

SPIRITISM

Fraud . . . or Fact?

**Can men actually communicate with departed spirits?
What about the witch of Endor? What does the Bible
say of Spiritism?**

by Herbert W. Armstrong

IS THERE anything to *Spiritism*? Granted there is trickery and deception. Houdini, one of the greatest trick-artists of modern times, exposed numerous frauds. So also have Thurston, Walsh, Gearson and many another. Some leading Spiritists have been convicted of "plain dishonesty" or "common fraud" and imprisoned.

Yet not all Spiritism is fraud or slight of hand!

When all the fraudulent phenomena, the tricks, the deceptions are carefully and scientifically sifted out, there remains something to be accounted for—some *real* SUPERNATURAL EVENTS that cannot be explained away!

Wicked Spirits in Control

Whether or not human beings like to admit it, the Bible plainly teaches that *supernatural powers control and operate this world*. The apostle Paul was inspired to write that human beings must struggle "against *powers*, against the *rulers* of the darkness of this world, against *wicked spirits* in high places" (Ephesians 6:12, marg. reading).

Jesus Christ never contested Satan's claim that all the nations of the world were his. Said Satan: "All this *power*"—the control of the nations—"will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine" (Luke 4:6-7).

Little wonder, then, that Spiritism should be manifest in a world controlled and operated by wicked spirits in high places!

Modern Spiritism had its birth at Hydesville, New York, in 1848. It began with the famous Rochester knockings heard by the Fox sisters. Within less than a century Spiritism has obtained millions of followers. It is a RELIGION masquerading under the name of Christianity.

Spiritism is based on the devil's first recorded lie! The devil has continued to deceive millions into believing that the dead can *talk* with the living!

The Dead Cannot Talk with the Living!

Notice what Jesus said about the dead, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are *in the graves* SHALL HEAR his voice, and shall come forth . . . unto the resurrection" (John 5:28-29).

The dead *cannot* communicate with the living!

But the DEVIL must perpetuate his lie! He must make it *appear* that the dead can communicate with the living. That is why the manifestations of Spiritism exist—to perpetuate a lie!

Spiritism is a work of DARKNESS! Paul warns us: "Have NO FELLOWSHIP with the unfruitful works of DARKNESS, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Millions of dollars have been filched from unthinking people who have lost loved ones and who have sought to contact them in the DARKNESS of Spiritist seances. GOD'S blessings come "without money and without price." But it *costs* money to fellowship Spiritism's DARKNESS!

Extorting money from innocent victims on behalf of the *dead* is a RACKET ALMOST SIX THOUSAND YEARS OLD! The racket is controlled by Satan the devil. Spiritism, however, is not its only form. This racket even manifests itself in powerful denominations. Sorrowing relatives are asked to *pay* to relieve their loved ones from suffering supposedly occurring on the other side of death!

Two Kinds of Angels

Since not all Spiritism is trickery—and since the dead CANNOT communicate with the living, then what power *causes* the phenomena of Spiritism?

Remember that this world is controlled by SUPERNATURAL SPIRIT POWERS. Satan is called the *prince of this world* in three distinct Scriptures—John 12:31, 14:30 and 16:11. He is the *god of this age* whom the world worships in ignorance! Paul said, ". . . the god of this world (or "age") hath blinded

the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:4).

The Bible reveals that there are only *two* classes of spirit beings created by God. Man is NOT spirit. He is mortal flesh. Paul wrote of man: "For this corruptible must *put on* incorruption, and this *mortal* must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:53).

Here are the two classes of spirits:

1) *Obedient angels* of God. Paul wrote: "But to which of the angels did He say at any time: Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering *spirits*, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:13-14). Obedient angels are *spirits* sent to minister to mortal, fleshly human beings who are heirs to salvation—*heirs* to immortality!

2) Demons or fallen angels, subject to the princely authority of Satan the devil. Satan is the "prince of demons" (Mark 3:22). We read of Satan and his angels in Revelation 12:9: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and *his angels* were cast out with him." The apostle Peter wrote of them: "For if God spared not the *angels* that *sinned*, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (II Peter 2:4).

The two classes of created spirit beings are both angels. The only difference is that one class is obedient, the other class DISOBEDIENT.

The spirits manifesting themselves through Spiritism are of the second class—WICKED spirits.

Cause of Demon-Possession

The demons manifest their powers in various ways—sometimes in the *darkness* of Spiritist seances, sometimes through possessing the mental and physical attributes of human beings. This lat-

ter form is often termed "demon possession." There are several interesting cases recorded in the Bible. Turn to Acts 16:16-18 and notice one example:

"And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by sooth-saying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the *spirit*, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

Notice that evil spirits can possess the mental and vocal faculties of human beings. They *impersonate* or *pretend* that they are human beings. They often manifest their powers in connection with religion to deceive innocent victims—or to bring reproach upon the name of God by their misconduct, as in the example in Acts 16.

