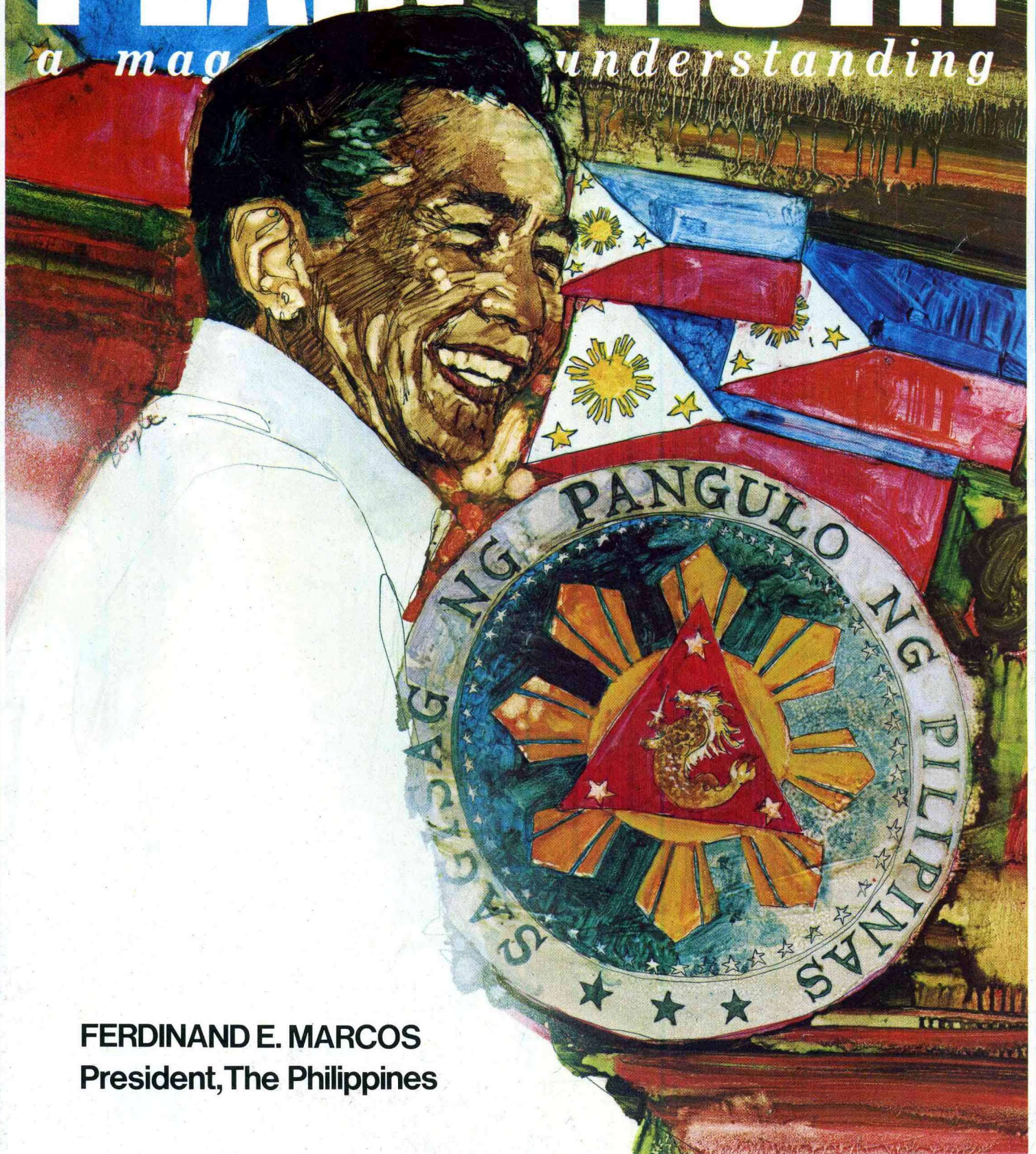


PLAIN TRUTH

a magazine of understanding



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IS IT WRONG to be a cultured individual?

