We don't believe in setting dates, but wise is that one who is ready and waiting and watching at all times!"

His own statement shows that he is a confused man. If they "cannot know for certain" and if they don't believe in setting dates why has he set 1970 as the year of our Lord's return?

Rev. Billy Graham, in his booklet, *The Second Coming a Glorious Truth*, wrote: "Jeremiah says that at the Lord's coming Jerusalem will be made the throne of His glory and nations shall be gathered in representation-that a disarmament conference will be held not in Washington, London or Paris, but in Jerusalem."

Although the reverend gentleman did not cite the chapter and verse in which such a prophecy is contained, we are not in doubt that his interpretation is wrong because it runs counter to the revealed truth. The Jerusalem that comes into focus in relation to the second coming of Jesus Christ is not the literal city of Jerusalem in Palestine which today is in the throes of war but the "New Jerusalem" from above which symbolically means God's Kingdom from heaven now established on the earth. - Galatians 4: 26; 2 Peter 3: 13; Revelation 21: 1-3.

### Vengeance

Furthermore, Jesus Christ, it is clear in the Scripture, has come to take vengeance upon the wicked and to rid the earth of all unrighteousness before he begins his reign for a thousand years. After Christ had put the parable of the wheat and tares, he declared: "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity...So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the Just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13: 40- 42, 49-50) The fire here is not literal but a symbol of trouble and bitter suffering of the wicked on this earth before they would be perpetually destroyed. - Romans 2: 5 6,8-9; 1 Corinthians 3: 13-15.

St. Paul disclosed that Satan the devil will be crushed. (Romans 16: 20) And he stated in his second epistle to the Thessalonians thus: "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." - 2 Thessalonians 1: 6-10; see also chapter 2, verses 8 and 9 and Revelation 20: 1- 3.

The great tribulation and battle of the great day of God Almighty will climax the events that are taking place in this age of Christ's presence. Despite the fierceness and horrors of that impending trouble, Jesus Christ who is Michael the archangel will give deliverance to the faithful the favoured ones or sheep of God. Concerning this Daniel prophesied: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book, And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever," - Daniel 12: 1-3.

The battle under reference is not a world war where human weapons are used but it is a war between Jesus Christ, the Commander-in-Chief of Jehovah's army, and Satan, the prince of the demons and his cohorts. And Jesus said: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." - Matthew 24: 21.

Whatever efforts the devil may make to drift men from the truth and righteousness of God, it is vividly shown in the Bible that a great multitude of the sheep of God will survive the trouble, and be granted

salvation by Jesus Christ as to enter the Third World - the World Without End. - Revelation 7: 9-17; Isaiah 45: 17, 18.

From all that has been explained both in the last issue of *The Weekly Sermon* and in this, we can see that the importance of the second coming of Jesus Christ cannot be over stated. In all sincerity of purpose, we have shown how he comes-not with fleshly body visible to men but in spirit; we have marshalled scriptural facts to establish conclusively that our Lord has returned; and we have left no ground uncovered as to make every honest mind understand and appreciate the purpose of his second presence.

It is honourable to accept the truth. For anyone to doubt the truth of Christ's second presence in spite of the signs of the times, which are very easily seen, is unrealistic and unsafe. In fact, in a prophetic statement St. Peter pointed out that such would be the attitude of people in these last days who, being willingly ignorant of the wonderful works of God, mock at religion and live self-indulgent lives. He stated: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." -2 Peter 3: 3, 4.

We need not wait to see Jesus Christ in person before accepting the truth of his presence. It is dangerous to take such an erroneous stand. Christ has come in spirit and he is forever a Spirit. Said St. Paul: "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." - 2 Corinthians 3: 17.

May God open the hearts of men who seek after truth to understand His word! Amen.

# GOD'S KINGDOM ADVOCATE

"SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS..."—MATT. 6: 33.

## 8. HOW ARE SAINTS MADE?

**THERE are honours that no man can arrogate to himself or can give to another but which the Almighty God alone gives. And such is the honour to be a saint. But the age-long tendency of some in Christendom to impose their own dogmas and traditions upon their adherents in complete disregard of the tenets of Christianity as enunciated in the Scriptures, has in most cases been the cause of misunderstanding.**

When we make reference to the first president of God's Kingdom Society, the late Gideon M. Urhobo, as a saint some people look at us with frowns of disapproval and some others express great surprise. We have always been confronted with questions such as (1) who made G. M. Urhobo a saint? (2) when was he canonized? And (3) where was he canonized? Some of our Roman Catholic friends have put it straight to us that it is only the Pope who can declare a person a saint.

It is gratifying to note that such questions have every so often provoked frank religious discussions through which many people have emerged from behind the cloud of ignorance to the glorious light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The issue as to how saints are made or how they can be identified cannot be resolved unless we go straight to the Holy Bible, which all Christians accept as their guide-book and authority. The Christian policy is that ANY teaching or practice, which is not in conformity with the Scriptures, must be rejected. And so St. Paul stated: "But through we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed..."—Gal. 1:8, 9.

With a dispassionate mind, we have carefully considered the claims of the Roman Catholic Church in regard to canonization as well as the system whereby certain persons had been beatified and made saints, and have come to the conclusion that the claims are scripturally unsustainable.

### Canonization

Writing on "How saints Are Made" in a Roman Catholic magazine, The Gold Coast CATHOLIC VOICE, JULY 1954, Msgr. Joseph J. Sullivan stated that any catholic may petition a Bishop to begin the cause of a person whom he considers fit for canonization and the Bishop may begin the informative process.

According to the Monsignor, when the various parts of the informative process are completed a notarized copy is sent to the sacred Congregation of Rites in Rome for scrutiny. "It is the Pope who finally decides whether the cause should proceed or not."

With regard to the scrutinizing of the informative process report, Msgr. Sullivan wrote: "First the Congregation examines whether the process was carried out properly; then it studies the results of the investigation. In each case an official of the Congregation, call the Promoter General of the Faith, acts as the 'Devil's Advocate' and opposes the continuance of the cause from every possible viewpoint. His objections are carefully weighed and considered by the congregation."

The Monsignor added: "According to the law, formal investigation into the practice of heroic virtue by a person is not permitted until 50years after his death..."

It is when the Pope is satisfied at the end of the various ceremonies that he, at the third request of the postulator of the cause, declares, " 'In honour of the Holy Trinity, for the glory of the Catholic faith and the progress of the Christian religion, in virtue of the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Holy Apostle Peter and Paul, and of his own plenary and proper authority,' that the servant of God in question

shall be inscribed on the register of the saints ('Canon Sanctorum')..." (*Addis & Arnold's Catholic Dictionary*, page 112).

*The Catholic Voice* (Jan. 1956) stated positively: "Only the Pope can speak the words that declare a person a saint." (Back page).

We wish to recall here that Catholics agree that "the whole Bible is the word of God" and "it is a Catholic teaching that there is no error in the Bible". And concerning the Bible a Catholic newspaper, the *INDEPENDENT* (Oct. 16-22, 1966) has this to say: "Not only must Priests find in the Bible the source of their sacred learning, nourishment for their interior life and substance for the instruction of their people, but the people, too, should be encouraged and helped to read the sacred scriptures for themselves."

Well, can anybody cite the Sacred Scriptures to show that saints are ordained in the way the Roman Catholic church is doing? Who acted as the "devil's advocate" when Peter, Paul or any other apostle was made a saint? From whom did that tedious process of canonization, with all the formalities and ceremonies originate? Was it from Christ or Peter or Paul?

Moreover, where in the Bible is it stated that a person must die before he is made a saint? Or that it should be 50 years after a person's death before he is declared a saint? Did Peter or Paul or any other apostle canonize anybody at all? What is the name of that person who was canonized? And where in the Bible is the record?