In other instances they utilize human faculties in a violent manner. Institutions for the insane are filled with helpless human beings possessed with spirits of violence. Notice the example found in Matthew 8:28-33:

"And when he [Jesus] was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with *demons*"—the King James Version incorrectly uses the word "devils"—"coming out of the tombs, *exceeding fierce*, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the demons besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold—the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters."

Here is an example of the power of evil spirits—the very evil spirits *impersonating* lost loved ones in Spiritist seances!

Spiritism Condemned in Bible

God condemned Spiritism centuries ago. Here are His words: "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 19:31).

A *familiar spirit* is a particular spirit who associates itself with a Spiritist medium who is usually a woman. A familiar spirit is often called a "guide" because it guides or controls the seance for the medium. A *wizard* is a male human

being who acts as an instrument of wicked spirits. In this verse in Leviticus, God warns His people not to *attribute divine power* to women or men who act as slaves of evil spirits nor to regard what they say. We are to regard what God says and to attribute power to HIM! He is the Eternal your God!

Again, notice, God's condemnation of Spiritism in Deut. 18:9-12:

"When thou art come into the land which the Eternal thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth *divination*, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a *witch*, or a charmer, or a *consulter of familiar spirits*, or a *wizard*, or a *necromancer*. For all that do these things are an ABOMINATION unto the Eternal: and because of these ABOMINATIONS the Eternal thy God doth drive them [the Gentiles] out from before thee."

Spiritism is an ABOMINATION to God. He drove out the Gentiles in the days of Joshua for permitting Spiritism. And the same punishment is coming upon our nations for permitting Spiritism and its kindred arts to flourish!

Notice that God condemns the witch—a woman who pretends to contact the "spirit" of a beloved one who has recently died—and a *consulter of familiar spirits*—usually a woman who contacts a particular spirit for information—and a *wizard* and a *necromancer*—one who professes to predict the future by the art of communicating with the dead.

These are all forms of Spiritism. All these forms are *condemned* by God Almighty. Spiritism is *evil*. It is a direct instrumentality of the DEVIL. Because it is so evil, God condemns those who practice Spiritism and those who seek to contact the dead in its seances! God means business. It is a question of following Spiritism and rejecting eternal life or of rejecting Spiritism and obeying God in order to receive eternal life. Spiritism perpetuates the devil's lie that the dead are not really dead. God says we must come to HIM to OBTAIN eternal life: "For the wages of sin is DEATH; but the *gift* of God is *eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

Spiritism is condemned as one of the products of *human carnality*—as a fruit of the flesh. Paul wrote: "Now the works of the flesh are *manifest*, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, WITCHCRAFT, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: OF THE WHICH I TELL YOU BEFORE, AS I HAVE ALSO TOLD YOU IN TIME PAST, THAT THEY WHICH DO SUCH THINGS

SHALL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD" (Galatians 5:19-21).

Saul's Experience with a Witch

One of the most noted portions of scripture—yet one of the *least* understood—is the case of Saul and the witch at Endor. This story is found in I Samuel 28. Notice verse 3 of this chapter: "Now *Samuel was dead*, and all Israel had lamented him, and BURIED HIM IN RAMAH, even in his own city."

Notice that Samuel was dead and buried. He was *not* alive.

Continuing, "And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. And the Philistines gathered themselves together . . . and when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul inquired of the Eternal, the Eternal ANSWERED HIM NOT, neither by dreams, nor by Urim [through the high priest], *nor by prophets*" (Verse 6).

God would *not* listen to Saul. Saul had been disobedient. Samuel had been inspired to tell Saul: "For rebellion is as the *sin of witchcraft*" (I Sam. 15:23).

What did Saul do? "Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a *woman* that hath a *familiar spirit*, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at *Endor*" (Verse 7).

Remember that Samuel was buried in *Ramah*, located in the territory belonging to the tribe of Ephraim (I Sam. 1:1, 19). But the Philistines and Saul were now near Lake Galilee, in Mount Gilboa, near Endor—about 50 miles from the place in which Samuel was buried. The night before the battle "Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee" (Verse 8).