Is it wrong — is it extravagant — to purchase quality things? Some people pride themselves on lack of culture and good breeding. They actually brag: “We’re just poor folks.” They spurn good-quality merchandise, saying, “That’s too rich for my blood.” They shop for bargain prices, condemning better quality as “extravagance.” They accuse a well-dressed person of being “stuck up.”

Does God love the poor and hate the rich? People speak of “God’s poor.” Must one be poor economically, ignorant educationally, uncouth socially, in order to please God?

It’s true Jesus said, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” But he also clarified his statement by adding: “How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!”

In this world we have the poor, the ignorant, the uncouth and the uncultured. And at the other extreme we have the rich, the social snobs, the intellectuals.

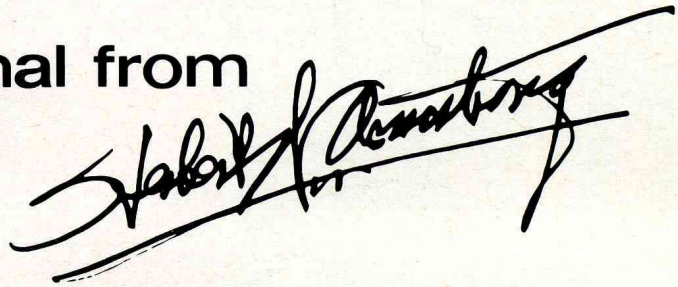
What is right?

We say at the Ambassador College campuses that we teach not only how to earn a living, but also how to live! The college motto is: “Recapture True Values.” Out of what textbook do we teach the true values? In what textbook do we learn how to live?

Actually, the only source of this most necessary knowledge might seem a little strange to students of the average university. It is the **ONLY** textbook which imparts the most necessary of all knowledge: What is the meaning — the purpose of life? What are the true values? What is the right way to live — the way to peace, happiness, prosperity, security — the comfortable, interest-packed, enjoyable and abundant life?

Why should the one book — the Holy Bible — that holds all the right **ANSWERS** — the only rational an-

Personal from



IS IT WRONG TO BE A CULTURED INDIVIDUAL?

swers that make sense — be overlooked by so many?

The Holy Bible is, actually, the foundation of knowledge. So what is the answer that comes from the textbook of the very Creator about this matter of culture, good breeding, how we should dress, education, financial prosperity?

Actually, surprising though it may be to some, the Bible teaching upholds prosperity, culture, education and acquisition of right knowledge, good quality, proper attire in clothes. The Bible reveals human nature as being lazy, slovenly, yet full of vanity and greed.

When people *brag* about being poor, uneducated and uncultured, that is merely **VANITY**. It is usually self-excusing shiftlessness, neglect, lack of effort.

Now is God lazy? Jesus said, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” What was God’s work? That of Creator and ruler over his creation.

What about quality? Was his work well done or poorly done? After the creation in the first chapter of Genesis, “God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was **VERY GOOD**.” God placed the first man in the garden of Eden. It was undoubtedly the most beautiful garden ever to exist on earth. God planted it. God gave the first man a job in that gar-

den. It was not to be lazy, shiftless and let the garden go to weeds and ugliness — but “to dress it and to keep it” (Genesis 2:15).

In creating, God had to think, plan and design what was to be created. For example, look at a beautiful rose or a lily. There’s nothing inferior there.

His instruction to the workman: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Jesus, prior to his ministry, was a carpenter, a builder of buildings. In Nazareth the best and finest buildings were built out of stone. The little synagogue (mentioned in Luke 4:16) was very probably one of the stone buildings that Jesus helped to build.

A man once accused me of being a “perfectionist.” But Jesus Christ *commands* that we be perfectionists: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

Jesus Christ is still a builder. He rose from the dead. He is **ALIVE TODAY**. Today he is building a **SPIRITUAL** building — his church, to *become* the kingdom of God. It must be the **FINEST** (Ephesians 2:20-22).

Just what is the difference between “best” quality and cheap merchandise?