### Holy Person

A Saint is a holy or sanctified person. One who has received the anointing of the Holy Spirit and is therefore set aside by God through Jesus Christ for holy uses. The early apostles of Jesus Christ stand out as practical examples.

Many people are ignorant of the fact that the fold of God's sheep under the shepherding of Jesus Christ is composed mainly of two categories or classes of Christians: the **Little Flock** and the **Other sheep** (Luke 12: 32; John 10: 16). The Little Flock is made up of the apostles who having been anointed must devote their lives exclusively to the services of God. All other believers who are not anointed, no matter how high the degree of their knowledge of the Scripture, like Timothy and Titus, are the **Other sheep**.

Jesus Christ himself made this clear distinction when he specially chose twelve out of the multitude of his followers and called them APOSTLES (Mark 3: 13-19; Luke 6: 12-16). At that stage the ordination of the apostles was not yet complete in that they had not been anointed with the Holy spirit. However, Jesus Christ gave them a promise to the effect that "the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost (Spirit), whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things". (John 14: 26; Act 1: 8). This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles. (Acts 2: 1-4). But before then Judas Iscariot who proved unworthy of the grace of God, being the son of perdition, had fallen and killed himself and his office had been given to Matthias—Acts 1: 15-26.

The twelve apostles were the foundation members of those that made up the Little Flock but later on others like Stephen, Paul, Cornelius and so on were chosen. And though Cornelius was a gentile God showed that he had been sanctified having received His grace. For concerning him the angel of God said to St. Peter: "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."—Act 10: 15.

St. Paul introducing himself in his epistle to the Roman Christians stated: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christians **called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God**" (Rom. 1: 1). And he further stated: "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He call, them He also justified: and whom he justified, them He also glorified."—Rom. 8: 29-30.

It is such ones like St. Paul who are anointed, set apart or chosen by God Himself through Jesus Christ for the ministry of the Gospel, and who are the firstborn among Christians, that are the saints. St. Paul referred to that group of Christians as the "Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven". —Heb. 12: 22, 23.

And God said: "**Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.**" (Ps. 50: 5). It is as a result of that covenant by sacrifice that they are prepared to undergo any form of persecution the devil may devise and even die for the sake of the Gospel. But Christ said: "...Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—Rev. 2: 10.

What is obtaining in the Catholic Church is quite the opposite of the scriptural facts herein brought to light. People whose professions had nothing to do with the Gospel have been canonized or made saints. *A Catholic Dictionary* (formerly "*The Catholic Encyclopedic Dictionary*") has this to say: "The canonized saints form a microcosm of the Church; among them are to be found representatives of all forms of human life, activity and temperament...Nor are their activities and greatness directed in strictly

religious channels only; besides so many priests and monks and nuns the Church has canonized emperors and kings and queens, soldiers, artisans, domestic-servants. Beggars, housemaids, lawyers, merchants, society dames, farmers and their labourers, artists, physicians, a retired hangman—sanctity is an order of which all are eligible.” (Page 444)

Roman Catholic authorities do admit that there had been abuses in their system of canonization. Despite the fact that some of the defects were said to have been remedied by the tenth century when Ulrich, Bishop of Augsburg, was canonized, the Addis & Arnold’s Catholic dictionary stated: “Still, however, through the inordinate fondness with which those of a particular country or religious order regarded holy persons of their own blood or profession, instances of abusive cultus sometimes occurred.”—(Page 110).

We have made it clear that saints are not made by man. They are called to be saints by God through Jesus Christ, and they are devoted entirely to His service preaching the gospel of His Kingdom. It is their duty to pronounce God’s judgment written in the Bible to warn men against sin. As it is written: “Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all His saints...” (Ps. 149: 5-9) And St. Paul stated: “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?...” (1 Cor. 6: 2, 3). This duty of judgment they discharge through the preaching of the gospel of Christ.—John 12: 48.

It is quite clear from all this that saints are not ordained after death. And St. Paul writing to the Corinthian believers generally, the saints inclusive, stated: “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, call to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord... Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 1: 2,3). The saints among them were living Christians and St. Paul could not have sent greetings with the wishes of grace and peace to dead people.

The saints are also priests and kings. (Rev. 1: 6). They are taught by God in spirit and need not attend seminaries or colleges for academic qualifications. And St. John wrote: “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”—John 2: 27.

And so the principal mark by which a saint can be identified is the TRUTH of God’s word which he must preach unmixed with lies. For “no lie is of the truth” said John the apostle. (1 John 2: 21). There are other marks such as visions and persecutions for the sake of the Gospel but these can sometimes be seen in counterfeit prophets, so much that they can hardly be distinguished from the saints by those without spiritual understanding. But false prophets can never preach the truth without adulteration!

If beggars, domestic servants, housemaids, labourers and a hangman can be saints, why should it be a sin for Gideon M. Urhobo to be a saint? Is it because he is a Blackman, an African, a Nigerian or an Urhobo man? But God does not discriminate against any one because of his colour, race or tribe. --Act 10: 34-35.

The works of the late G. M. Urhobo show clearly that he was chosen to be a saint, Apart from other spiritual aspects of his life he preached the TRUTH fearlessly, uncompromisingly and unadulteratedly. And Jesus Christ said: “By their fruits ye shall know them.”—Matt. 7: 20.

The Saints are comparatively few. “Many are called but few are chosen”, said Jesus Christ. To be among the anointed few who are the saints or priests is a great honour. And St. Paul declared: “And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”—Heb. 5: 4.



# GOD'S KINGDOM ADVOCATE

"SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS..."—MATT. 6: 33.

---

## 9. REINCARNATION AND TRANSMIGRATION

**AMONG** the factors that have given rise to the doctrine of reincarnation and transmigration, ignorance and superstition preponderate over all others. The belief that a person who dies is born again on earth or that there is a soul in man that enters, after death, into another human or animal body is without scriptural foundation. It is deeply rooted in heathenish; and no true Christians do not believe in it.

*Reincarnation* is describe as a religious belief and is defined in the *Odhams Dictionary of the English Language* as "the return of the soul to earth after death, in a fresh bodily form". From all data available there is no doubt that the belief is very ancient and it is shared by peoples of various creeds, tribes and nationalities in all the world.

"Transmigration of the soul" or "metempsychosis" is said to be the belief that after the body dies, the soul passes into some other material form or body—whether human or animal, plant or inanimate matter and so on. According to The American Educator Encyclopedia, "transmigration involves belief in the pre-existence as well as the survival of the soul after death; it is the conviction that the soul is not only indestructible but uncreated—*eternal* in the strictest sense. The doctrine appears in many religions, among them the Hinbu and the ancient Egyptian, and it was hel by many Greek and Roman philosophers, notably Plato..."—Vol.14, page T-154.

It can be noted that while transmigration is said to mean the rebirth of a "soul" at death in another body, whether human or animal or plant or so, reincarnation usually means rebirth in a body of the same species.

Concerning reincarnation, E. Royston Pike stated: "The belief that when we die we are reborn on earth in another human body. Very often it is regarded as another name for Transmigration but this, strictly speaking, teaches that the reappearance on earth may be in non human (plant or animal) form equally with human. The Greek term for very much the same idea is Metempsychosis."-*encyclopedia of Religion and Religions*, page 319.