Saul sinned by seeking a witch. If God would not answer Saul by a prophet because of Saul's disobedience in government administration, how much more would God *refuse to answer Saul by a prophet* when Saul seeks to a witch! Remember that Samuel was a *prophet* (Acts 13:20) and a *judge* (I Sam. 7:6, 15-17). And God would *not* use a prophet to answer Saul! In other words, God would *not* use Samuel the prophet to answer Saul; neither would God use any other means, for that matter. God absolutely refused to listen to Saul because of his rebellious attitude.

The Spirit Masquerades as Samuel

But notice what happened: "Then said (Please continue on page 11)

rated not only in the Nabunaid chronicle but also in the inscription on the famous cylinder of Cyrus."

So Babylon fell in October, 539 B.C., and 2520 years later is October 1982. That's when the seven times of punishment would be fulfilled!

That is less than thirty years from now! But remember, we cannot be sure of the accuracy of this date. We publish it as the most accurate calculation we are able to arrive at now. It may come sooner than this!

Yes, these times are very close to completion, very close to the second coming of Jesus Christ to rule the nations and to teach them the ways of peace.

But many catastrophic world events are going to happen *between* now and the time that this punishment upon the Gentiles is finished!

These terrifying world-shaking events will take place *in less than thirty years*—in your life time, this very last generation that is destined to live in two worlds!

Remember what Jesus said in Luke 21:24? That Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles until the very completion of the times of the Gentiles!

Since Zechariah 14:1-3 shows that Jesus Christ will return in order to deliver Jerusalem from the Gentiles, it is plain that **THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST WILL OCCUR SHORTLY BEFORE THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES ARE FULFILLED!** (Isaiah 27:13; I Cor. 15:52).

As Christ said, of the second coming, "But of *that* day and hour, *knoweth no man!*" But *today's* world-occurrences warn us that even now, it is *near!* Yes, it's **LATER THAN YOU THINK!**

SPIRITISM Fraud . . . or Fact?

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the woman, Whom shall I *bring up* unto thee?" Notice that the woman spirit medium claimed to contact the dead by supernaturally bringing them up from the grave through the familiar spirit. This form was practised when the people believed that the dead were in their graves. *Today* spirit mediums have the familiar spirit produce a voice from the air—because it is commonly believed *today* that the dead are *not* in their graves but somewhere else!

Saul replied to the woman: "Bring me up Samuel."

Instead of the familiar spirit appearing *first*, and then the visionary form of a dead person, the woman saw *first* a form that looked exactly like Samuel! "And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou?"

Notice that the familiar spirit did not manifest itself first at Saul's seance. Instead, the familiar spirit produced the form of Samuel which **ONLY THE WOMAN SAW!** Saul did not see it! He asked the woman what *she saw!*

"And the woman said unto Saul, I saw *gods* ascending out of the earth" (Verse 13, last part). This is an *incorrect* translation. The word translated "*gods*" is *elohim* in the Hebrew. It can mean either the true God, pagan gods or *judges*. In Exodus 22:8, 9, the Hebrew word *elohim* is translated *judges*. In I Samuel 28:13, the verse should have been translated: "I saw a *judge* ascending out of

the earth." This is *proved* by what follows:

"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).

A Deception

Notice that Saul still did **NOT** see anyone! He only *perceived* by reasoning that the form which the woman saw was that of Samuel! Here we have a perfect illustration of the impersonation of human beings by evil spirits. The familiar spirit produced an illusion which only the woman saw. To her the illusion was that of a judge rising out of the earth. Remember that Samuel was actually buried about 50 miles away, not at Endor where the seance was occurring! Samuel was *not* resurrected. The whole thing was a **SUPERNATURAL FRAUD!**

While *impersonating Samuel*, the spirit spoke to king Saul thus: "And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?"—notice the *lying* spirit. Satan lied to Eve in a similar manner! "And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and **GOD IS DEPARTED FROM ME, AND ANSWERETH ME NO MORE, NEITHER BY PROPHETS, NOR BY DREAMS:** therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do."

The spirit continues to impersonate Samuel by reprimanding Saul for all his evil deeds. Finally the spirit concluded

by saying: "Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: and the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hands of the Philistines" (Verse 19).

How did the spirit know what was to happen? Because God often makes His plans known to evil spirits! Notice I Kings 22:22-23 and II Chronicles 18:21-22. God permitted "lying spirits" to know His plans. God rules over all. But He has allowed Satan and his demons to control and influence this entire world. The familiar spirit of the witch at Endor must have known that God would deliver Saul that next day. So it told Saul what would happen in order that its impersonation of Saul might *seem* real!

Saul's Punishment

Now read what happened to Saul for inquiring about the future from a spirit medium: "So Saul *died* for his transgression which he committed against the Eternal, even against the word of the Eternal, which he kept not, and *also* for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; and inquired **NOT** of the Eternal: therefore He slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse" (I Chronicles 10:13-14).