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All merchandise comes out of the ground. Quality products are simply those resulting from more careful and conscientious selection of better materials, which are made into an object by more thoughtful, better-designed and more painstaking craftsmanship. Inferior merchandise comes from indifferent selection of materials and less conscientious and careful workmanship. God's way is the quality way!

Is good quality "extravagance"? Many people do not realize the true meaning of the word "extravagance." Webster's definition: "A spending of more than is reasonable or necessary; excessive expenditure; wastefulness." God's quality, then, is NOT extravagance unless it is excessive.

But what if you can't afford the best quality? Then purchase only what you are able — always live within your means — and be satisfied with such as you have. But, be industrious, doing what you do the best you can and if you really live God's way, in due time he will prosper you so that you can afford better.

Yet, never set your heart on physical things. In the quotation from Jesus mentioned above (Mark 10:23-24), it was not the possession of wealth that Jesus said would keep a man out of the kingdom of God — but the TRUSTING in those riches. David warned us that, when God prospers us, we should be careful not to set our hearts on the prosperity.

Through John, Jesus says: "Beloved, I wish above all things that you mayest prosper and be in health" (III John 2). Look at the prosperity of the patriarch Joseph: "And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a PROSPEROUS man. . . the Lord made all that he did to pros-

per. . ." (Genesis 39:2-3). Job was the wealthiest man in the East. After he learned his lesson, God gave him double his original wealth. The greatest national prosperity was promised by God to the descendants of Abraham if they would diligently follow his way.

Prosperity is not a sin. It is a BLESSING. God is the giver of abundance and prosperity. But carnal man usually sets his heart on the wealth, instead of God. He makes it an idol in which he trusts. That is the sin.

It is God's will that we prosper, be obedient to him, with our hearts set on him, relying solely on him. Then when we prosper — when God gives abundance of good things — of good quality — he wants us to be appreciative, grateful, give him thanks, enjoy what he has blessed us with, all the while trusting and worshipping him and realizing we shall have the material things in but a short time.

One businessman whom God had blessed with a very nice home well furnished with good quality things put it this way: "My attitude toward it is like it was when I was assigned to a very fine hotel room for overnight. I said: 'I will enjoy it these few fleeting moments, give God thanks, be appreciative, try to use it as facilities for serving God, obtaining a good night's rest, and then leave it and go on my way in the morning, never looking back with any regrets at leaving it.' That's my attitude toward my very nice home. If I had to leave it forever tomorrow morning, there would be no regrets — just thanksgiving that God let me enjoy it for the little time I had it. This life doesn't last long — and we soon leave everything in it. I'm merely a transient sojourner here, looking forward to something more real and permanent in God's kingdom."

But what about one who never had this understanding — and now, at middle age or older, realizes what has been lost? It may be no fault of the person at all. But everyone

should do all he can, from the time he awakens to this truth. Forget the past. Begin where you are, and start living God's way!

What about good manners, clothing and proper attire?

There is much sophisticated "culture" in this world that is pure snob-bishness and vanity. But TRUE culture is based on God's great law: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." That part of culture and good manners which expresses concern for one's neighbor in politeness, graciousness, pleasantness, smiles and service is true culture.

About dress? Yes, one should dress according to the occasion, and also within reason according to his pocketbook. On Ambassador College campuses, during work hours, students dress in the proper work clothes for the job. During classes, they do not "dress up," but men often come in shirt sleeves and open collar — yet clean, neat and orderly. For an evening function, they dress up in whatever is their best — and if they cannot afford better than they have, that's quite all right.

But for a wedding or graduation exercises, they should dress properly — in the best they have. Is that being "stuck up"? Never! Jesus gave a parable picturing the wedding between himself and his church. The king in this parable is God, and his son is Jesus Christ. Notice:

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness" (Matthew 22:11-13).

The Bible teaches the principle of proper attire according to the occasion. Bodily apparel is also used in the Bible to symbolize character. There is a kind of pride that is NOT vanity, but rather concern for others and respect toward God. That kind of pride we should have. □