### Spiritual Ignorance

On the subject "Reincarnation, otherwise Transmigration or Metempsychosis" the *Chamber's Encyclopedia* has this to say among other things: "The primitive conception of the separable soul capable of passing out of the body, assuming as independent existence of its own and taking up its abode in some other human being animal or inanimate object, finds expression in the idea of metempsychosis and transmigration which in the philosophical thought of Greece and India gathered a moral content as an explanation of the inequalities of life... At death the soul passes into an insect or some other animal or vegetable species; and not infrequently it is reborn with in the same family or clan in human form, an occurrence which is thought to account for the resemblances between persons of different generations. By some what similar reasoning the Australian natives explain why strangers be come fast friends almost at first sight, alleging that the parties must have been comrades in a previous existence.

"In Madagascar there appear to have been many tribes of whom their neighbours asserted that they were transformed at death into animals..."

"The Zulu, like many other peoples, believe that their dead pass, according to their rank, into various kinds of serpents or lizards; but other Bantu-speaking peoples hold that their chiefs, or even the common herd, pass into lions and other animals; some Zambezi tribes say that a man can choose his own soul-animal by swallowing the maggots from the putrefying flesh of his chosen species.

"The following account of Ewe beliefs, itself only a sample of West African creeds. Is but a survey of some features of the reincarnation complex. The Ewe say that a man had two souls, one of which goes into the grave and thence to the land of the dead, which is a duplicate of this world: a man who has been a great king there will die soon after birth here, so that he may return to the scene of his former glories;

and an aged man in this world may fall ill because his associates in Amedzowe, impatient at his long absence, are preparing to break down his hut there; his relatives in Amedzowe send him to this world...

"The deep-rooted confusion disclosed by this summary is parallel among the Edo of Benin, though the aspect of the creed differs widely; among them the genius is double and some say that the one in elimi (heaven) comes to earth when the one on earth leave the corpse of a dead man." – Vol. 11, page 572-573.

This encyclopedia also touches on the ideas of Greece, India, Australasia and Europe, and they all reveal how man because of spiritual ignorance is capable of making himself a slave of his own imaginations and inventions.

Among several tribes in this country the belief is rife. Such children who are believed to have been born again in a new body are mostly identified by some kind of names with superstitious intention. In their infancy they are deemed not to deserve as much tender care as others, and their mothers prefer to use rags or sack-clothes for them.

### **Yoruba Conception**

Dr. J. O. Lucas, writing on "The Yoruba Conception of Man", stated among other things: "The fact that children are born who show physical characteristics possessed by their parents to such an extent as to suggest that they are re-incarnations of their parents or ancestors leads to the idea that the second individuality is a double entity, a part of which may be incarnated in a new-born child. Whilst the other part contains the existence of the man as an individual."—*The Religion of the Yorubas*, page 245.

In the view of Mr. Justice Adewale Thompson "it is impracticable to expect any better standard of proof other than circumstantial evidence" as regards reincarnation. He stated in his book, *The Invisible World*, thus: "Since I am not yet dead and since I do not propose to do so for a considerable time I think it will not be fair to expect me to give an account of a former life.

"It is safe to assume that we are now prepared to accept the view that man is made up of body, soul and spirit and that the spirit is part of the universal spirit which pervades the whole of creation."

Justice Adewale Thompson explained that the two schools of thought on reincarnation are "The Extinctionist School" and "The Survival School"; and "judging by the results of modern experiments," according to him, "the latter school is more acceptable".

He stated: "THE SURVIVAL SCHOOL... argues that since the process of procreation continues, it is only logical to expect that the universal spirit which is being replenished by additional spirit essence on the death of a person, is also committed to surrender a corresponding side of its illimitable substance, at any time a new life is born, otherwise our public registers will be filled with records of deaths, and no births; maternity hospitals will be closed down and cemeteries constructed in stead."—page 52.

None of the authors quoted in the foregoing claimed to be inspired by the Father of Jesus Christ—Jehovah or Yahweh whichever you accept.

That the devil has capacity beyond human measure in making men take the shadow for the substance or believe what in fact does not exist, no one can gainsay. The Holy Bible does not in any way give credit to the doctrine of reincarnation or transmigration.

There is no time in all of history that reincarnation transmigration was connected with the true worshippers of God—whether before Christ or after him. The belief in either of them is known to have existed in ancient times only among the Greeks, Egyptians and some other non-Jewish nation who were not of the true supreme religion. And no Jew who was not an apostate would ever cherish the illusion that a dead person could be reborn on earth.

But today many people who claim to be Christians have expressed their belief in reincarnation. It is not because they find a passage in the Holy Bible that gives such an idea but because they have a tendency of swallowing or accepting what they will without recourse to the Book of books, which is the guide to true Christians in all matters of faith.

### **Living Soul**

The whole foundation of the belief or teaching concerning reincarnation or transmigration is, according to the Scriptures, without substance. To think of the soul as a "living entity" or "being" in man that after death, is able to live on its own or enter another body to continue existence is very wrong. This notion, which has been instilled in the minds of men at the instance of Satan the devil, has developed into lots of imaginary beliefs and dogmas both among professed Christians and other religionists.

As regards the creation of man the Bible states: "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Gen 2:7) The **living soul** or person is made up of the body from the dust of the ground and breath of life or spirit. The spirit is the air or breath men take in through the nostrils. What makes this particular air different is that it has the power of existence or life.

When the breath of life or spirit goes out of man or animal, the organs of the body cease to function and that means death. The Psalmist declared: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. **His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth;** in that very day his thoughts perish."—Ps. 146:3, 4.

It is the same breath that operates in animals. And King Solomon, moved by the holy spirit of God, stated: "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts: even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, **they have all one breath;** so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."—Eccl. 3: 19, 20.

God has made the air or breath available to all creatures that come into being in any part of the world; and it is inexhaustible. There is no particular kind of breath or spirit for every individual person or animal. And the air in the whole world is under the control of God. So when a man dies his breath of spirit returns to God in the sense that it is deposited in the air. As it is written: "if He (God) were to turn His thoughts inwards and recall His life-giving spirit, all that lives would perish on the instant, and man return again to dust." (Job 34: 14< 15; *N.E.B.*) "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit (Breath of life) shall return unto God who gave it."—Eccl. 12: 7.

All stories that have been weaved around the word *soul* as an "immaterial being" that passes, after death, into another human body or into animal or plant, or goes to heaven to enjoy bliss or into "hell-fire" for punishment and so on, are a web of lies. They are just human imaginations, and the devil has always endeavoured to create circumstances to make them appear as though they are realities. And so when Justice Adewale Thompson stated with reference to reincarnation that "it is impracticable to expect any better standard of proof other than circumstantial evidence" he was being honest.

The view that the soul is uncreated and indestructible or immortal is unscriptural. God Who is the Creator of all souls said: "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die..."—Ezek. 18:4, 20.

St. Peter, having pointed to Jesus Christ as the prophet and Messiah spoken of by Moses, added: "And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet (Jesus), shall be destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3:23). It is abundantly clear from these indisputable scriptural authorities that the soul is destructible or mortal.

True Christians do not believe in transmigration. The idea of a human "soul" taking abode in plants and even in inanimate objects is not from God but from Satan.

With regard to the creation of plants, it is written: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so ..." (Gen. 1: 11, 12) God never said that the "soul" of persons should find abode in plants.

Moreover, the belief that a person who dies can be born again on earth is untrue. It is a fact that the process of Procreation continues but to think that it is the "spirit" of the dead that makes the birth of new lives possible is very wrong. The process of procreation is the fulfillment of the Divine mandate – "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth". (Gen. 1: 28) If it is those who die that are born again, how then came about the birth of Cain and Abel when nobody had died after Adam and Eve were created? And if the dead pass into serpents, lizards and other animals and so on, where then did the "souls" of the countless number of people who died in the Great Deluge in the days of Noah find shelter when both men and beasts were destroyed?