That is exactly how serious God regards Spiritism! He took the life of Saul for seeking information at a seance!

In His Revelation to the apostle John, Jesus warns us of the *growing* influence of wicked spirits. They will become so *influential* in world affairs that the rulers of nations will act upon their deceptive, lying words. The control of these wicked spirits, described in Revelation 16:13-16, will lead to **ARMAGEDDON!**

TODAY we are warned: "Believe *not* every spirit, but **TRY THE SPIRITS whether they are of God!**" (I John 4:1). We need to *prove* whether spirits are good or evil.

Notice what Isaiah wrote: "And *when* they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that 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, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:19-20).

Evil Spirits Pretend to Bring Light

The spirits who masquerade as human beings at Spiritist seances *pretend* to bring **LIGHT** and knowledge. Here is what Paul wrote of them: "For such [ministers who pretend to serve Jesus Christ] are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; **FOR SATAN HIMSELF IS TRANSFORMED INTO AN ANGEL OF LIGHT.** Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be

transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (II Cor. 11:13-14).

James tells us what to do when the influence of wicked spirits is present: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. RESIST THE DEVIL, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). You must not obey the devil by yielding to his temptations. Instead, ask God for help. Refuse to yield to satanic influence. Submit to God's correction. Let Him guide you.

The most important chapter in all the Bible relating to our combat with evil spirits is found in Ephesians 6, beginning with verse 10. Here is what we read:

"Finally, my brethren, be *strong* in the Lord, and in the *power of His might*. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, *against wicked spirits in high places*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand. . . . Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with TRUTH"—Jesus said the *truth* shall make us free (John 8:32). God's Word—the Bible—is *truth*. We need to *understand it*.

Continuing, "And having on the breastplate of righteousness"—righteousness is defined as keeping all God's commandments (Psa. 119:172). "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"—we must all work, that the good news of the kingdom of God may reach the whole world.

"Above all, taking the shield of FAITH, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked"—*absolute trust* in God for deliverance despite all obstacles—and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the WORD of God"—use the Bible to know what to do and to know what to resist. It is the only sword which can vanquish evil spirits, and which can overcome sin and produce self-mastery!

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto *with all perseverance* and supplication for all the saints"—don't slack off in praying, don't become negligent. PRAY with perseverance, not only for yourself, but for all those whom God has called.

We are all in this battle together! It is a titanic struggle.

Our eternal life depends upon whether we overcome the temptations of the devil and submit to the rule, the AUTHORITY of God over our lives.

It is high time we recognized the evil powers which manifest themselves through Spiritism!

Don't Let Television Become a Curse!

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Are you NEGLECTING your salvation—*throwing away* with *impunity* your opportunity for ETERNAL LIFE—for the shoddy, corrupt, *temporary* lusts of the flesh?

What to Do About It

The biggest question in *your life* could be—what are you going to DO about it? "Be ye DOERS of the word, and not bearers only" (James 1:22).

Is your mind attuned to the things of God? "Let this *mind* be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). If you have the mind of Christ, will you sit and soak up the ways of *this world* for hour after hour when you *should* be studying your Bible—training your children—spending your time in real earnest PRAYER, helping others, being busy and *productive*?

NO, of *course* you won't! But is the LUST inherent within you *too strong* for your will power to overcome? "For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (II Peter 2:19). Are you a SLAVE—a WHIPPED SERVANT OF YOUR TV SET? God warns you, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make *not* provision for the flesh, to fulfill the LUSTS thereof!" (Rom. 13:14). The *real test* is, WHAT ARE YOU—yes, YOU, GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

Jesus Christ explained the condition of many MILLIONS of Americans when He gave the parable of the sower. Read it in your own Bible! In Matthew the 13th chapter, beginning with the 18th verse. And in verse 22, "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that HEARETH the word; and *the care of this world*, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." God asked, through Elijah, "HOW LONG HALT YE BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS? if the LORD be God, FOLLOW HIM!" (I Kings 18:21).

How to Overcome Your Problem

If you are *honest* with yourself, and with God, you will be able to see very clearly the great PRINCIPLE of *character* behind this television craze that is sweeping the nation.

But—simply agreeing in PRINCIPLE will gain you *nothing*. Putting a decision, once the right decision has been reached, into ACTION is where the real *character* is necessary.

If you can MASTER yourself and CONQUER the TV habit—beginning to watch *only* the constructive, thought-provoking

programs—asking yourself, "Would Jesus watch this?" at all times; if you can keep your TV viewing in extreme MODERATION according to the word of God, then you will have learned a valuable lesson—one that will strengthen you and add to your character.