### Evil Spirits

Any person who purports to have experienced the sensation of regaining the memories of a past life must either be a victim of evil spirits or must have been in the flight of fancy. There is the saying that by the power of fancy one may create an unreal world. The story of the so-called pre-existence of human beings is a creation of the brain; it is not true.

It must be admitted that certain children had been born who had the very physical characteristics or features of some members of their families who had died. There is a story of a certain woman whose male child died having his face scarred by small-pox. Later on the woman became pregnant and she gave birth to another baby-boy on whose face were certain marks similar to those of the child who died. It was widely believed within the area of the incident that it was the dead child that was born again.

It is possible to cite other instances similar to this just mentioned, yet the truth remains that no human being is born twice or more on earth. Two things are mainly responsible for the incidents of new-born babies having features or marks identical with those of their deceased relatives, friends and so forth. They are either the hand-works of the devil or the outcome of the law of reflection.

The devil, as a spirit creature who since his rebellion has been misusing the wide power given him by God before his fall, can interfere with children in the womb in various ways> He had caused some to be born blind or to cripples from birth. And some of such deformed ones were miraculously healed by Jesus

Christ and his apostles in their day as a manifestation of God's supreme power —John 9: 1-3; Acts 3: 1-10.

Moreover, the devil too can create and his children always bear his vicious characteristics. They are extra-ordinarily obstinate, troublesome and ungodly inclined. The Psalmist said: "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born. Speaking lies.) (Ps. 58: 3) And Jesus Christ parabolically referred to the devil's children as tares that would be destroyed by God—Matt. 13: 38-40.

### **Law of Reflection**

On the other hand through the law of reflection a pregnant woman who is fond of cuddling or playing with a monkey may give birth to a child having the looks of a monkey. Similarly, a pregnant woman who has a devoted love for her husband or who is ever pre-occupied with admiration for her husband's features, may bear a child who resembles her husband.

There is a striking instance of the law of reflection in the Bible. This happened when Jacob still managed the flocks of Laban after he had made up his mind to quit his services so as to provide for his family. In answer to Laban's question as to what he wanted, Jacob said he would still serve him if her (Jacob) would be permitted to pick out "all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats" as his wages.

Having received the consent of Laban that everyone that was spotted among the goats and brown among the sheep was his, he (Jacob) adopted a strategy whereby he increased his own flocks. As it is written: "And Jacob took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chesnut tree; and pilled white strokes in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods. And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink. And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted."—Read Gen. 30: 37-43.

### **Resurrection**

**In all the wonderful revelations of God through the ancient prophets, Jesus Christ and his apostles, as contained in the Holy Bible, no indication is given that a person can be born twice or more. Rather what is made known is the doctrine of resurrection. And by resurrection is meant the raising of the dead. This God promised to do through Jesus Christ at the time appointed.**

The vision of Ezekiel the prophet concerning the dry bones was a demonstration fo how the dead would be raised. (Ezek. 37: 1-14). There is no point of a soul entering into a body and being reborn. It is breath of life otherwise referred to as spirit God would send to revive the dead. And so He told Ezekiel: "Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, won of man, and say to the word, Thou said the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army," (Verses9, 10).

God then said to Israel: "And ye shall know that I am the LORD when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, said the LORD". Verses 13,14.

What is more, Jesus Christ said: "Wonder not at this; for the hour cometh, wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil unto the resurrection of Judgment."—John 5: 28, 29. (*Douay Version*) See also Luke 14: 14; Acts 24: 15.

It can be seen from the facts of the Scripture already brought to light that there is no transmigration or reincarnation but resurrection of the dead. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead," and St. Paul. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." — 1 Cor. 15: 21, 22.

It is when the dead are raised that they shall be judged and rewarded according to their works as stated by Jesus Christ. Until then —excepting the "little flock", the saints, who go to heaven according the Scriptures — They must remain in their graves. Thus Paul the apostle stated: "And as it is appointed unto men ONCE to die, but after this the judgment." (Heb 9: 27.) The doctrine of reincarnation or transmigration is from the devil. Not from God Almighty, we repeat. And true Christians are strongly warned in the Holy Scriptures against "the doctrines of devils".—1 Tim. 4: 1-6.

#### THE VANITY OF MAN

“LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.

“Behold, Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before Thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.

“Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

“And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee.”—Psalm 39: 4-7.

## 10. FACTS ABOUT COVERING OF HAIR IN WORSHIP

In appearing before God for devotion or worship, every woman is required by nature and by the law of God to cover her hair. This puts her in a solemn and becoming posture for study, meditation, prayer and singing of praises to God. However, it has now become the norm for women in most Churches in the world to go for devotion or attend services with their hair uncovered. This practice which has been gaining ground with the advance of secularism in the last 100 years is a clear violation of the law of God as stated in the Holy Bible.

Writing in such websites as [www.btinternet.com](http://www.btinternet.com), [www.christianhospitality.org](http://www.christianhospitality.org) and [www.pbc.org](http://www.pbc.org), a number of church leaders and commentators on the issue contend that “the hair is the God-given covering, the material covering is just a human fashion or custom” and that “women are not supposed to wear veils because God has given them long uncut hair instead”. Among the arguments they use to buttress their stand are that:

1. By the law of Moses, women being tried for committing adultery are allowed to uncover their hair in the temple;
2. Mary, sister of Lazarus worshipped Christ without covering her head;
3. The Priests of old wore caps while a king of Israel was crowned in the temple

Let us now look at these arguments against the background of the Holy Scriptures.

In the case of women accused of adultery as stated in Numbers 5:11-31, the law provided that she should undergo a special rite to ascertain if she was actually guilty of the charge made against her. The law states among other things that “the priest shall set the woman before the LORD, and uncover the woman's head”. (verse 18) Some hold to this as proof that women could uncover their hair in the temple. But it should be understood that women spoken of in the passage under reference were under trial and uncovering their hair signified the humiliating and shameful nature of the accusation against them. Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible in explaining verse 18 “uncover the woman's head”, states as follows: “To take off a woman's veil, and expose her to the sight of men, would be considered a very great degradation in the East.” It adds: “To this St. Paul appears to allude in 1 Corinthians 11:5,6,10”.

Since in the East it is considered highly disrespectful for women to appear before men without a covering in line with the law of God - it is

therefore natural to expect them to show much greater reverence for God Almighty by covering their hair during devotion. What those who canvass this argument should also reflect on is that: if the Jewish women normally worshipped in the temple with uncovered heads, why then was it necessary for women caught in adultery to be specifically asked to uncover their hair? Certainly, it was not the practice in those days for women to go into the temple with uncovered hair. Also, it should be pointed out that the woman accused of adultery did not go to the temple at that particular time for worship but for judgment.

The Bible states that shamefacedness is a virtue in women. St. Paul in his letter to Timothy instructs thus: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." - 1 Timothy 2:9,10

Another instance adduced by those who believe and teach that a woman need not cover her hair in worship is that of Mary, the sister of Lazarus. On a certain occasion when the Lord Jesus Christ visited them, the Bible records her as "weeping at the feet of Christ and wiping his feet with her hair". Here again we see that this was not a temple service but an unplanned, spur-of-the-moment action, in an informal setting - the family home of Lazarus, Mary and Martha. The spontaneous outpouring of goodwill, and appreciation by Mary to God Almighty for His goodness on her, including the raising of Lazarus, her brother from the dead, cannot be used to justify leaving the woman's hair bare during worship. -John 11:2; 12:2,3; compare Luke 7:37-50.