But if, like many people, you are UNABLE to master yourself—to FORCE yourself to control this HABIT, then read what Christ said in Matthew 18:7-9. YES, SELL YOUR TV SET. GIVE IT AWAY! Do whatever is necessary—but GET RID OF IT! Then you'll have *rooted out* the source of temptation. But *first* ask God to give you the strength you lack to help you CONQUER yourself!

The way to replace bad habits is to exchange them for the *right* habits. To get the air out of a bottle, you must put a liquid *into* the bottle. Are you making the *most* of your time? (Eph. 5:15). Are you *studying* to improve your mind? (II Tim. 2:15). Are you going FORWARD—GROWING in grace and knowledge? (II Pet. 3:18). God has provided the WAY to keep you engrossed in HIS TRUTH—to keep you SO FILLED with *interest*, and *zeal* that you'll remain STEADFAST until the end (Matt. 10:22).

If you do *not* have a TV set, we DO NOT advise you to buy one. Not even to see "The WORLD TOMORROW" program.

You may *hear* the "World Tomorrow" program at least once daily ON RADIO. You can read "The PLAIN TRUTH" magazine every month, and now, you may take the Ambassador College BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE. This unique course will *open up* the Bible to you—make it a clear, sparkling with *interest*, LIVING book; so interesting you'll be *eager* to search its pages for the living TRUTH of God!

If you really *want* to put your spare time to a PROFITABLE use—then write in immediately for the *Correspondence Course*. There's NO CHARGE! Not ONE CENT of tuition! But you've got to really MEAN it! You must be willing to spend *at least ONE HOUR OR MORE EVERY DAY* to really *study* your Bible! Write in NOW—while you're thinking about it, and request this *amazingly different* STUDY course of the Bible.

God says, "See, I have set before you this day LIFE and GOOD, and DEATH and EVIL . . . CHOOSE LIFE, that both you and your seed may live!" (Deut. 30:15-19).

WHAT IS YOUR CHOICE GOING TO BE?

Thou Shalt *Not!*

Are the Ten Commandments "NEGATIVE" and therefore a WRONG form of law?

by Herbert W. Armstrong

OFTEN we hear the basic Law of God impugned as negative, and therefore not good. God is often conceived as a stern, wrathful God, who angrily says to us: "THOU SHALT NOT!" God's truth is sometimes looked upon as "a religion of FEAR," and therefore not desirable for modern, advanced, enlightened man. It ought to be POSITIVE, they say, not negative.

Thus God, the Truth of God, the purpose and plan of God, the method of God, and the Law of God are relegated to the primitive, the imperfect—something enlightened man has now outgrown. Modern man thereupon looks upon himself as elevated to a plane of rational thinking, and knowledge higher than God, or Christianity, or God's Law. Of course, when we UNDERSTAND, God's TRUTH is the most *positive* religion or philosophy there is—it *eradicates* fear! It is the way of FAITH!

But *is* the negative form, "Thou shalt not," then, wrong? Is it outmoded? Should a PERFECT law contain only "DO's" and no "DON'TS"?

Just what is TRUE CHARACTER? Just what is the perfect life?

I have defined character—that is, true, righteous, holy character—as 1) coming to the KNOWLEDGE of the true, as opposed to the false values—the right, instead of the wrong way; 2) making, of one's own free will and volition, the choice to *do* the right instead of the wrong; 3) the exercise of the will in actually *doing* the right instead of the wrong.

Character, then, once the true knowledge is acquired and the right decision made, involves SELF-DISCIPLINE. The truly educated person is a self-disciplined person.

What, then, does this SELF-DISCIPLINE involve?

Two things: 1) self-restraint to resist the lower impulses and pulls in human nature—to restrain the self from desires, impulses, habits, or customs which are contrary to the RIGHT WAY; and 2) self-propulsion or determined initiative to drive the self to *do* those things which ought to be done. In other words, in true character in action there is the POSITIVE and the NEGATIVE.

Suppose one rejects the negative as

faulty and something to be discarded altogether. Suppose one applies the positive only. He impels the self to DO those positive things to be done, but he exercises no restraint to resist those things which, by habit, impulse, desire, or custom of others ought not to be done. Because human nature is what it is, the very nature in such a man will pull him constantly in the wrong direction. Thus CHARACTER is destroyed. He is out of balance.

We find present in NATURE both the positive and the negative. Electricity functions and performs its work by use of both the positive and the negative. All elements are either alkaline or acid. All living things and beings in this world of matter are male and female. There are SINS both of OMISSION and COMMISSION.