Some have argued that since the Bible says one should "pray without ceasing", (1 Thessalonians 5:17), a woman should cover her hair all the time. This is not correct. As indicated earlier, the law on covering of hair by women has to do with worship situations. What St. Paul meant in his letter to the Thessalonians was that we should be regular in prayer; we should not be weary of asking for help from God. Prayer is a formal, solemn act of thanksgiving and of making requests from God by way of worship. This cannot be a 24-hour activity.

It is true that in the time of old, the priests wore headgears. The high priest wore a distinctive head gear called mitre (See Exodus 28:4,37,39; 39:28,30; Leviticus 8:9), while that worn by other priests was generally called bonnet. (Exodus 28:40; 29:9) The mitre is defined by the Smith's Bible Dictionary as "the turban or headdress of the high priest, made of fine linen cloth, eight yards long, folded around the head on the front of which was a gold plate with the inscription 'Holiness to the Lord'". We agree that under Mosaic law it was mandatory for priests to cover their heads but such law was not retained in the Christian era. See Colossians 2:14-17.

It is also true that King Joash was crowned in the temple as recorded in

2 Kings 11:11,12,14. But this was an abnormal situation. Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (2 Kings 11:1) had usurped the throne after the premature death of her husband Jehoram and her son Ahaziah. She sought to secure herself on the throne by the murder of all the seed royal. Only Joash her grandson, then an infant, was saved by his aunt Jehosheba. The child was concealed in the temple for six years and brought up under the care of the priest, Jehoiada. During this period Athaliah reigned over Judah. At the age of seven Jehoash was brought from his place of refuge and crowned under the supervision of Jehoiada the high priest. The people's zeal for God and their loyalty to the house of David ensured that they quickly stood up to Athaliah's subsequent challenge and put her to death. - 2 Kings 11:1-21; 2 Chronicles 23:1-21.

What happened was that God allowed the Priest Jehoiada to install Jehoash as king in order to continue the royal lineage of king David in keeping with His oath to him. (Psalm 132:11,12; 2 Samuel 7:12; 2 Chronicles 6:16) The devil, knowing the purpose of God that all kings of Israel would come through the line of king David, had planned to frustrate that purpose by using Athaliah to kill all the heirs to the throne. But no one can interfere or change the will of God. The crowning of Jehoash in the temple is an exceptional case which cannot be cited as a precedent for all time. God also makes allowance for unusual circumstances and these could warrant exemptions from the general rule. The circumstances of those days warranted the action of the Priest Jehoaida as the temple was the only secure place the priest could get to hurriedly crown the king. In any case, this was not a normal coronation ceremony as Jehoash was only seven years old. There is no other example in the Holy Bible where a king of Israel was crowned in the temple. In summary, we must reiterate that the case of king Joash being crowned in the temple was an example in time of old, which does not apply in the Christian era.

Some scholars have argued that though Joash was crowned in the temple, the venue could not have been the Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies where the priest enters once a year. According to the American Tract Society Dictionary, "The temple itself, strictly so called, which comprised the Porch, the Sanctuary, and the Holy of Holies, formed only a small part of the sacred precincts, being surrounded by spacious courts, chambers, and other apartments, which were much more extensive than the temple itself. It should be observed that the word temple does not always denote the central edifice itself, but in many passages some of the outer courts are intended." - *Emphasis ours*.

### Change of Priesthood

The Bible shows that Jesus Christ came to "magnify the law and make it honourable". (Isaiah 42:21) It was the will of God that in due course the



work of the Ministry should be raised to new heights through Jesus Christ. In the words of Apostle Paul "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Romans 10: 4) The Priesthood changed with the coming of Christ, the Melchizedek, as a result of which the laws, which were only a shadow of things to come, were done away with. St. Paul said: "For the Priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." (Hebrews 7:12) For the fact that Jesus Christ did not come from the priestly line of Levi indicates that the law as to the priesthood had changed. (Hebrews 7:11-15) And in Galatians 3:24,25 St. Paul added: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a school master." After Christ, the perfect teacher, had come, nobody should take the people of God back to the schoolmaster.

We implore our readers to take particular note of the fact that Apostle John records a vision in the book of Revelations where the 24 elders who sat about the throne of God "cast their crowns before the throne" in reverence to God Almighty. (Revelation 4:10,11) This is a clear demonstration of the fact that men, no matter how highly placed ought not to cover their heads during worship and is in line with the words of St. Paul that men should not cover their heads while worshipping God.

Jesus Christ and his apostles wore no head covering or any distinctive garments as the priests of old did while ministering in the temple. That was why Judas had to use a kiss to identify Jesus Christ. (Matthew 26:48). The example and precept of Christ and his apostles supersede the laws of the old testaments regarding the dressing of priests and ministers of God. (John 13:15) St. Paul in his letter to the Christians at Colossae stated: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."- Colossians 2:14-17.

St. Paul

To better understand the Bible position on the covering of hair by women, let us dissect St. Paul's letter to the Christians at Corinth in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 in which he dwelt extensively on the issue. In verse 1 he enjoins the Corinthian Christians to follow his example just as he was also following the commands of Christ. In verse 2 he reminded them of the need to keep the ordinances he delivered to them. He went on to state the basis of the ruling he was to give, saying in the next verse, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the

woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.” For this reason therefore: “Every man praying or prophesying, (preaching the word of God) having his head covered, dishonoureth his head: (Jesus Christ) But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head (the man) for that is even all one as if she were shaven”. (verses 3-5) Then he added in verse 6, “For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered”. The statement is clear enough.

In spite of the clarity of St. Paul's statement, many professed Christians still do not understand what St. Paul meant in verses 5 (already quoted) and 15 of 1 Corinthians 11. Verse 15 says: “But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.” A number of professed Christians wrongly explain this text to mean that because the woman already has hair on her head she does not need any scarf or any other covering anymore!

There should be no room for confusion in understanding of 1 Corinthians 11 verses 5 and 15, if we are sincere to ourselves. What St. Paul is saying is that if the woman prays without using a scarf or other material to cover her hair, she by so doing dishonours her head, that is the man. The material over her head is a sign of her subjection to the man and her readiness to subject herself to the divine order. The only condition in which she could pray without covering her hair is to shave it all. The covering in verse 5 refers to a material covering or vesture, etc. There is no way the expression “having her head uncovered” could mean “having no hair on her head”. The “long hair” in verse 15 means the woman's natural hair. This gives her glory and she could use it to cover her face if struck by shyness: “for her hair is given her for a covering”.

St. Paul's words are rendered more clearly by the Living Bible. We may as well quote verses 2-76, which reads as follows: “But there is one matter I want to remind you about: that a wife is responsible to her husband, her husband is responsible to Christ, and Christ is responsible to God. That is why, if a man refuses to remove his hat while praying or preaching, he dishonors Christ. And that is why a woman who publicly prays or prophesies without a covering on her head dishonors her husband [for her covering is a sign of her subjection to him]. Yes, if she refuses to wear a head covering then she should cut off all her hair. And if it is shameful for a woman to have her head shaved, then she should wear a covering. But a man should not wear anything on his head [when worshipping, for his hat is a sign of subjection to men]”. St. Paul adds in verses 13-15: “What do you yourselves really think about this? Is it right for a woman to pray in public without covering her head? Doesn't even instinct itself teach us that women's heads should be covered? For women are proud of their long hair, while a man with long hair tends to be

ashamed.”

The Churches who allow women to uncover their hair in worship are motivated by the quest for large membership and money, for which reason they are prepared to compromise Christian standards than practise righteousness. Such will definitely give account of their stewardship to God. (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10) Even the wives of some of the Church leaders cover their heads during worship whereas most members of their congregation don't. This is hypocrisy.

Like the unfaithful priests of old, some of the Church leaders of today are committing a grievous blunder by not clearly setting out the right standards, as commanded by God for people to follow. In Ezekiel 22:26 God declared: “Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, ... and I am profaned among them.” See also Ezekiel 44:23; Leviticus 10:10.

### **Personal Righteousness**

The truth is that several Churches have gone with the prevailing fashion of the secular world such that the covering of hair “has slowly but surely slipped out of sight” in many congregations.

Those women who prefer to do their own will by not covering their heads argue that God does not look at the outward appearance or dressing but the heart. This is a grossly misleading argument which has nurtured several licentious practices. The outward appearance or conduct is and should be a reflection of what is in the heart. And Christ said so in Matthew 15:18-20 thus: “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man...” By refusing to obey the command of God, those women who fail to cover their hair in worship and the priests who cover their heads are showing that their hearts are far from God. (Matthew 15:7-9; Isaiah 29:13,14) Indeed, those who follow the opinions and traditions of men and serve God loosely are indulging in vain worship.

It is in view of this that we go all out to draw people's attention to the truth as stated in the Holy Bible, not for the love of controversy as some say, or with the view of embarrassing anybody, but in the interest of the sheep of God who want to practise His righteousness so as to be saved.

Regrettably, many professed Christians today are behaving like the natural Jews who, instead of adhering to the standards God has laid down for His worshippers, are following the dictates of their hearts thereby falling short of the righteousness of God. St. Paul stated: “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear

them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." - Romans 10:1-3

Warning those who refuse to abide by this instruction on covering of hair, St. Paul declared "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." He also stated: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." -1Corinthians 14:37,38. See also 1 Corinthians 11:16; 7:40; Matthew 7:21.

## 11. BIRTHDAYS AS SEEN THROUGH THE HOLY BIBLE

Millions of people all over the world do mark with uncommon zeal and ceremony their birthdays, defined by the *New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* as “the day of one’s birth or the anniversary of this day”. During such occasions, the celebrant spares no expense in order to host and fete friends and well wishers who attend to share in the merriment that marks the occasion. The guests in turn shower the celebrant with good wishes, compliments and gifts.

The celebration of birthdays is seen as a symbol of sophistication. Thus, once people attain positions of prominence in society, they are expected to celebrate their birthdays regularly. That is why a number of notables, particularly monarchs, have an official birthday on a fixed day of the year, on which celebrations are held. A number of television stations in Nigeria devote special programmes to birthday celebrations in which they invite all children born within a certain period to attend the party on payment of specified amounts. Also, the practice of post-humous birthday celebrations is now increasingly in vogue, such that the birthdays of people who had died even more than a century ago is remembered with lots of activities.

The ritual of observing birthdays has crept into the Church with many church leaders celebrating their birthdays with wide publicity and special thanksgiving services. Barnes, in his *Bible Commentary*, says: “It is natural and proper for men to celebrate with thanksgiving the day of their birth, as life is a pure and positive blessing. The benign Creator gives only a happy and precious form of existence to those whom he endows with the capacity of estimating its value.” As we proceed in this sermon we shall by God’s grace determine whether it is natural and proper, in the light of the Scriptures, for men to celebrate their birthdays.

### Custom of unbelievers

The custom of venerating the day of one’s birth has been practised from ancient times by people who did not know God. It is on record that the ancient Greeks celebrated the birthdays of gods and prominent men. Josephus, the Jewish historian, refers to Titus' celebration of his brother's and father's birthdays by slaughtering Jewish captives. (source) Astrologers attach special importance to birthdays believing that the day of birth determines the person’s character and future and that “starting to do anything of major importance on a birthday has the extra solar boost of a once-a-year infusion of universal goodwill and luck.” (source) But available records show that the natural Jews abhorred the celebration of birthdays. *The Imperial Bible Dictionary* in its comments states: “The ... Hebrews looked on the celebration of birthdays as part of idolatrous worship, a view which would be abundantly confirmed by what they saw of the common observances associated with these days.” The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* pointedly affirms that not only is there “no evidence for the celebration of birthdays in Israel in pre-Hellenistic times” but that “the early Christians did not celebrate birthdays because they considered it a pagan custom”.

### **Sons and Daughters of Job**

Some scholars do make reference to the account of Job, where it is stated that his children held special banquets in turns in their houses as proof that “in early times the birthday was observed with great solemnity and rejoicing”. In the book of Job chapter 1 verses 4 and 5 it is written: “And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.”

Those who use this text to support the celebration of birthdays believe that the phrase “every one his day” refers to the turn of each of the children of Job to celebrate his or her birthday. But this is not correct, in that if it were so, then the Bible record would have also spoken of when the sisters celebrated their birthdays to which they would invite their brothers.

It is not true that the meals eaten together by the children of Job were birthday parties. The children of Job only gathered from time to time to eat together in order to strengthen their bonds of unity, and to thank God for His goodness on them. Their manner of life was akin to the ways of the early Christians who “breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart”. (Acts 2:46) Certainly, the early Christians were not eating together from house to house because of birthday celebrations! The truth is that people of God are not prohibited from inviting their friends, to occasions of merriment. They are only advised to do things in moderation and godly fear. Scripture says: “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” - 1 Corinthians 10:31. See also Philippians 4:5.

It must be understood that Job being a prophet, had deep understanding of the purpose of God and kept the faith even under intense persecution. Indisputably, he and his children, as people of God, were distinct in character from their neighbours. It was therefore a measure of his devotion to God that he took it upon himself to pray for God’s favours on them, after they had had their banquet.

If birthdays were important to Job, he would not have, at the time of his temptation, profusely cursed the day he was born. He stated among other things: “Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it.” - Job 3:3,4.

### **Pharoah and Herod**

The Holy Bible makes direct reference to two birthday celebrations, that of Pharoah, king of Egypt and that of Herod the Tetrarch. Each celebration included an execution. In the first instance, Pharoah, executed his chief baker in fulfilment of the dream, which Joseph correctly interpreted. The Bible account states: “And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand: But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them.” - Genesis 40:20-22.

In the second instance, it happened that on the birthday of Herod, when he made a supper to his lords, the daughter of Herodias, his wife, pleased him so much by her dancing at his birthday, “Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask”. (Matthew 14:6, 7) She, being before instructed of her mother, asked for “John the Baptist's head in a charger”. The Bible states: “Though the king was sorry nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat... he sent, and beheaded John in the prison”. (Matthew 14:9,10) It should be pointed out that John was put in prison for daring to criticise Herod for using his position to marry Herodias, his brother’s wife, while his brother was still alive. Herod had earlier wanted to put John the Baptist to death, but had refrained from doing so because he feared the multitude, in

that they counted him as a prophet. - Matthew 14:1-5.

It was because Herod and his wife had no regard for God that they, without prick of conscience, imprisoned a widely acclaimed servant of God and even killed him. Herod, being an enemy of God and His work, observed birthdays because it was in keeping with his pagan roots. It could be seen that he preferred to violate the law of God than to lose face with mortal men who were guests at his party. This is in total contrast to the character of the people of God who do things, to please God Almighty and not mortal men. – Galatians 1:10; Romans 2:11.

Notably, these instances of birthdays in the Bible involved the shedding of blood, which are proofs that such observances originated from satan who was “a murderer from the beginning”. (John 8:44) Evidently, birthday celebrations have pagan origins and those who participate in such observances should be aware of its implications. The Holy Bible says that we should avoid pagan ceremonies. “Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen ... For the customs of the people are vain.” (Jeremiah 10:2,3) A true worshipper of God must therefore be careful as not to do anything just because others are doing it, otherwise he would find himself entangled in the web of human traditions, customs or philosophies which are contrary to the will of God. The Bible says: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” - Colossians 2:8. See also Exodus 23:2.

That many people are doing something does not mean that it is right in the sight of God, for the fact that men love “darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”. (John 3:19) Our Lord Jesus Christ also declared, “...that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God”. - Luke 16:15.

### **Bible view**

We must note that when the prophet Abraham “made a great feast”, for his son Isaac, it was not a birthday he was celebrating, nor was it held on his day of birth or circumcision, but on the day of his weaning. He did not imitate the manners of the Gentiles in marking the birth of his son whom he had at the age of 100 years. It should be noted that Abraham did not hold any other such celebration for his son Isaac.

At birth, no one can tell the type of life a newly born child is going to live – whether it is a life that will bring glory to God and blessing to his people or one that would be contrary to the will of God which will bring pain and anguish to people. No one can gainsay the fact that, except for the saints who are predestinated, it is only at death one can tell the type of life lived by an individual, not at the time of his birth. In other words, it is by virtue of the the works a man had done while alive that people will remember him, for good or for ill. It was on this score Solomon stated: “A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.” - Ecclesiastes 7:1.

In addition it should be pointed out that observance of birthdays bestows undue importance on the individual. All mankind are born in sin into a world full of trouble. (Job 5:7; 14:1) No human being should therefore be unduly exalted. (1 Corinthians 8:2) The Bible says “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away” and that “every man at his best state is altogether vanity”. – 1 Peter 1:24; Psalm 39:5.

It was because of this understanding that servants of God in ancient times did not emphasize, the day they were born, but their end. David the Psalmist wrote: “Lord, make me to know my end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am, Behold, thou hast

made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.” (Psalm 39:4,5). And King Solomon stated: “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof...” (Ecclesiastes 7:8) Solomon, the prophet said that the end is better than the beginning because it is at the end of one’s life that his manner of life could be assessed, whether the man lived “soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” or whether he gave himself to eating “the bread of wickedness”, “the bread of idleness” and drinking “the wine of violence. - Titus 2:12; Proverbs 4:17; 31:27.

Moreover, it is an unnecessary exercise to stick to a particular day to express joy and gratitude to God for the preservation of one’s life. Thanksgiving needs to be done every day. David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel stated: “I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.” (Psalm 3:5; 4:8) In Psalm 104:33 he added: “I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.” Also, Jeremiah the Prophet stated: “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.” -Lamentations 3:22, 23.

Another point against birthday celebrations is that they involve the expenditure or investment of so much time, energy and money. It is not unusual for those celebrating their birthdays to hire a standing band or a Disk Jockey, photographers, public address system and to sew special attires. They also make giant cakes, print cards, buy gifts, drinks, foods, arrange for vehicles to convey some of the guests, and place adverts in print and electronic media. In these difficult times, such money could be put to better use, if not for the benefit of the individual concerned but for others who are in need.

It needs also be pointed out that though some say they do not celebrate birthdays, they give and receive birthday cards, best wishes, and, gifts, which amount to observing the day as special. Christians should learn to avoid such gifts and explain to their friends that they do not observe birthdays, in line with the understanding of the Holy Bible. - Romans 1:32; 1 Timothy 5:22.

### **Christ’s birth anniversary**

Some people have asked why we of the GKS mark the birth anniversary of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ when we are so opposed to birthday celebrations. The point that must be made clear is that we do not observe his birthday but commemorate his birth, which occasion the GKS calls Freedom Day. This we observe by way of divine services on all Sundays in October. In any case, Jesus Christ was different from all mortals in that he was born without sin and lived and died sinless. The Freedom Day Divine Service gives us the opportunity to express appreciation to God Almighty for His goodness in sending His only begotten son to die for the sake of redeeming mankind from sin and death. None of the children of Adam could die for the sins of man, or pay back the life man lost in the Garden of Eden, except Jesus Christ who was born perfect. Unlike mortal men who are born in sin and whose end no one can tell, the birth of Jesus Christ had been prophesied of long before he was born. - Romans 5:12-19; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6,7; Micah 5:2.

The Freedom Day celebration also enables us to give honour to God Almighty and His Son Jesus Christ, in harmony with the command of God in Philippians 2:9-11. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ declared: “That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.” - John 5: 23.

From all that has been said in this sermon, it could be seen that celebration of birthdays is a carryover from the days of ignorance, when people did not have the accurate knowledge of God. Now that the light has come, those who want to be on the side of God and righteousness should



shun such pagan practices as birthday celebrations and honour God Almighty and His son Jesus Christ exclusively, for their blessings and salvation in the end. (Isaiah 25:6, 7; Acts 17:30,31) Scripture says: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” - 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18.

## 12. THE POWER OF KNOWLEDGE

For the fact that it is not every kind of knowledge that empowers, and not every kind of power that is beneficial to society, it is critical that all people of goodwill should be nurtured with the right kind of knowledge to enable them attain their full potentials according to the purpose of God. Herein lies the essence of this sermon, the power of knowledge.

The Bible lays great emphasis on the power of knowledge. Hence Solomon, a prophet and king in Israel declared: "A wise man has great power, and a man of knowledge increases strength". ([Proverbs 24:5](#)) Sir Francis Bacon, the English Statesman and Philosopher, drew from the words of King Solomon in coining the famous Latin phrase ***scientia potentia est***. "For also knowledge itself is power".

The New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language defines *knowledge* as "acquaintance with facts, truths, or principles as from study or investigation; the sum of what is known, the body of truths or facts accumulated by mankind in the course of time" *Power* is defined by the same dictionary as "strength, might or force". In the context of this subject, the knowledge being referred to is the knowledge of God Almighty, the Ancient of Days, Who personifies all that is factual and true. There is no denying the fact that the knowledge of God imbues one with strength, courage, insight and far-sightedness beyond the ability and comprehension of mortals.

The strength or might that comes from knowledge of God is spiritual, not physical or carnal. St. Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 10:3,4 that the weapons of our warfare "are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds". That was why Solomon, the wisest man in his days, spoke of a poor wise man, who by his wisdom delivered a city which had been besieged by powerful enemies. Therefore he declared, "...Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard". (Ecclesiastes 9:13-18) Above all, the knowledge of God gives eternal life. Solomon declared in Ecclesiastes 7:12: "For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it". See also James 3:13-17; Proverbs 3:20; 19:11.

### Knowledge of Good and Evil

The world values knowledge very highly. This is particularly so in this age of the last days, known as the "information age", a time when greatness depends not on who one knows but on what one knows.

Philosophers have for long sought to discover the means by which knowledge is acquired, the extent of knowledge available to man and the standards or criteria by which one could reliably judge the truth or falsity of present knowledge. They have been striving to find out if one can possess information "that is not open to question". While some have insisted that there is obtainable information which is not mere opinion and which cannot be questioned, others say it is not possible to have knowledge which is entirely credible and consistent.

Without mincing words, we must state that the answers to the basic questions about life have long been made available to man by God. These include the question of the existence of God, His purpose of creation, death and the coming into being by and by of a perfect world, Those who earnestly seek true knowledge could obtain it from God's guidebook to man, the Holy Bible, the foundation of true knowledge. – Deuteronomy 30:11-14; see also Romans 10:6-8.