Frequently we read the pitiful, feeble efforts of a man who fancies in his ignorant egotism he is wiser than God, setting forth his idea of TEN POSITIVE COMMANDMENTS. Ten "do's," and no "don't's." And what do we find? How much character would such a list of "commandments" produce? Just about as much character as an electric light bulb would produce light with merely the one *positive* wire leading into it. Just about as much character as the male alone, without the female, could reproduce his kind. He might DO a few good things, but all his good things would be nullified and cancelled out by the unrestrained evil he would commit.

No basic LAW OF LIFE, forming the basis of perfect CHARACTER, could be a perfect law unless it contains, in perfect balance, both positive and negative.

Examine now again God's basic code, upon which all His laws, social, economic, civil, and religious, hang:

1. "THOU SHALT have no other gods before Me." This is actually stated in the *positive* form, implying we SHALL worship and obey the true God. In a sense, this commandment contains both the positive and negative, directing us positively, "Thou SHALT," to the true God, and restraining us from false gods.

2. "THOU SHALT NOT make unto thee any graven image, or . . . bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." This is negative, restraining from either making

or worshipping any THING as a god; also from either worship, or obedience to, such false god. To the true God we owe both worship and obedience. Notice the principle of GOVERNMENT in this, as in all the commands. THE WHOLE ISSUE IS ONE OF GOVERNMENT. Adam and Eve rejected God's *government*, refused His rule over their lives, disobeyed four of the Laws of His government. Christ came preaching the "KINGDOM of God," which is the *government* of God—commanding men to repent of their rejection of that government and the transgression of its laws (sin is the transgression of the law—I John 3:4)—providing the way of atonement for that transgression, and reconciliation to the worship and government of GOD.

3. "THOU SHALT NOT take the NAME of the Eternal thy God in vain." This is a restraint—negative—to prevent cutting man off from the POWER and BENEFITS of the right use of GOD'S NAME. If we repent of sin, and come to God by Jesus Christ, He puts within us the impregnating gift of His Holy Spirit, and thus we become His actual begotten children—begotten into HIS FAMILY—bearing HIS NAME (the true name of His Church is Church of GOD)—and having access to all the BENEFITS, BLESSINGS, and POWER of that name. This command is a negative, making possible the POSITIVE and vitally needed blessings thru that NAME!

4. "REMEMBER the Sabbath Day, to KEEP IT HOLY . . . the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Eternal thy GOD." Here is another POSITIVE command—the only one God specifically commanded us to "REMEMBER," and the very one mankind insists above all upon forgetting. Is it not an indicting commentary on the unrestrained human nature, and irrational thinking of the self-professed RATIONALS who imagine themselves superior to God, and who insist His Commandments ought to be all POSITIVE and not negative, that this most positive of all the Commandments they flout and disobey with greatest impunity. Again, notice the perfection—here again is a command including both positive and negative, for while it is primarily positive, yet it includes negative restraints to make possible that positive—"in it thou SHALT NOT

do any work, thou, nor thy son," etc.

5. "HONOR thy father and thy mother." Do you see any negative statement in this command? Here is a POSITIVE command, with a definite promise of blessing. This heads the six commands regulating man's relationship with neighbor. However, the negative opposite is implied, tho not stated.

6 thru 10. "THOU SHALT NOT kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness against, or covet." Here are the famous negatives, yet each implies the opposite POSITIVE: as, THOU SHALT love and have charitable tolerant patience toward your neighbor; BE TRUE to your wife and RESPECT your neighbor's property.

Here is a PERFECT LAW (Psalm 19: 7). It outlines, in broad detail, man's right relationship with the true GOD that he may have all the needed guidance, help, and blessings from God; and also man's right relationship toward human neighbors—including parents, children, husband and wife, and all neighbors. This Law provides for both WORSHIP of God, religiously, and OBEDIENCE TO God, and BLESSINGS FROM God—every need of man for his own good in living, active, continuous relationship with the all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving God.

This perfect Law forms the basis of ALL human relationships, as well as man's God-relationship. It provides the wide, basic general rules affecting every phase of his life—

a) Religious, in his relationship to GOD;

b) Family, in his relationship to parents, children, wife and husband, and is designed to preserve the blessed sanctity and dignity of the HOME;

c) Next-door and personal neighbors and friends;

d) Civil relationships — here are found the very BASIC civil laws respecting murder, larceny (theft), adultery, perjury;

e) Economic life—honesty, not coveting other's money, goods, or property or possessions, which coveting is the very root source of today's economic principle of competition;

f) Social life—such commands as those respecting adultery, false witness against, coveting, stealing, form the foundation principle of right social attitude and relationship with neighbors.