The quest for "higher knowledge" started from the Garden of Eden. The garden had three categories

of fruits, consisting of “every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” (Genesis 2:9) Adam and Eve, were free to eat of every tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God warned them that in the day they ate of it they shall “surely die”. (Genesis 2:16,17 ) The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not just a test of their obedience but was also indicative of the freedom given man by God to make moral choices. The devil obsesses the mind of man with negative thoughts causing those taken in by his blandishments to believe and do unreasonable things. The purpose is to turn the people away from God and cause them to go into destruction. Beguiled by the subtle serpent, Eve induced Adam to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 3:3-6) and this resulted in their fall and consequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Though their eyes were “opened”, to know that they were naked, the knowledge gained did not actually profit them. The fact is that God gives His people the right amount of knowledge in His own due time (Psalm 104:27) Man can therefore only be profited by what God has purposed to give him at each point in time. Moses the prophet declared in Deuteronomy 29:29 “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

We are now at the time of the end, in an era when knowledge of all types is available at the touch of a button. God Almighty told Daniel: “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased”. (Daniel 12:4) That the prophecy is fulfilling is evident from the wonderful inventions and discoveries made by man in the last 100 years particularly, which have made modern life light years ahead of other ages. These include the motorcar, the aircraft the mobile phones, live-television broadcasts, computers, space exploration, the placing of satellites in space, etc. With the arrival of the Internet, knowledge and information are today obtained by billions of people all over the world, with relative ease. But apart from secular knowledge, there is in this age a phenomenal increase in Bible knowledge among people. (Matthew 24:31,14) Because of high literacy rate, and modern technology, billions of people are today able to read and hear the gospel, even in their own languages.

It needs to be pointed out however that the knowledge at the disposal of man could be put to both beneficial and sinister or dastardly ends. This is true of nuclear technology which could be used to generate electricity and to manufacture the nuclear bomb, which but for God’s staying hand, is capable of annihilating mankind from the surface of the earth. The aircraft, which provides a convenient, fast and relatively safe means of long-distance travel, is now known to be a deadly means of bringing down high rise buildings, as is evident from the terrorists’ attack that destroyed the World Trade Centre Towers in New York, United States of America on September 11, 2001.

## **God of Knowledge**

The Bible says God Almighty is “a God of knowledge” (1 Samuel 2:3) and that He is “perfect in knowledge” (Job 36:4; 37:16) Truly, “out of His mouth cometh wisdom and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6) And this is why all who have attained true greatness, whose wisdom have stood the test of time, are those inspired by God and are directed by Him.

One of the men who because of their wisdom got to the top rung in the ladder of greatness, was king Solomon. He prayed God to give him “an understanding heart to judge thy people”, and to “discern between good and bad” The request so pleased the Lord, that He gave Him not only wisdom but riches and honour. (1 Kings 3:9-14) The wisdom God gave Solomon was evident in his works, writings and judgments. The Bible says: “And Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about”. - 1 Kings 4:30,31.

When the Queen of Sheba visited him “to prove him with hard questions” King Solomon was able to answer all her questions. (1 Kings 10:1-5) This is proof of the excellence of the knowledge that comes from God. – See also Proverbs 3:14-18; 8:15-19.

During the Babylonian and the Medo-Persian empires, God used four faithful Jews to show the power of divine knowledge. They were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah (whom the Babylonians renamed

Shedrach, Meschach and Abednego respectively, [Daniel 1:7]). The Bible account states that God gave these four Jews “knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom” but “Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams”. (Daniel 1:17) Not only did Daniel rise to the position of president in the Medo-Persian Empire, he was preferred among them because of the wisdom given him by God.. – Daniel 6:1-3.

At the time of the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus Christ taught the people in the temple and they also marvelled, saying, “How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?” But Jesus told them, “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me”. (John 7:14-16) On another occasion, they sent soldiers to arrest him but the soldiers turned admirers instead. “Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?” – John 7:45-48; Matthew 13:53-57

Then the days of the early Church, “there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen”, but they were not able “to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake” because of the knowledge of God which he had. (Acts 6:8-10). Another instance was the time Apostles Peter and John appeared before the Council of the Jews and displayed such eloquence that the rulers and scribes openly expressed their amazement. The Bible says: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus”. (Acts 4:13) In all cases where the apostles had debates with the religious leaders of their time, they beat them hands down because of their superior knowledge. Truly, the Bible says “he that walketh with wise men shall be wise...” – Proverbs 13:20.

### **Quest for Bible Knowledge**

The Bible urges us to pray for the knowledge of God. (Colossians 1:9,10; James 1:5-7) Prayer should be followed by diligent study of the Bible so that one may be fully profited. St. Paul exhorted us thus: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”. (2 Timothy 2:15) Then we must put what we have leant into practice. Among the things we learn from the Scriptures is that we must attend all divine services, Study Meetings as a duty that gives glory to God, to share Christian fellowship with fellow Christians and to grow in knowledge. See Hebrews 10:25.

Writing on “turning knowledge into power” Gerry McGovern, in his website [www.gerrymcgovern.com](http://www.gerrymcgovern.com) stated: “They say knowledge is power. If that were the case, academics would rule the world. Knowledge itself is not power; rather the application of knowledge is where power lies”. He added: “They say a little learning is a dangerous thing. Well too much learning can lead to paralysis and a lack of decisive, timely action. Knowledge is only useful if we act on what we know, so we need to balance the time we spend knowing with the time we spend doing”.

We must therefore do what we profess lest our service becomes vain and unprofitable. Apostle James stated: “But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.” (James 1:25; 2:12; Revelation 1:3) It is at these assemblies, divine services, Bible Study Meetings, etc that we grow in knowledge by His grace.

## **Benefit of Bible Knowledge**

One who trusts or follows the teachings or opinions of man is certain to remain in spiritual darkness. Such would ultimately go into certain destruction. (Psalm 146:3, 4; Hosea 4:6) It is from the Bible, the greatest storehouse of knowledge and wisdom, one should get knowledge. “Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read”, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” - Isaiah 34:16; Revelation 1:3.

The Bible is written and given to man for his aid and guidance. St. Paul admonished:

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”. He added: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Timothy 3:14-17) Such a knowledgeable person will not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners nor sit in the seat of the scornful but will meditate on the word of God day and night. (Psalm 1:1-6) Faith comes from being acquainted with the word of God hence St. Paul says “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”. – Romans 10:17

The knowledge of God enlightens, sanctifies, strengthens and ennoble “and in keeping of them there is great reward”. - Psalms 19:7-11; John 17:3,17.

On the day of Pentecost when the apostles received the anointing, so captivating and penetrating was the word preached by them that the people were “pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Apostle Peter responded on behalf of other apostles: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the holy ghost (holy spirit)” (Acts 2:37,38) When St. Paul preached at Ephesus even magicians brought their books and burnt them publicly. (Acts 19:18-20) The Bible says: “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12,13) It is evident therefore that the word of God has power to convert people of honest minds to the way of righteousness.

By the knowledge of God, the truth, one is able to counter errors or false doctrines created by the devil to exploit the ignorance of the people and make merchandize of them (2 Peter 2:1-3). Such false beliefs include the teaching that the soul is immortal, that all good Christians will go to heaven, the doctrine of trinity and claims of ability to do miracles. With knowledge, the people are able to know that so-called “men of God” parading all over the place do not deserve their high sounding titles and should therefore be avoided. (Luke 4:16-21) In this wicked sin-ridden world, it is the knowledge of God that enables us to scale the hurdles that the devil has placed in our way by God’s grace. It is the mark by which the just shall be saved. – Ezekiel 9:4-6; Proverbs 11:9.

Thus, the most important benefit of the knowledge of God is that it gives life. Hence St. Paul stated: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith”. – Romans 1:16-17; Ecclesiastes 7:12.; John 6:63.

Indeed, salvation or complete freedom from sin and its consequences, including death is the ultimate object of the Christian endeavour. Jesus Christ told the Jews who believed on him, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”. – John 8:31,32.

May the Almighty God Jehovah continue to endow His people with His knowledge, the truth so that they may live joyfully and in peace not only in this world but in the world to come by His grace and power through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