This Law, in its basic principles, defines THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN (Eccl. 12:13). It is the basis, in principle, for ALL THE BIBLE. The entire Bible is, so far as its TEACHING is concerned, a magnification in specific detail of these basic principles.

This Law is COMPLETE. It contains, in brief summation-principle, all the positive and negative obligations of the PERFECT, rightly-balanced life. It expresses

and reflects the very character of God.

The whole Law is summed in one word, LOVE. It is like God, for God is LOVE, just as His Law is LOVE. It was

given in love for us, and LOVE is the fulfilling of the law—LOVE IN ACTION.

It is love to GOD, and love to NEIGHBOR. It is PERFECT. It is COMPLETE.

WHY So Many Religious Denominations?

(Continued from page 6)

that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things," why?—"to draw away disciples after them." To gain a personal following for themselves! To start a new denomination!

Do you catch the full significance of these two verses? The elders or ministers were especially assembled because, immediately after Paul would leave Ephesus—not at the time of the Protestant Revolt, but IMMEDIATELY—there would come within the local church congregations false ministers, wolves in sheep's clothing, to make a prey of Christians; and even from those elders already in the church congregations some would pervert the doctrine of Jesus to secure a following of "Christians" themselves.

HOW It Happened

The city of Ephesus was located in the Roman province of Asia, which embraced the western part of Asia Minor or Turkey today. After preaching in the province of Asia at Ephesus, Paul had to separate the disciples from Jews who would not follow the teachings of Jesus Christ (Acts 19:9). Those Jews especially hated Paul because he brought Gentile converts, uncircumcised in the flesh, into fellowship with converted Jewish brethren. This so incensed them that they were everywhere spreading lies about the teachings (Acts 21:21).

The apostle warned Titus about the "many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision" who were spreading "Jewish fables, and commandments of men that turn from the truth" (Titus 1:10, 14).

It was from the stubborn Jews that the original trouble arose in the Christian community. They followed Paul to Jerusalem to accuse him falsely (Acts 21:27; 24:18). Not long after this, they had so poisoned the minds of the Christians at Ephesus that Paul had to write Timothy: "This thou knowest, that ALL they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (II Timothy 1:15).

Notice, in a few short years, ALL in

the province of Asia were deceived into turning from the truth which Paul preached. It was not the few, but the many—ALL—who were deceived; yet they thought they were still Christians.

The apostle John later wrote to the Ephesians: "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Rev. 2:5). Here is PROOF that heresy overtook many Christians while the apostles yet lived!

Although much of the opposition developed originally from Jews who tried to impose their human traditions and fables which were contrary to the law of God (Mat. 15:3), as the number of Gentile converts increased, there arose a feeling of antagonism between Jewish and Gentile converts, especially about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. Such a contention naturally would lead to CHANGING the days celebrated by professing Christians. Dislike of Jews, who celebrated almost the same days as the early true church, caused unconverted carnally minded Gentiles in the church to substitute the pagan holidays.

Gentile Deception Prophesied

Not only Paul, but also Peter warned the churches that MANY would be misled. There were false teachers among Christians who would bring in heresies, "and MANY shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (II Peter 2:2).

When Paul wrote his second letter to the Gentile-born Thessalonians, he instructed them against the "mystery of iniquity" which "doth already work" (II Thess. 2:7).

Notice, the cleverly disguised teachings of iniquity or LAWLESSNESS were at work in Paul's day. The Roman world was being filled with numerous mystery religions which stemmed from the old sun-worshipping mysteries. It was Paul himself who was restraining lawlessness until he should be "taken out of the way."

False teachers secretly professed to giving a hidden, yet easy way to evade the consequences of breaking God's law.

Jude had to include in his letter the admonition that every Christian "should earnestly contend for the faith which was *once* delivered unto the saints. FOR THERE ARE CERTAIN MEN CREPT IN UN-AWARES, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, TURNING THE GRACE OF GOD INTO LASCIVIOUSNESS, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ . . . These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 3 and 19).

These false teachers *crept in unawares*—professing to come in the name of Jesus Christ. Yet they *deny* that Jesus is the Christ *by rejecting the only sign* that proves that He is the Messiah (Mat. 12: 39, 40) and substituting for it the "Good Friday-Sunday Resurrection" tradition.

They also turned the grace or unmerited pardon of God into a *license* to disobey the commandments, claiming that grace makes you free to commit sin!

Jude says *these preachers separated their followers from the body of believers*. By the time John wrote his epistle, he had this sad note to include about those preachers who at first crept in unawares: "*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us*" (I John 2:19).

Those who departed were no longer Christians. They separated themselves from the *true* church and organized themselves into *their own* church.

True Christians Forced Out

Although numerous deceivers, called Gnostics, left the church, drawing away disciples after them, there was an even more dangerous apostacy which has deceived this whole world.

In instructing the evangelist Timothy, the apostle to the Gentiles instructed him to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come that they will not endure sound doctrine; but *after their own lusts*"—the congregations wanting to do what they please—"shall they heap to themselves teachers"—elect ministers who will preach what they want to hear—"and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto *fables*" (II Timothy 4:3, 4).

This was in the days of the apostles and evangelists, not at the Protestant Revolt! MANY who fellowshipped in the local congregations of the early church, after about two generations, did not endure sound doctrine because they had not repented and received the Holy Spirit. They elected teachers who, for the sake of money, pleased their wishes by preaching fables—doctrines *assumed* to

be *Christian*, today!—the enticing fables of mysticism and sun-worship that were engulfing the Roman Empire. The letters of Paul were twisted by them to give another meaning than intended (II Peter 3:15-16).

But instead of leaving the local congregations and forming their own sects, as some Gentiles did at first, the false preachers remained within the congregations and *soon began to expell the true Christians*.

In the letter of the apostle John to Gaius, we read: "I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and

not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, AND CASTETH THEM OUT OF THE CHURCH" (III John 9 and 10).

The true Christians, who alone, comprised the true Church, *were being put out of the visible, organized congregations*. They were the SCATTERED ones of whom John said: "Therefore the world knoweth us not" (I John 3:1). In the Western Roman Empire, where Paul died, the state of Christianity was even more advanced along the paths of error. The name *Christian* was being borne away by leaders who crept into the fellowship of the Church of God and who, in the name of Christ, *deceived the MANY into following their false teachings and into organizing with human government a universal or catholic church over the whole Roman Empire*.

The Age of Shadows

Following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the deaths of the apostles, a strange phenomenon is witnessed. The true church almost disappears from history, and false churches arise! Of this period, the famous historian Gibbon says: "The scanty and suspicious ecclesiastical history seldom enables us to dispel the dark cloud that hangs over the first age of the church" (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch. XV).

The truth was obscured by error!

Jesse Lyman Hurlbut gives us even more details in his book *The Story of the Christian Church*, page 41: "We would like to read of the later work of such helpers of St. Paul as Timothy, Apollos and Titus, but all these . . . drop out of the record at his death. For fifty years after St. Paul's life *a curtain hangs over the church through which we strive vainly to look*; and when at last it rises, about 120 A.D., with the writings of the earliest church-fathers, WE FIND A CHURCH IN MANY ASPECTS VERY DIFFERENT FROM THAT IN THE DAYS OF" Peter and Paul.

Those inspired young men who outlived the apostles left almost no mark in the record of Church history for *one* particular reason. They were the last vanguard of the true apostolic church which fought against the rising tide of prophesied apostacy immediately after the days of the apostles. *The false ministers* in church offices, against whom the evangelists preached, are *the very ones recorded in the history of the universal or catholic apostacy at the close of the first century*.

Some of those ministers may have been honestly deceived, but many, many others were deceivers who had "men's persons in admiration because of advantage"—financial advantage (Jude 16). They taught a mixture of truth and error;

"What Denomination Do We Represent?"

Daily we receive letters asking, "Who are you? What denomination do you represent?" No one seems able to guess. And no wonder.

For we are *not denominational!* The "WORLD TOMORROW" radio and television programs and The PLAIN TRUTH magazine are NON-sectarian (I Cor. 1:12-13).

What denomination did JESUS join? Few ever stopped to think of it in that way. The religious sects of His day were the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essanes, the Samaritans, etc. Jesus joined none of them. On the contrary. He called His disciples *out of them*—out of all organizations of men. The Greek word "ecclesia" translated "Church" in English has the meaning of "called-out ones."

The Eternal God called me from the field of business to a life of separation for the mission being carried out in His work. Consequently, in complete surrender to Him, without preconceived notions, doctrines, and convictions, and with the guidance of His Spirit, I prayerfully approached the study of the Bible as a business man would approach a business problem. God started this work through us as small as a work could start, and on and with nothing but FAITH.

We are utterly independent of denominations, sects, or organizations of any kind—wholly DE-pendent upon our heavenly Father for guidance, for funds—for EVERYTHING.

I speak and write, not in the name of any denomination, but solely *in the name of JESUS CHRIST!*

HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG