

WHO IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

ALTHOUGH there is the proposal for Church unity, it is common knowledge that the question as to who is the head of the Church is one of the issues on which there still exists an area of disagreement. The right answer to this question is of paramount importance because it touches on the very foundation of the divine institution that is known as Church.

The issue of doctrines is very important in the Christian Faith. St. Paul warned Timothy, a bishop in the early Church, to guard the doctrines of God jealously and charged him to warn others to "TEACH NO OTHER DOCTRINE".-1 Timothy 1: 3; 4: 16; see "also Galatians 1: 8, 9, *Authorized Version*.

It is an article of faith of the Roman Catholic Church that Peter the apostle was the 'rock' upon which Jesus Christ built his Church and that Peter was chosen to be the "**Head of the Church**" and the "**Chief of the Apostles**". Linked with this is the claim that every Pope or Bishop of Rome is a successor of St. Peter.

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Baltimore, James Cardinal Gibbons, stated: "The Catholic Church teaches also that our Lord conferred on St. Peter the first place of honor and jurisdiction in the government of His whole Church, and that the same spiritual supremacy has always resided in the Popes, or Bishops' of Rome, as being the successors of St. Peter." (*The Faith Of Our Fathers*, Eighty-third Revised Edition, page 78.)

A *Catholic Dictionary*, Second Edition, Revised, defines the "Church of Christ" as "the visible religious society... instituted directly by Christ under one head, St. Peter and his successors, the popes..." (Page 97).

A Roman Catholic magazine- *the Catholic Voice*, issue of June 1956 had this to say: "...Our Divine Lord called Peter the 'rock' on which His Church would be built ..." (page 81). And answering a question as to why our Lord appeared to St. Peter, *the Catholic Voice* of July 1956, stated: "... We presume that He did so because He had chosen Peter to be the Head of His Apostles and the Church." (Page 102).

The issues involved in this matter are very serious and are of tremendous spiritual interest to both Roman Catholics and Protestants alike as well as any other person who desires to acquire an accurate knowledge of the Christian Faith. It is the more interesting that the Roman Catholic Church bases its teaching about the primacy of Peter not merely on 'tradition' but on the Scripture.

Holy Bible

We must admit that the awakening of the interest of the Catholics in the Holy Bible is a significant development in Christendom Under the heading, "BACK TO THE BIBLE", a Catholic news paper, the *INDEPENDENT* of Oct. 16-22, 1966, published: "One effect of the Ecumenical Council has been to re-awaken our interest in the Bible...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." In *Course No.6* of the "Catholic Enquiry Centre", published at Owerri, Nigeria, it is positively stated: "And for a Catholic the whole Bible is the word of God...It is a Catholic teaching that there is no error in the Bible."

We of the God's Kingdom Society always endeavour to keep an open mind towards

one and all. It is our policy to call a spade a spade, or truth, truth, no matter who says it because we firmly believe that the truth belongs to God. Therefore, if the Roman Catholics are right we must sincerely admit that they are right, but if they are wrong, yes, we should not only say so but we should also prove from the Holy Bible, which they believe is "the word of God", that they are wrong.

Indeed, we quite agree with Revelation John Laux, M. A., author of *A Course in Religion for Catholic High Schools and Academies* (Part III) when he stated that we should enlarge our knowledge, cultivate our reason, "to get an insight into the relation of truth to truth; to learn to view things as they are".

Now let us turn to the Holy Bible to get an insight into the relation of scripture to scripture about the truth of the question, **"Who is the Head of the Church?"** In order to avoid misgivings and for the benefit of our Catholic friends, all Bible references in this sermon, except otherwise expressly stated, are from the **Douay Version** which some call 'Roman Catholic Bible'.

This Rock

When Jesus Christ came to the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples: "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" Some people, the disciples told him, said John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Jesus then asked: "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God." (Matthew 16:13-16) Following this reply, Jesus said: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee that: **Thou art Peter: and upon this rock I will build my church;** and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."- Matthew 16: 17, 18.

What has been described as the "charter of the Papacy" is drawn from this declaration of Christ. Thus in answer to Question 88, *The Explanatory Catechism* states: "I know that Christ appointed St. Peter to be the Head of the Church, because Christ said to him: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church. ... (Matthew xvi. 18, 19.)'"

At this juncture, we must say outright that the interpretation given the text by the Roman Catholic Church has given cause for dispute among Christians because some believe that Jesus Christ NEVER made Peter the head of the Church. No one, apart from Jesus Christ himself or God's word in the Bible, is competent to settle this dispute. Jesus Christ, it is clear in the Bible, did not say St. Peter is the rock; neither did he say that the church was built upon him nor that he was the head of the Church. **Rather Jesus Christ himself is the rock upon which the Church is built, and he is the head of the Church. The truth of this in the Bible is so clear that there is no room for doubt for anyone who keeps his mind free from prejudice.**

When Jesus said, "Thou art Peter", we know as a rule in grammar that Peter was the second person. And when Christ added, "and upon THIS rock", we can as well understand that he was no longer referring to the second person-Peter. If Peter were the rock, Christ would have said, "Thou art Peter, and upon thee, the rock, I will build my church". The contrast between "THOU" and "THIS" should not be confused. So when he said, "and upon THIS rock", Christ was pointing to himself, the Son of the Living God, as the one upon whom the Church would be built.

In fact, he is the rock or foundation stone. This fact is strengthened by St. Paul's statement concerning the natural Jews, to wit: **"And all drank the same spiritual drink; (And they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them; and THE ROCK WAS CHRIST.)"**- 1 Corinthians 10: 4.

The Foundation

The "Catholic Truth Society" of London stated in a pamphlet, *What Do You Know about St. Peter and His Successors...* "One such essential feature of the Church was undoubtedly the authority of St. Peter. It was the foundation, and what could be more essential to any building than the foundation. If the foundation changes, the building changes. Our Lord actually compared His Church to a building erected on the foundation of St. Peter's authority."

We agree that Jesus Christ likened the Church to a building but there is no passage in the whole Bible which states that St. Peter is the foundation of the Church.

Long before the human existence of Jesus Christ it had been foretold that he would be a stone to be laid by God in Zion for a foundation—a stone, though rejected by human builders, that would still become the head-stone. (Psalm 117: 22,23; Isaiah 28: 16) Referring to Jesus Christ, St. Peter said to the Jews: "This is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, which is become the head of the corner..." - Acts 4: 10- 12; 1 Peter 2: 6.

The name Peter, from the Greek word *Petros* means a stone. It was Christ himself who called Simon, his apostle, Peter (John 1: 42) which spiritually signifies strong faith in God. Other faithful servants of Christ are also stones. That was why St. Peter wrote to the Christians: "Be you also as *living stones* built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

And turning to the prophecy relating to Christ, he added: "Wherefore it is said in the Scripture: Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious..." - 1 Peter 2: 3-8.

All the apostles make up the "Little Flock" but there are the "other sheep" whom Christ promised to gather. (Luke 12: 32; John 10: 16) Both the apostles, including Peter, who are the foundation members in the sense of being the predestinated and first fruits of Christ's disciples, and the "other sheep" are all built in ONE foundation, which is Christ. Said St. Paul: "Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners; but you are fellow citizens with the saints and the domestics of God, built upon the foundation of the APOSTLES and PROPHETS (note-NOT Peter alone, but all the apostles). **Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom (Christ, not Peter) all the building, being framed together, groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord.** In whom (Christ) you also are built together into an habitation of God in the Spirit." - Ephesians 2: 19-22.

Whatever remains in the argument of the Catholics, if any at all, is knocked out by St. Paul when he stated: "**For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid: WHICH IS CHRIST JESUS.**" - 1 Corinthians 3:11.

Saint Peter was at no time given supreme power over the other apostles. If by Christ's saying "Thou art Peter" and so forth, he was understood by the apostles to have made Peter their head, why was it that after that occasion they still "disputed among themselves, which of them should be the greatest"? Even then Jesus did not say Peter was greater than anyone of them but he said, "For he that is the lesser among you all he is the greater." - Mark 9: 33, 34; Luke 9: 46-48.

St. Paul whose wisdom was commended by St. Peter, laboured more than all the apostles (1 Corinthians 15: 10) and he did not consider himself inferior to Peter or any other apostle. He said: "For in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing." - 2 Corinthians 12: .11; 11: 5, *King James or Authorized Version (A. V.)*.

St. Peter recognised that he was an elder or an overseer just as other apostles were. He wrote: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who AM ALSO AN ELDER, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be

revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof..." (1 Peter 5: 1-3, A.V.) **He did not say he was the only elder or head of the apostles.**

That Christ Jesus is the head of the Church and not St. Peter, there is no doubt. Concerning Christ it is written: "... And He (God Almighty) hath subjected all things under his (Christ's) feet **and hath made him (Christ) head over all the Church...**" - Ephesians 1: 19-23.

Exhorting the Christians in regard to the duties of husband and wife, Saint Paul used the relationship between Christ and the Church as an example, and showed that Jesus Christ, not Peter is the head of the Church. Said he: "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord; because the husband is the head of the wife, **AS CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.** He is the saviour of his body. Therefore, as the church is subject to Christ (not Peter, we reiterate) so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things." - Ephesians 5: 22-24.

What is more, Saint Paul described Jesus Christ as "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature". He added: "And he (Christ) is the **HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH;** who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he (Christ) may hold the primacy; because in him, it hath well pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell..." - Colossians 1: 15-20.

The truth of the matter is already made bare. Some may ignore it or argue it- it remains the truth, God's word of truth says that God "hath made him (Christ, NOT Peter) Head over all the Church". All we can do, if we are true to our conscience, is to accept the truth for our own good in the Lord. "For we can do nothing against the truth; but for the truth." (2 Corinthians 13: 8) And Jesus said, "You shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free."

ARE CHRISTIANS BOUND TO KEEP THE SABBATH LAW?

OF all the divers laws and ordinances enacted by God through Moses the prophet, the Sabbath Law was one of those the breaking of which carried capital punishment. But the advent of Jesus Christ brought a modification of the law and, subsequently, the understanding that the Sabbath was among those things which were a shadow of things to come.

The sabbath day was the seventh day of the week on which the children of Israel were by law enjoined to refrain from all kinds of work. This was one of the Ten Commandments. God said: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." - Exodus 20: 8-11.

Stringent Law

It was a requirement of the law that no fire should be kindled on the sabbath day. The law was stringent, and the penalty for breaking it was death. In Exodus 35: 2-3, it is written: "Six days shall work be done but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day."

There was an occasion when the children of Israel were in the wilderness that a certain man who was gathering sticks on the sabbath day was caught. The man was brought before Moses and Aaron, and all the congregation of the people. He was found guilty, and God's sentence was this: "The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp." Indeed this sentence of the Lord was at once executed. - Numbers 15: 32-36.

After the return of the Jews from Babylonish captivity, the faithful observed the sabbath law with all seriousness. Trading on the sabbath day was prohibited. (Neh. 10: 31) It happened at one time that when Nehemiah the prophet took notice that some of the Jews violated the sabbath by making purchases on that day, he strongly objected. And because of the misconduct of the people in this regard, he ordered that the gates of Jerusalem should be shut and should not be opened until the sabbath was over.

Here is his own record:

"In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, what evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be

dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day." - Nehemiah 13:15-17.

Modification

Long before Jesus Christ was born on the earth, the prophet Moses, moved by the Spirit of God, had told the nation of Israel in a prophecy concerning him (Christ) thus: "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from among the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; **unto him ye shall hearken.**" - Deuteronomy 18: 15.

As a matter of fact, the advent of Jesus Christ brought about a change from the old to the new covenant. It was because the unbelieving Jews in his days ignored the prophetic instruction about the expected Messiah-the Greater Prophet - that they failed to recognise or acknowledge the pre-eminent position of Jesus Christ. In John 1: 17, it is written: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

By virtue of the authority God gave to Jesus Christ, he modified the Sabbath Law. There was never a time he taught his disciples to keep the sabbath. Rather, he showed -by precept and example - that for doing any good work on the sabbath day no one deserved to be punished.

On of the things that often brought conflict between Jesus Christ and the fanatical Jews was the question of the Sabbath. He did good works on the Sabbath day and even allowed his disciples "to pluck ears of corn, and to eat", which according to the Pharisees was "not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day" – Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28.

In the synagogue of the Jews into which he went there was a man with a withered hand. And when the Pharisees asked whether it was lawful to heal a man on the sabbath day in order to find fault with him, he answered: "What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much more then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days." - Matthew 12: 9-12. See also Mark 3: 1-5.

There was another occasion when Jesus Christ, on the sabbath day, cured an impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. Instead of the Jews to glorify God and rejoice with the man who was cured, they harassed him saying, "It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed." But the poor fellow replied, "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk." (John 5: 1-11) And when the hardhearted Jews knew that it was Jesus who cured the man, they persecuted him "and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day". (verses 15, 16) Notwithstanding, Jesus defended himself and justified his action by saying, "My Father has never yet ceased His work, and I am working too." - verse 17, *New English Bible*.

Moreover, none of the apostles of Jesus Christ ever enjoined the Christian believers to observe the sabbath. When the council of the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem sent word to the Gentile converts at Antioch, Syria and Cilicia as to what they should do, they did not ask them to keep the sabbath. - Acts 15: 22-31.

Shadow

That the sabbath law was among those Ordinances blotted out by Jesus Christ, as stated by St Paul, is beyond argument. For this reason the apostle admonished: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, 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.

The bottom has been knocked off the argument of those who hold that Christians should keep the sabbath. It is wrong to stick to the demands of the Mosaic law instead of the truth and faith of Jesus Christ. St. Paul showed clearly that the law served as a kind of tutor to lead the Jews to Christ and that since he (Christ) had come "we are no longer under a schoolmaster". (Galatians 3: 23-25) He also said: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ..." - Galatians 2: 16.

Among the churches that claim to be keeping the Sabbath, there is disagreement as to whether Saturday or Sunday is the sabbath day. There should be no dispute over this if men would be true to themselves. The seventh day of the week, according to the Bible (Exodus 20: 10,11), which is Saturday, is the sabbath day. In his *Encyclopedia of Religion and Religions*, E. Royston Pike, an ecclesiastical scholar, stated: "Among Jews the sabbath is reckoned from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset." (Page 332).

Sunday Observance

The change of the sabbath from Saturday to Sunday was made by Constantine, a Roman emperor. He made a law in 321 A.D. for the observance of Sunday throughout the Roman Empire. About this, Frank Loris Peterson wrote:

"Seeking to please both the Christians. Who observed the seventh-day Sabbath, and the pagans, who worshipped the sun on the first day of the week, he (Constantine) 'artfully balanced the hopes and fears of his subjects by publishing in the same year two edicts, the first of which enjoined the solemn observance of Sunday, and the second directed the regular consultation of the Aruspices (a pagan practice).'" (*The Hope of the Race*, pages 110-111). His quotation was from the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by Edward Gibbon.

Concerning the Sunday observance, *The American Peoples Encyclopedia* states: "Historically, Sunday came to be identified with the Sabbath, specifically in regard to its observance. The Emperor Constantine's decree A.D. 321, making Sunday a day of rest from general labor, but providing for exceptions, such as keeping open the market place, is an example of civil laws regulating the day's observance after Christianity had become a legal religion." (Vol. 16, page 845).

The teaching that Christians, as the *Explanatory Catechism* says, are "commanded to keep the Sunday holy" is a distortion of Bible truth. Many of the wrongs in Christendom sprang from the imposition of Roman paganism upon Christian practices.

People know that those claiming to be keeping the sabbath-Saturday or Sunday - are deceiving themselves. If we are to go by the terms of the sabbath law, we do not think that any of the so-called sabbath-keepers would be living since the penalty for breaking it was death. Do some not go to the offices to work on Sundays or Saturdays? Do they not kindle fire, make purchases or do some other works? If they don't, granted, what about their children, servants, or domestic animals? The law says, "Thou shalt not do ANY work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." - Exodus 20: 10.

However, the vital point we must emphasise, is that Christians are not bound to keep the sabbath-be it Saturday or Sunday. One is free to rest oneself any day. The law of faith and grace under Christ does not tie anyone to a particular day to rest. The sabbath is not to control us; and Jesus Christ told the Pharisees: "The sabbath was made for man, and not

man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." - Mark 2: 27-28.

Real Rest

The word *sabbath* means **rest**. The time for the real rest or sabbath that God promised His true worshippers, of which the Mosaic sabbath was a type, has not come. That will be in God's Kingdom fully established, and it is towards that rest we as Christians are labouring. Concerning that antitypical rest, St. Paul wrote: "For if Jesus (that is, Joshua) had given them (the Jews) rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God...Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." - Hebrews 4: 8-11.

Jesus Christ, the Leader and Master of Christians, worked on the sabbath day. If therefore his disciples work on the sabbath day, they do not break God's law since Jesus Christ whom Moses told the Jews to look to and obey, has amended the law. "The sabbath", said he, "was made for man and not man for the sabbath." This is the truth and it is clear.

HOW WAS THE GKS FOUNDED?

WHAT does God's Kingdom Society (GKS) stand for? How, when and by whom was she founded? What precisely is her mission? And what are her doctrines? These are some of the questions often asked by people. Many of them ask with a sincere desire to know the truth, but some others do merely to find fault. Whatever the motive of anyone, the facts, no doubt, are of vital interest to unprejudiced, honest people.

There is nothing in the history of the GKS for which we the members should be ashamed. It is a record of happenings that confirm the time-honoured truth that what God has planted no one can uproot. And so, we have every cause, rather, to glory in the Lord.

The God's Kingdom Society is a purely Christian Organisation founded by the Almighty God through the instrumentality of the late Gideon Meriodere Urhobo, of the blessed memory. The late G. M. Urhobo, who was the first President of the GKS, with just an instrument chosen by God through Jesus Christ, according to the election of grace, to accomplish His purpose. - Matthew 24: 31; Acts 15: 14-18; 10: 9-35; James. 1: 18.

Any religion or faith is literally organised by man but spiritually either by God Who moves and directs the man through His Spirit or by the devil. And we "know them by their fruits". - Romans 6: 16; Matthew 7: 15-20.

As a matter of fact, there is no religious organisation that can claim that God Himself came down to this earth to set it up. God has always used men, as He pleases, to carry out His will. Jesus Christ himself, when he was on earth, said: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him (God) that sent me." - John 6: 38.

Also, the early apostles of Jesus Christ were practical examples of people chosen by God to be His vessels. All the spiritual gifts and powers manifest in them and which they exerted in the work of the ministry were derived from the Almighty Father. For that reason, the glory, honour and praise of their successes must be ascribed to God who, by His grace, fitted them to their several uses.

Said St. Paul, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man. I have planted, Apollos watered: but God gave the increase, So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase..." -1 Corinthians 3: 5-10.

History

The history of the God's Kingdom Society is linked with the biography of her first President, Brother G. M. Urhobo, in respect of his career as a preacher of the gospel. He hailed from Urhobo tribe and was the second son of a kind pagan gentleman-the late Ukoli of Agbassa village in Warri, Midwestern State of Nigeria. He was educated at the Warri Government School, and he taught in Roman Catholic schools as well as the Government school, Warri, in the twenties. In June 1930, he joined the Posts and Telegraphs Department as a postal clerk and telegraphist.

Undoubtedly, his strong inclination for divine knowledge fired his interest in the Holy Bible which he spent most of his time to study. The most significant experience of his life came when he fell into a trance and received the Lord's commission. It was this remarkable occurrence that brought about the radical change in his life from a civil servant to an adroit preacher of the gospel! There was never a time he equivocated with regard to his spiritual calling; rather, he ever so well made open declarations about the grace the Lord bestowed upon him-and he lived up to it. Here is his own testimony:

"After three and half years' diligent and prayerful studies of the Holy Bible, Jesus Christ revealed himself to me in a vision and commanded me to go and proclaim the good news of God's Kingdom (or 'Gospel of Peace') to all nations as the only remedy for all human sufferings and woes; to expose all the false doctrines which Satan had used to deceive the people and to keep them in ignorance of God's Kingdom and purpose of creation; and to pronounce God's written judgment against all wickedness."

Under the circumstances, it was virtually impossible for him to continue to serve under the Nigerian Colonial Government. He had no other alternative than to obey the Lord's command, like St. Paul of Bible fame (Acts 26: 12-20), and devote his life wholly to Christ's Ministry as "the Lord's freeman". So, in February 1933, he resigned from the Government Service and became a full-time Minister of the gospel of Christ. This was quite in harmony with the biblical injunction, which says: "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: Likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men " - I Corinthians 7: 22, 23.

The resignation of Brother G. M. Urhobo from the civil service for no other reason than that he, being anointed by the Lord, was going to give his whole time to God's Kingdom service, gave cause for his own relatives and many of his colleagues and friends to view his sanity with suspicion. It was really difficult for the unspiritual to appreciate his decision and course of action in throwing to the winds, for the love of preaching as some said, such an enviable post in the Government Service in those days when men of his social rank were regarded as the elites of society!

Right from the start of his career as a preacher, Brother Urhobo became an object of hatred and reproach as Christ truly said would happen to the chosen ones. (John 15: 18, 19; 17: 14-16). His relatives and friends forsook him. Some said he was mad; others called him a devil and deceiver just as Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of mankind, was called. (John 10: 20). Many false reports about him were published and circulated by certain people and the Watchtower Society warning the people to avoid him because of his teachings, which they considered to be revolutionary.

His worst antagonists were among the members of the Watchtower Society and the Roman Catholic Church Owing to the persecution in Warri he went to Sapele in June 1933. There, too, it was not all roses for him. His expository lectures in which he criticised the false doctrines of "churchianity" stirred great enmity of the clergymen against him

Urhobo vs Brown

In October 1934, Brother Urhobo went to Lagos where, owing to his interest in the publications of the late J. F. Rutherford -former President of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of America-he came in contact with the late W. R. Brown, the local representative of the Watchtower Society in Nigeria.

Later on, there was a disagreement between Brother Urhobo and Mr. Brown over the

issues of doctrine. Brother Urhobo had in a biblically constructive argument, for the purpose of correction (2 Timothy 3: 16, 17), called the attention of Mr. Brown to certain errors in the teachings of the Watchtower Society about "Marriage", "Jehovah's Organisation", "Selection and ordination of the 144,000 Anointed Christians", "Leadership", "Memorial Supper", "Women Preaching" and their fixing dates for "Armageddon".

Instead of Mr. Brown to allow the Spirit of Christ to dominate his reason as to consider the correction of Brother Urhobo from a scriptural stand-point, he lost his temper. Yes, King Solomon said, "He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly." (Proverbs. 14: 17) And St. James stated, "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." - James. 1: 20.

The honourable course open to Brother Urhobo was to part company with Mr. Brown whose teachings, he pointed out were inconsistent with the Scripture. It is those doctrinal issues that are the base of the vast gulf still existing between the God's Kingdom Society and the Watchtower Society whose members call themselves "Jehovah's Witnesses".

GKS Organised

It was in Lagos in that same year 1934 Brother Urhobo, through his soul-stirring public lectures, attracted a handful of adherents whom he, through the Spirit of God, organised into a group of Bible students. And it was that group that has grown steadily by God's grace, into thousands of Christians allover Nigeria and abroad, in spite of stiff opposition and tribulations of the devil and become a mighty Christian Organisation known, today, as GOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY. This precisely fulfils the Bible: "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time." - Isaiah. 60: 22; see also Matthew 13: 31, 32.

The members of the Watchtower Society having failed in their attempt to hinder the progress of the GKS, resorted to a campaign of callumny. They called Brother Urhobo a devil, Judas, man of sin, thief, prisoner, a withered branch, and such like contrary to the Bible. (Matthew 5: 43,45) They are not ashamed that the man whom they always called a "withered branch" was more virile in preaching the gospel than they; and the GK.S, which is the fruit of his labour, continues to grow by leaps and bounds through the grace of God in fulfilment of the Bible. - Psalm 105: 24; 115: 11, 13-15; Isaiah. 9: 6, 7.

We are sometimes amused when we hear some people talk glibly about the God's Kingdom Society. They ask, "How can it be the church of God when it was founded by man?" They add, "The GKS sprang from the Watchtower Society; we knew the founder very well: it was the late G. M. Urhobo who was an ordinary postal clerk."

It is those who have no spiritual understanding that look down on the work of God on carnal or worldly considerations. We do not know of any church denomination, we reiterate, that God Himself came down *from* heaven to establish on earth. The Roman Catholic Church cannot make such a claim. Even their claim that it was founded by St. Peter is scripturally unsustainable. Historically, the influence of pagan Rome on that church is common knowledge. We need not go into details as to why people who had no spiritual light became "rulers of the church from outside".

The Church of England split or sprang from the Roman Catholic Church. Under Henry VIII, the break with the papacy became complete.

The Lutherans started with Martin Luther and the Presbyterians with John Calvin. And was it not John Wesley, after graduation and ordination as a priest in the Church of England, that founded the Methodist Church? What about the Salvation Army? Was it not founded by

William Booth, a Methodist minister, in the East End of London in 1865?

Are the Baptists not successors of the *Anabaptists* who seceded formally from the Church of England in 1633. and "among their early and most distinguished names are those of Milton and Bunyan"? (Vide *Jack's Reference Book*, page 839).

The Adventists of which the Seventh- Day Adventists is just a body, started in North America with William Miller, a Baptist minister.

Russell vs Barbour

Finally, let us take a look at the Watchtower Society whose members are most vociferous in making bombastic claims and scandalising others. They claim that theirs is "Jehovah's Organsation", but who founded it? It was founded by Charles Taze Russell at Pittsburgh, Pa., in America. And what was he before then? A Watchtower publication, *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, has this to say: "Russell was in partnership with his father, assisting him with his business activity in a men's furnishing store...he abandoned it all to devote his entire time to the ministry," (Page 17).

The book stated that "in 1876, while Pastor Russell was in Philadelphia on a business trip, he happened to come into possession of a copy of the magazine *The Herald of the Morning*" being published by N. H. Barbour of Rochester. N. Y. He was pleased and interested because of the similarity of their views "even though he recognized it as an Adventist paper". He got in touch with Barbour to arrange a meeting at his (Russell's) expense in order to discuss matters. "He was satisfied with the evidence Barbour presented." The book continues; "As a result of Russell's meeting with Barbour, his study group in Pittsburgh became affiliated with the group at Rochester..." (Page 18)

It is interesting to note that a division soon arose between Russell and Barbour because of differences on scriptural points. **This resulted in Russell's breaking away**, The Watchtower publication quotes Russell as stating among other things; "Therefore, after a most careful though unavailing effort to reclaim the erring, **I withdrew entirely** from *The Herald of the Morning*, and from further fellowship with Mr., Barbour." (Pages 20-21, *emphasis ours*).

What moral right, therefore, have the Watchtower witnesses to point accusing fingers at Brother G. M. Urhobo for parting company with Mr. Brown and the Watchtower Society on doctrinal grounds?

However, the point we are making in our reference to other religious bodies is that none of them is in a better position than the God's Kingdom Society to claim to be God's Organisation. But judged by the standard of morals, disciple and, above all, the preaching of the truth of God as contained in the Bible, we, like St. Paul recommend the GKS to "every man's conscience in the sight of God". The GKS does not, however, claim to be the only true church organisation in the whole world. We say all this not out of ill-will or animosity but for the purpose of enlightenment.

The fact that Brother Gideon Urhobo was an African or a postal clerk was no reason why God would not use him to do His work. Late President Rutherford of the Watchtower Society stated in his booklet, *Favored People*, that the blessings of God have no reference whatsoever to nationalities;. He wrote: "The blackest man from Africa will have the same opportunity as the white man of America. " (Page 7).

The early apostles of Jesus Christ were common men but it pleased God to make them His workmen. If God could choose a fisherman to be an apostle, is it a postal clerk He could not call to labour in the gospel? (Matthew 4:18-22; Acts 4; 13) There is a popular hymn having

this stanza:

*Not many rich or noble called,
Not many great or wise;
Those whom God makes His kings and [priests
Are poor in human eyes.*

This was drawn from the first epistle of St. Pauls to the Corinthians in which he made it clear that it is those the world regards as foolish and base God chooses to do His work. He wrote: **"For ye see your calling, brethren, bow that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the - foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence."** - I Corinthians 1: 26-29.

So when some people say contemptuously that the first President of the GKS did not go to Europe or America or university, we do not bother ourselves because we know that they are spiritually ignorant. The reproaches, malicious misrepresentations, slanders and persecutions of men have never stayed God's blessings from descending upon the GKS. St. Paul was so reproached and branded a heretic, yet he told Felix: "But this I confess unto thee that after the way which they (his accusers) call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets." - Acts 24: 14.

Success.

The success of Brother Gideon Urhobo is no longer in dispute. Today the God's Kingdom Society, no matter whatever view anyone holds, reflects the glory of God and stands as an everlasting monument, by the grace of God, of Brother Gideon M. Urhobo-an illustrious son of Africa!

With regard to the mission of the GKS, the following extracts from her Constitution are explicit enough:

"(a) To declare God's Kingdom of righteousness and peace on earth and to express this doctrine in every conceivable way and form, within the bounds of law, order and human decency and to do so at any time or place, to the best of our knowledge and understanding of Bible interpretations and symbolism.

"(b) To vindicate, admonish, preach and impart to mankind irrespective of colour, creed or caste the wholesome idea of service, fear, adoration and reverence to God Almighty, the Maker of Man, the Author of Life, and the Great Ruler and Architect of the Universe, and for this purpose always to organise meetings and gatherings in any corner of the street, road, house or premises, in any township, village or locality without harm, violence nor damage to any person or property and without infringement of any laws or regulations of any constitutional authority of Government.

"(c) To excite the interest of Africans and all peoples of the earth to the study of the Holy Bible, the Christian ethics and theology and to promote all means and measures conducive to the propagation of this knowledge for the eventual peace and realisation of harmony and tranquility among all people of the human race in accordance with scriptural ideology."

We have published this in the interest of the readers who have been asking to know more about the God's Kingdom Society. Yes, the GKS is planted by God; it is not the work of man.

Therefore, anyone persecuting her is "fighting against God". - Acts 5: 29-42; Luke 10: 16; Mark 9: 41, 42; Hebrews 10: 31; 12: 29.

IS THE OLD TESTAMENT ABOLISHED?

THE view of some people that the Old Testament of the Bible has been done away within the Christian Era is, to put it mildly, a misconception. Indeed, the advent of Jesus Christ brought about a modification of the Mosaic Law, yet, the change was calculated to rule out the use of the Old Testament by Christians.

The Old Testament (otherwise known as the Hebrew Scriptures) is the first of the two great divisions of the Holy Bible containing God's covenants with man. It is made up of 39 books which are counted from Genesis to Malachi. The contents of the Old Testament include the accounts of the creation, the fall of man and the manifestation of God's justice, the Deluge, the Abrahamic promise, the laws of Moses to the nation of Israel, other typical incidents of far-reaching spiritual significance, the psalms, proverbs and prophecies.

Among those who profess to be Christians there are some who in their teachings discard the Old Testament and give their followers to understand that Christians have nothing to do with it in that it was intended to serve the natural Jews alone. For this reason, many people frown upon any reference to texts in the Old Testament.

In a *Bible Correspondence Course* by the "Church of Christ" it is stated: "The Old Testament was God's law to the Jew... It is most important for us to realize that God's will for us is found in the New Testament-not in the Old.

"Here are three reasons why we cannot today go to the Old Testament to find what God requires of us: (1) The Old Testament was God's law to the Jew. You were never under it. The ten commandments were given to the Jew only -never to the Gentiles (Read Exodus, chapters 19 and 20.) You cannot break the ten commandments any more than you can break the law of China. You are not and never were under them. (2) The Old Testament never contained a plan of salvation, not even for the Jew. At best, all he could do with his sacrifices was to postpone the punishment for his sins for a year. His sacrifices could not take away sin. (3) You are not under the Old Testament because Jesus took the law of Moses out of the way at his death. 'He taketh away the old (covenant) that he might establish the new (covenant) by the which will we are sanctified'. (Hebrews 10: 10)"

The foregoing quotes, no doubt, represent the argument of those who hold the view that the Old Testament is out of date.

Law and Prophets

In the first place it is very wrong to equate the Old Testament with the Ten Commandments contained in the twentieth chapter of the book of Exodus. As we indicated earlier in this sermon, the Old Testament contains much more than just "God's law to the Jew". Jesus Christ referred to the Old Testament as "the law and the prophets" during his ministry on earth. (Matthew 5: 17; 11: 13; Luke 16: 16) When Jesus was addressing his disciples after his resurrection, he declared: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in **the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me.**" The account goes on, "Then opened he their

understanding, that they might understand the scriptures."-Luke 24: 44,45.

It is very misleading, therefore, to give the impression that the Ten Commandments are the only fundamentals conveyed in the Old Testament! The Scriptures which Christ opened the minds of his disciples to understand were not only the Ten Commandments. They included the prophets and the psalms as well.

The Old Testament is so linked with the New in such a flow of divine thoughts, symbolisms and rules that no true Christian can dispense with a thorough understanding of its significance. Christians are bound to believe the Old Testament but their belief must be backed with a good understanding of the modification of the law through the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. -John 1: 17.

St. Paul confessed before Governor Felix that he believed the Old Testament which he referred to as "the law and the prophets". He said: "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they (the Jews who accused him) call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, **believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets.**"-Acts 24: 14.

Eternal Life

The second point that "the Old Testament never contained a plan of salvation, not even for the Jews", is a clear manifestation of lack of spiritual understanding. It is another way of saying that all those who lived before Christ would not be saved. The Bible does not support this view. In Hebrews chapter 11, there is a catalogue of some of the ancient faithful who had received God's approval to inherit His everlasting perfect Kingdom.

As far back as the days of Abraham the Almighty God disclosed His purpose of the salvation of mankind. To Abraham He said: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12: 3; 22: 18) It was in order to accomplish this magnificent purpose of blessing mankind-not only the believing Jews but the converted Gentiles also-with life, peace and happiness everlastingly that God sent Jesus Christ to the world. Concerning this St. Paul stated: "And Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles through faith, declared the Gospel to Abraham beforehand: 'In you all nations shall find blessing.' Thus it is the men of faith who share the blessing with faithful Abraham."-Galatians 3: 8, 9. (*New English Bible*).

Space will fail us to expatiate on the significance of the prophecy of Moses concerning Jesus Christ whom he warned the Jews to obey. (Deuteronomy 18: 15; Acts 3: 23) What about Job's declaration? "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." (Job. 19: 25-27) Could a man who had no knowledge of "God's plan of salvation" speak in such a vein that reflected true confidence and faith in the resurrection of the dead with- out which the faith of Christians is vain?

A question-and-answer conversation between a lawyer and Jesus Christ in his days on earth, throws a ray of light on this matter. The lawyer put this test question to him: "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus countered him with questions: "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" The law expert then answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." (The lawyer quoted from Deuteronomy 6: 5 and Leviticus. 19: 18.) And Jesus told him: "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."-Luke 10: 25- 28.

On another occasion when a certain ruler asked Jesus Christ as to what he should do in order to inherit eternal life, he (Jesus) told him: "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not

commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother." (Luke 18: 18-20) The point is that, if the laws were not necessary for salvation why did Christ refer to them? Mark you, the question was about salvation or eternal life. Will the anti-Old Testament preachers say that the book of Luke is in the Old Testament? Must Christians steal, commit adultery or bear false witness against people because the laws were for the Jews only?

St. Paul stated firmly that the "commandment was ordained to life" and added, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good". It is sin in men that makes them unable to keep the perfect laws of God. (Romans 7: 7-17) St. Paul believed the writings of Moses and quoted him as saying, "That the man which doeth those things (of the law) shall live by them." (Romans 10: 5; see also Leviticus 18: 5; Nehemiah 9: 29; Galatians 3: 12).

The usefulness of the Old Testament to Christians is further portrayed in St. Paul's epistle to the Romans. He said: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for OUR learning, that WE (Christians) through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15: 4.) Can any Christian of today claim to be a better authority than St. Paul, the vastly talented apostle? He also said: "For we are saved by hope..." (Romans 8: 24, 25) This is the hope which we have through "the comfort of the scriptures" about which the apostle was referring to the Old Testament.

With regard to the third point that the law of Moses was taken out of the way at the death of Jesus Christ we agree; but only to the extent of the understanding of what in effect was taken out of the way or the proper spiritual understanding of what that implies. St. Paul stated without ambiguity that there was a change of the law consequent upon the change of the priesthood from the Aaronic system to the priesthood after the order of Melchizedec. It is this change that enabled Jesus Christ who sprang from the tribe of Judah to become a priest. But under the Law of Moses only the sons of Aaron from the tribe of Levi were qualified for the priesthood. -Read Hebrews 7: 11-19.

We must point out that this change of the priesthood and the law cannot be taken to mean the abolition of the Old Testament. The laws cancelled were those that were a shadow of things to come, many of which Christ had fulfilled, and those laws which stood against our nature such as relating to meat, drink, holyday, new moon and sabbath days.- Colossians 2: 14-17; Hebrews 10: 1-10.

It must be understood that the Ten Commandments were not the only laws of Moses; there were several others. Many of these laws are still effective up till now save that they are underlined by the grace of Christ through faith which permits of observing the spirit rather than the letters of the law. The apostles commanded the Christians not to eat blood or things strangled according to Acts 15: 28, 29. But these were some of the Old Testament Laws though not among the Ten Commandments.

Amendment

The opinion that the Old Testament is condemned has no basis in the Scriptures. Jesus Christ himself said: "Do not suppose that I have come to abolish the Law and the prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to complete. I tell you this: so long as heaven and earth endure, not a letter, not a stroke, will disappear from the Law until all that must happen has happened. If any man therefore sets aside even the least of the Law's demands, and teaches others to do the same, he will have the lowest place in the kingdom of Heaven, whereas anyone who keeps the Law and teaches others so will stand high in the kingdom of Heaven."-Matthew 5:

17-19. (*New English Bible*).

Even in modifying the laws Christ increased the degree of their strength. Some of the amendments of the Law by Christ are written *in* Matthew 5: 21-48. Here are few instances. He said to his disciples: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment..." (Matthew 5: 21, 22) By this amendment, it is not only when you commit murder that you become guilty but as soon as you nurse anger against your neighbour without cause you are in danger of judgment.

Again, Jesus said: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matthew 5: 27, 28) In fact, some of the amendments are additions which place the old laws on a firmer footing in the Christian Era.

There are numerous Old Testament quotations in the New Testament. Both Jesus Christ and his early apostles made references to texts in the Old Testament to support their statements. When Satan tempted Jesus Christ to get food by changing stones into bread so as to prove that he was the Son of God, it was the Old Testament Christ quoted to counter the devil. For Jesus said: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4: 3, 4) To be precise, Christ quoted Deuteronomy 8: 3. On that occasion, the devil also cited the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) which he twisted, as false prophets do, to suit his purpose, but Jesus Christ silenced him with genuine authorities quoted from the same Old Testament. (Matthew 4: 5-11).

St. Peter also quoted the Psalms of David (Psalm 41: 9; 69: 25; 109: 8) when he was addressing the disciples about Judas Iscariot, the traitor, whose office another was to take. - Acts 1: 15-20.

In most of St. Paul's epistles he made references to the Hebrew Scriptures. Exhorting the Roman Christians, he said: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." (Romans 12: 19) The apostle cited from Deuteronomy 32: 35. And in Romans 14: 11, he further cited from Isaiah 45: 23.

Instances of references made by Jesus Christ and the apostles to Old Testament texts are numerous and all cannot be cited here. But from the few of them shown in the foregoing it will be preposterous for anyone to insist still that the Old Testament is of no use to Christians.

In first Corinthians chapter 10, St. Paul outlined some of the experiences and doings of the children of Israel. He stated that God was not well pleased with many of them because of their iniquities and they were overthrown in the wilderness. He then added: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." -1 Corinthians 10: 11.

If we the Christians now at the end of the world are to do away with the Old Testament. how can what is written in it be "for our admonition"? In other words, how can we understand the spiritual import of those incidents and learn lessons from them?

Law of Liberty

Some people quarrel with the Old Testament because of their lack of understanding in regard to the change of the Mosaic Law. Christians are expected to live a holy life; this calls for the practice of righteousness by adhering to the demands of God's word or law of liberty

which purifies the worshipper who sincerely acknowledges and puts away his sins. -Acts 10: 34,35; Matthew 5: 20; 6: 33; James. 1:25; 2:12.

We do not by this ignore the fact that it is by God's grace through faith that Christians will be saved. Asked St. Paul: "Do we then make void the law through faith?" He himself answered: "God forbid: yea, we establish the law."-Romans 3: 31.

If we know how to use the laws, we will never under-estimate their value. It was St. Paul who said "But we know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully."-1 Timothy 1: 8.

The truth of the subject matter has been made plain. Anyone who believes in the New Testament must equally believe in the Old because the New testifies to the vital importance, reliability and indispensability of the Old Testament. It is both the Old and New that make up "all Scripture" which St. Paul says "is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine for reproof, for correction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3: 16, 17) And remember that Jesus Christ said he came not to destroy the law or the prophets but to fulfill and complete their works. - Matthew 5: 17-19.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD (1)

THAT God exists is an eternal truth which even some sceptics from evidences staring them in the face now admit! A good knowledge of this fact coupled with holy fear is a powerful incentive to virtue and the best guard against vice. The most demonstrable among the evidences of His existence are found in His works of creation. But whenever doubt about this has arisen, it has not come from those who are pure in heart.

There are many people, especially among the intellectuals, who do not believe in the existence of God. These are the atheists. They are often inflated with pride based on a warped notion that by disbelieving in the existence of God they are scholarly and even scientific.

When misfortunes befall some people or when they are faced with problems they are unable to cope with they either turn round to accuse God or deny His existence. There was a man who said he did not believe that God exists because he lost his beautiful wife. We have also learnt of a certain Nigerian who was formerly a Christian so-called but today makes so much noise about his atheism in his writings. He became an atheist as a result of frustration. When he went overseas for further studies he hung his hopes for financial aid upon certain people. But to his chagrin he was disappointed by those whom he regarded as fellow-Christians. Consequent upon this accident he pitched his battle not against his "offenders" but against God. The circumstances that drive people into atheism vary from one person to another.

Science

In the *DRUM* magazine issue of December 1966, a certain man was quoted to have said: "Science has proved that there is nothing like God. If anything, God is what you think he is." This is arrant nonsense. We know that this is the mentality of some who brag so much about science-a subject about which they themselves have no profundity of knowledge. J. S. Hoyland, in his book, *A Brief History of Civilization*, wrote that "science teaches us, more than was ever possible before, to marvel at God's wisdom and skill".

There are some people who want to see God before they can believe that He exists. We do not see any sense in this point-of-view. Prime Minister Kosygin of Russia and President Nixon of America, to our knowledge, have not visited Nigeria, yet many of us who have not seen them believe that they are existing.

When a question was asked whether a scientist could believe in God, the answer was given by an eminent scientist thus: "Some persons think that scientists simply can't believe in God. But I think scientists have unique advantages here-for scientists are precisely the persons who believe in the unseeable, the essentially undefinable. No scientist has ever seen an electron. No scientist soberly thinks that anyone ever could.. Yet nothing is more 'real' to a scientist than an electron." This was published in *A Guide to the Religions of America* by Leo Rosten.

To disbelieve, or doubt, or to be ignorant of God's existence is folly at its worst. The Psalmist David, declared: **"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good."**-Psalm 14: 1.

Bertrand Russell is a philosopher who in worldly circles, has gained eminence. But he is a

die-hard agnostic. When he was asked as to what kind of evidence could convince him that God exists, he said: "I think that if I heard a voice from the sky predicting all that was going to happen to me during the next twenty-four hours, including events that would have seemed highly improbable, and if all these events then proceeded to happen, I might perhaps be convinced at least of the existence of some superhuman intelligence. I can imagine other evidences of the same sort which might convince me, but so far as I know no such evident exists."

Not only does the view expressed by Russell lack faith, as is characteristic of agnostics, pyrrhonists and atheists, but it is also very puerile indeed. There are records in the Holy Bible of holy men whom God-for the overall benefit of mankind-revealed Himself to in the days of old and they carried out His instructions. Russell could not believe all those because he wanted a personal experience whereby God would talk to him before he could believe in His existence.

If we are to go by Russell's way of thinking, man would not need to exercise his reasoning faculty, and God would have to talk to everybody in order that everyone might know that He exists. Did the British Prime Ministers who lived before Russell talk to him and every Briton of today before they believe that they (the Premiers) lived and ruled in their times? There are many people who, out of spiritual ignorance, feel like Russell but God Almighty is not One who can be tempted or Whose will could be altered to satisfy sinful men. God says: "For my thought's are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways...."-Isaiah. 55: 8, 9.

Francis Bacon, the essayist and philosopher, stated in his Essay, *Of Superstition*, thus: **"God never wrought miracle to convince atheism, because His ordinary works convince it."**

It is very wrong to look to scientists, philosophers and other secular scholars for guidance in matters about God. The knowledge they acquire in institutions of higher learning, being worldly, does not lead them to God. Rather there is much in it that poisons their religious beliefs and dampens their enthusiasm for divine worship. Even among those who are called theologians we find more grain of secularism or profane wisdom than sacred truth in their works!

St. Paul had good reasons for saying that the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. (1 Corinthians 3: 19) He also stated: "For it is written, I (God) will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent...For after that... the world by (its) wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."-1 Corinthians 1: 19-21.

God's Creation

The Holy Bible abounds with veracious testimonies of the prophets about God and His doings among men in the days of old. That apart we are all surrounded by evidences of the existence of God. We ourselves as human beings are proofs that tell unmistakably of the existence of the Creator. We did not come into being by chance neither did we make ourselves. We are the creation of the Almighty God. As it is written: "Know ye that the LORD He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture," -Psalm 100: 3.

When the: Psalmist further considered the wonders of God's creation and especially the wisdom displayed in the formation of the human body and its organism he declared: "I will praise Thee; for 1 am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works; and that my

soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them,"-Psalm 139: 14-16.

Naturally, every child grows up with the instinctive knowledge of God's existence. Any attitude later developed against this knowledge is a clear sign of perverse inclination of the mind. St. Paul stated that God, through the visible things of His creation had shown the reality of those that cannot be seen so that no one can be excused for denying His existence. He wrote: "But God shows His anger from heaven against all sinful, evil men who push away the truth. For the truth about God is known to them by instinct; God has put this knowledge in their hearts. Since earliest times men have seen the earth and sky and all God made, and have known of His existence and great eternal power. So they have no excuse for saying they don't know whether or not there is God. Yes, they knew about Him all right, but they wouldn't admit it or worship Him or even thank Him for all His daily care. And after a while they began to think up silly ideas of what God was like and what He wanted them to do. The result was that their foolish minds became dark and confused. Claiming themselves to be wise without God, they became utter fools instead."-Romans 1: 18-22. *Living Letters*.

Let us look at the heavenly bodies-the sun, moon and the stars-and we cannot be left in doubt, if we have sober minds, as to the infinite greatness of the All- powerful Architect of the universe. And turning to this earth where there are more than enough that meet the eye we would not be better than beasts if we cannot know that there is in existence a Supernatural Intelligence in Whom, according to St. Paul, "we live, and move, and have our being". -Acts 17: 24-31.

Isaiah the prophet was under inspiration when he said: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that. He is strong in power; not one faileth.... Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding.... "-Isaiah. 40: 26-31.

What is more, David, in his psalms, stated: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun." - Psalm 19: 1-4.

Men of Learning

A number of men of higher learning who believed in God's existence can also be cited. George Berkeley (1685-1753) was a scholar who, in the history of philosophy, is said to be a figure of permanent importance and inexhaustible interest. He wrote: "We may even assert that the existence of God is far more evidently perceived than the existence of man; because the effects of Nature are infinitely more numerous and considerable than those ascribed to human agents." -*The Principle of Human Knowledge*.

Here is a quote of Albert Winchester, a biologist: "A deeper and firmer belief in God can be the only result of a better insight into truth." (*Reader's Digest*, May 1963, page 85)

Also, a distinguished mathematician and author stated: "To me, God is the mysterious mind that has created the detail and the dimensions of the universe, including the crowning

mysteries of you and me and our minds. It is He who has put order and beauty into all this. It is He who has shown that truth and faith and love furnish for us the solution to all problems... With full credit to the science that has opened up the vastness of space and of the universe beyond, God is still highest." (*Reader's Digest*, Nov. 1968, page 132).

C. H. Spurgeon was quite right when he wrote: "He who looks at the sunrise, and the sunset and does not see the footprints of God, must be inwardly blinder than a mole, and only fit to live underground. God seems to talk to me in every primrose and daisy, to smile upon me from every star, to whisper to me in every breath of morning air, and to call aloud to me in every storm. It is strange that so many educated gentlemen see God nowhere.... Thus it is very clear that a man may be a great hand at learning and yet be ignorant, very ignorant."

Thomas Paine

Those who think that they can become influential characters by waging a fruitless verbal war against holy things should always remember that "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks". **In both sacred and profane history there is the lesson that those who gained popularity by denying God had miserable and inglorious ends.**

The case of Thomas Paine is a ready instance. His atheistic writings in the eighteenth century provided literary amusements to his friends and misguided idolaters, many of whom are still found today in the academic world. Paine's books - *The Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason* - were said to have taken the "Christian world by storm" and turned many from their religious beliefs to become agnostics or atheists.

But the end of Thomas Paine was miserable. Alfred Owen Aldridge, a Professor of English at the University of Maryland, in his *MAN OF REASON*- the biography of Paine-stated that "the life of Paine was a tragedy". His manners were rough and ungracious, and that he "was at times short-sighted, at times vain."

A review of the biography published in the *Morning Post* of August 20, 1963, spotlighted the sorrows of Paine. "He lived a life of ducks and drakes which cost him not only his dear wife Elizabeth put also the sale of his property to pay for a debt he owed. At the end of his 37th year, Paine's life to the ordinary observer and perhaps to himself, was a dreary series of failure in his profession, in business and in marriage.

"But later in his life he became very unpopular with the people that built him up. First by defending the execution of Louis XVI found guilty of treason and by his 'Rights of Man'. He was imprisoned and his book proscribed.

"He was practically deserted by his friends and on his death bed, it was left with a woman sympathiser to care for him and to lend her parcel of land for his burial. He died broken-hearted, unnoticed, unrewarded and unsung."

Yes, Francis Bacon did say: "They that deny a God destroy man's nobility; for certainly man is of kin to the beasts by his body; and, if he be not of kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature." (Essay, *Of Superstition*)

Some people only confess God or believe in Him when they are struck by the force of His acts. When Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh of Egypt and delivered the Lord's message that he should let the children of Israel go, he (Pharaoh) repulsively retorted: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." (Exodus 5: 1,2) But when the Most High showed His power and, because of the obstinacy of the king, punished the Egyptians with plagues, Pharaoh was compelled to confess to Moses and Aaron: "I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked."-

Exodus 9: 27.

God sometimes allows certain things to happen in order to show that evil, which He abhors, is not destined to thrive forever, and that He rules even in the kingdom of men. (Psalm 7: 11-13; Ezek. 21: 25; Daniel 4: 28-37.) The military coup of Saturday, January 15, 1966, in Nigeria affected the minds of many people in different ways. Someone who was described as a "well-known university lecturer" was quoted in the *DRUM* magazine of May 1966, as saying: "I have been an agnostic all my life, but now I believe there is God and that He has not abandoned the world to the devil to play with as he likes. I greet and embrace the new Nigeria that our brave military have ushered in. Whatever may happen in the future, I'm convinced that Nigeria will never be the same again. I'm convinced that the only people who won't be happy today are those who have taken the country for a ride all these years."

Well, if the incident of 1966 had not happened that intellectual might still, to his own hurt of course, have been blind in heart to the existence of God. This further points to the fact that agnostics and atheists are people who have fallen into the snare of the devil and who are spiritually captured by him at his will so that they may not know God. However, while some of them will be released by God like the university lecturer just cited, some will be permanently lost to the devil, And St. Paul said: But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." -2 Corinthians 4: 3, 4.

Faith

In order to be established in full appreciation and understanding of God's existence, FAITH is required, Hence St. Paul stated: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."-Hebrews 11: 6.

Those who deny God's existence and who are paying no heed to the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, will soon be compelled by the force of circumstances in this last day - the atomic age - to acknowledge not only the truth of His existence but also His supremacy. They shall find themselves in a spiritual storm when Jehovah the Almighty God will visit the iniquities of men upon them.

The Psalmist prayed: "Let them (confirmed unbelievers and evil-doers) be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish; **that men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.**"-Psalm 83: 17, 18.

WHY DO THE WICKED PROSPER AND LIVE LONG ?

The fact that some men who perpetrate wickedness are found among the rich and prosperous people of this evil world make some ask as to why God distributes His blessings indiscriminately. But Christians who understand the ways of God know that it is the devil, the god of this world, and NOT God Almighty, that prospers the wicked. God only permits the wicked to live in order to afford them the opportunity to repent; but where they do not, He visits their iniquities upon them suddenly and sentences them to perpetual destruction.

The wicked in the context of this subject are people who are evil in principle and in practice, or those who offend intentionally against what is right or the law of God. Such people, in the language of the Scriptures, “drink iniquity like water”. They do not acknowledge God. They are shameless and corrupt. In fact, they are a people who are governed by selfish ambition and are without conscience, being filled with every kind of evil. They steal and commit murder directly or through agents; they also commit adultery and fornication without remorse. To them pride is a virtue; they are arrogant and boastful. And they oppress the poor and take away from the needy their right.

It is a common experience among men that many of such wicked people appear to get on well in life: they amass wealth and live long. Their wives and children grow fat being well nourished and they enjoy good health. But in contrast with the case of the wicked, we have seen that many of those who are upright in heart, who love to serve God and who keep peace in the land find life hard; they and their families are often plagued with ill-health and plunged into trouble from time to time. And some of them who are faring well and who are kind, charitable and of immense services to humanity, are often snatched away by death in the flower of their age.

It was such experience as this that caused the well-known novelists and essayist, Daniel Defoe (1661-1731), to write: *“The good die early, and the bad die late.”*

There are instances in which thieves being pursued ran through places where there were thorns and broken bottles and escaped unhurt while those chasing them were injured at such places to the extent that they were hospitalized and even some, consequently, died! Why such things in which innocent ones suffer should happen in this world is a puzzle to many people.

It was King Solomon who said: “All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness.” – Ecclesiastes . 7:15.

It is a fool that will think that simply because he lives longer than another man he is more righteous or better. The worth of a man’s life is judged not by how long he lived but by how well to the glory of God and for the benefit of mankind. In his *The Bee*, Thomas Osbert Mordaunt (1730-1809) stated:

One crowded hour of glorious life Is worth an age without a name.

Character

The character of the wicked, their way of life and prosperity as well as their end are clearly shown in the Holy Scriptures. Concerning them Job said: "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod (punishment) of God upon them. Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth...Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?" – Job 21:7-15.

Some people envy the wicked and are tempted to imitate them when they find that they (the wicked) get on despite their evil deeds. The Psalmist who was a prophet of God was similarly tempted in his days but when he went into the sanctuary of God, then he understood the vanity of the prosperity of the wicked. He stated: "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. **They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth... And they say, How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.**" – Psalm 73:2-12.

The Psalmist as an honest and God-fearing man. So when he got to know that the wicked with their wealth were doomed to destruction, he confessed his foolishness and ignorance for envying them. He said: "**When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors... So foolish was I, and ignorant...**" – Psalm 73:16-22.

Corruption

There are people who become rich through stealing. The Bible says, "The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure..." (Job 12:6). And there are some who indulge in bribery and corruption and other ungodly acts to acquire riches. But they do not know that such riches are under curse. In Job 15:34-35 it is written: "For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery. They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit."

Moreover, it is also stated in Proverbs 3:33, thus: "*The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but He blesseth the habitation of the just.*"

Is it not true that certain people also become rich through oppression? They employ the poor to work for them but sometimes refuse to pay the labourers' wages. This is a grievous sin before God, and when such poor ones who are oppressed cry to Him, He will certainly plead their cause and take vengeance on the wicked. Concerning such rich men, James the apostle stated: "Next a word to you who have great possessions. Weep and wail over the miserable fate descending on you. Your riches have rotted; your fine clothes are moth-eaten; your silver and gold have rusted away; and their very rust will be evidence against you and consume your flesh like fire. You have piled up wealth in an age that is near its close. They wages you never paid to the men who mowed your fields are loud against you, and the outcry of the reapers has reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts. You have lived on earth in wanton luxury, fattening yourselves like cattle- and the day for slaughter has come. You have condemned the innocent and murdered him; her offers no resistance." – James. 5: 1-6. *New English Bible*.

Also, in Jeremiah 22:13, it is written: "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work."

The riches of the wicked are not from God but from Satan the devil who is the arch-enemy of God and men. The Bible says that God is angry with the wicked every day and will, in His own due time, make them reap the reward of their doings. - Psalm. 7:9-16; Isaiah. 3:11.

The devil makes the wicked rich and instills in them the feeling of self-sufficiency which induces them to blaspheme and to continue in doing evil. "The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhoreth. The wicked through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. His ways are always grievous; Thy judgements are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity. His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity." – Psalm. 10:2-7.

Punishment

The reasons why many people commit acts of wickedness is that those who do such things are not always killed by God immediately. This was lucidly explained by Solomon when he said: "**Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him: but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.**" - Ecclesiastes. 8:11-13.

We can understand from the foregoing that though the days of the wicked may be prolonged, he can never escape the punishment of God. "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray." - Proverbs 5:22, 23.

It is a glaring fact that the riches and joys of the wicked are counterfeit and transitory. Instances of this fact have been seen. In Job 20: 4-9, 29, it is written: "Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon the earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and

the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds; yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, Where is he?... This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God.”

We can appreciate, therefore, why the people of God are admonished not to envy sinners. (Proverbs 3:31; 23:17) David the Psalmist said: “Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb...Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.” (Psalm 37:1-3, 7) David then went on to speak of his experience in his days, saying: “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.” – verses 35-37.

Forgiveness

God does not want the wicked man to die in his wickedness; rather He wants him to put away evil and do righteousness. At it is written: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” – Isaiah. 55:7.

Left alone to us human beings we may desire that everyone who commits wickedness should be slain at once. But God does not want it so and we should do His wish or will always.

The Almighty knows that not all people are deliberately wicked; there are some who become wicked, not just because they were born wicked, but out of circumstances owing to human frailty or through the influence of the devil and evil men; such ones can repent. **And God said: “But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? Saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?”** Ezekiel 18:21-23; see also Job 33:27-30.

The point, which is very important, is that the wicked man or sinner must acknowledge and be sorry for his sins before he can obtain the Lord’s mercy. His penitence should not be a matter of mere oral declaration but a real change of heart which must be manifest in deeds.

If God is to kill everyone who sins immediately, not a single soul among the descendants of Adam will remain on earth because they are all sinners and it is in order to redeem them from sin Jesus Christ the righteous came to the world to give his life as a ransom. The Psalmist said: “If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.” – Psalm 130:3,4.

Long-suffering of God

The reason why God allows wicked people to live is to give them time to realize their faults and repent of their sins so as to be saved. St. Peter in his second epistle testified to this and spoke of the long-suffering of the Almighty God. He stated: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to

repentance,” – 2. Peter 3:9.

But a wicked man who, in spite of the warning of God through the gospel, proves to be stubborn and does not repent, will be destroyed in the end – Isaiah 1:18-20; Romans 2:5-9; 2 Thessalonians. 2:11,12.

We are not saying that all prosperous persons are wicked. We do know that there are many people who, by dint of hard work and honest labour, are prospered by God and they are in peace. Concerning such blessing of God it is written: “The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it.” – Proverbs 10:22.

Our christian admonition, therefore, is that everyone should take to an honest labour and do righteousness so as to be prospered by the Most High. Let those who have been led into the errors of the wicked turn from their evil ways and show a genuine proof of repentance or contrition by serving god in truth through Jesus Christ our Saviour. The door of salvation is still open to them. Jesus Christ said: “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” – Matthew 9:10-13.

What is more, Elihu, explaining how God deals with men, said: “Then He (God) sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity. **If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures. But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge.**” – Job 36:9-12.

It has been made abundantly clear in this *Sermon* that God does not bless or prosper wicked people. Any wicked rich man who reads or hears the reading of this *Sermon* is advised to repent and serve God justly in truth so that he may truly enjoy his wealth and be saved.

SHOULD A CHRISTIAN BOW THE KNEE TO MAN?

THE bowing of the knee, according to the Scriptures, is an act of worship or reverence commanded by the Almighty God to be done to Him alone. However, in due course, He conferred this particular honour upon His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, after he had successfully fulfilled his mission on earth and had been glorified in heaven. But to no other person, among angels and human beings, did God ever extend the honour.

Among certain tribes in Africa, genuflection or bowing of the knee is regarded as a sign of great respect that must be shown to an elderly person. It is known to be a custom not for the Jews but only among the gentiles. The origin of it dates back to antiquity; for we read in the Holy Bible of the Egyptians shouting, "Bow the knee" before Joseph when he was made a ruler of Egypt. - Genesis 41: 41-43.

In Nigeria the observance of the custom varies from tribe to tribe. There are some who not only bow the knee but prostrate in showing deep respect to a man of a higher rank-be it by age or social status or religious state. Some others just bend the knee and add a series of greetings. And there are also those to whom the custom is no longer a Matthew of physical action but more of oral expression taken as salutation. In this case, when a younger person meets an elderly man or woman, he only says by mouth, "I am on my knees" while in actual fact he is standing erect or walking or even riding on a bicycle! The elder on his part feels elated or highly honoured, and so with gusto he answers, "Get up from your knees!" It is sometimes ludicrous to find a man on the roof of a house or the top of a palm tree saying, "I am on my knees" to an elderly man on the ground who would in answer tell him to get up from his knees.

There are cases where certain people demand the honour of bowing down, and they feel damnably spited if it is not done to them.

It is not in dispute, therefore, that genuflection or bowing of the knee as an expression of deep respect to man is a custom among many people. But what is of interest to true Christians, which is our purpose to treat in this *Sermon*, is whether that custom is in harmony with the rule or law of God in the holy Scriptures. The point as to how long it has been in practice among any group of people or how widely it is observed is irrelevant to the issue.

According to the Holy Bible, the bowing of the knee is a religious act which must be done with all solemnity and devotion in worship of the Most High - the Creator of heaven and earth. Thus men who gave themselves to righteousness in ancient times both before and after the first advent of Jesus Christ went down on their knees only for spiritual reason - and that in prayer to, praise or adoration of the Almighty God.

We can cite the instance of King Solomon during his prayer at the dedication of the temple. Thus it is written: "And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this

prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD **from kneeling on his knees** with his hands spread up to heaven." - I Kings 8: 54; 2 Chronicles 6: 13.

Kneeling when praying is a pious gesture most expressive of reverence, humility and absolute subjection to God. Space will not permit us to go into details of the instances of people like Ezra, Daniel, Stephen, Peter, Paul and a host of others from which we learn of the true meaning and special importance attached by God to the bowing of the knee. - Ezra 9: 5; Daniel 6: 10; Acts 7: 60; 9: 40; 21: 5; etc.

There was never a time Jesus Christ in Jerusalem bowed his knee to any man but to God Almighty alone he did. When time had come for him to make the supreme sacrifice for the benefit of sinful mankind, and knowing the weight of the temptation he was facing, it is on record that on a certain occasion he withdrew from the apostles about a stone's cast "and kneeled down, and prayed". - Luke 22: 41.

The Law

God made it a law to His people-His worshippers-that to Him alone they should bow their knees, As it is written: **"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, THAT UNTO ME EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW, every tongue shall swear."** - Isaiah 45: 22, 23.

This law with reference to bowing the knee is still in force up till now, But as regards swearing Jesus Christ, acting on the instruction of our Heavenly Father, modified it when he said, **"Swear not at all"** neither by heaven nor by the earth, - Matthew 5: 34-37; see also James. 5: 12.

Some people may argue that the reference to Isaiah being in the Old Testament does not apply to Christians. No doubt, such a point of view can come out only from an ignorant mind. St. Paul in his letter to the Romans drew the attention of the Christians to this particular law. He exhorted as to how to treat a weaker brother and admonished against uncharitable judgment knowing that everyone would "stand before the judgment seat of Christ". He added: **"For it is written, As I live saith the Lord, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, and every tongue shall confess to God.** So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God." Romans 14: 11, 12.

When St. Paul recalled how many wonderful things, which were hitherto hidden from men, had been revealed to him through the grace of God, he declared: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." (Ephesians 3: 14, 15) All along all the faithful of old knew that the bowing of the knee is not an honour to be given to men but to God. And the Psalmist said: "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us **kneel** before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand..." - Psalm 95: 6,7.

It is most pertinent to this *Sermon* to recall what happened between Haman and Mordecai, who was a Jew, during the reign of King Ahasuerus as recorded in the book of Esther. The king had promoted Haman above all his princes, and so all the king's servants always bowed and revered Haman as was ordered by him. "But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence." This was so because he being a Jew had the knowledge of the law of God which said that only to God and not man would all knees bow. Mordecai in demonstration of his faith,

defied the king's commandment and obeyed the law of God. - Esther 3: 1-2.

When the other servants of the king enquired as to Why Mordecai did not bow to Haman as was commanded by the king, he told them that he was a Jew. They then reported the Matthew to Haman and he took offence. As a result of this, Haman plotted against the Jews in the land and sought to destroy all of them. But because Mordecai's action received the approval of God the mischief of Haman turned upon him in the long run; for he was hanged in the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. - Read Esther chapters 3-7.

The point we are putting forth is the fact that the law of God prohibits His worshippers from bowing to men. This is very clear from the instance of Mordecai and Haman just cited.

However, in the Christian Era God conferred the honour to receive worship of bowing the knee upon Jesus Christ. For the Almighty Father has exalted and given him authority above all His creation because of his (Christ's) faithfulness and obedience during his earthly ministry. As it is written: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: **that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**" - Philippians 2: 9-11.

Whereas it is unlawful to worship or bow the knee to any other angel or person, be he a saint or not, it is proper to give such an honour to Jesus Christ in acknowledgement of his universal lordship and mediatorial status as commanded by God.

It was because of St. Peter's knowledge that bowing is an honour that is due to God and Jesus alone, that he declined to receive it from Cornelius. The Bible account about this incident is as follows: "And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man." (Acts 10: 25, 26) St. Peter's reply shows clearly that mortal man is not in a position to accept the honour of bowing because it signifies worship in the sense of respect that is higher than that to be done to human beings. "I am a man like anyone else," said St. Peter. - *New English Bible*.

What is more, even an angel did refuse to be worshipped by St. John. In his own account of the wonderful, awe-inspiring Revelation he received from God through an angel, the apostle stated: "And I John saw these things and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: **worship God.**" - Revelation 22: 8, 9.

From the comprehensive explanation already made in this *Sermon*, an honest mind will surely appreciate why the members of God's Kingdom Society who have the faith and the knowledge of the law of God do not bow to men. It is an act of worship, we repeat. If others who call themselves Christians bow to men that is their business, but we know that it is unscriptural and therefore sinful to do so; and it is foolish and very embarrassing to act contrary to knowledge and one's conscience in a Matthew of faith.

Watchtower Society

There was a time up to the latter forties, the members of the Watchtower Society who always identify themselves as "Jehovah's Witnesses" were not bowing to men. But later on they shifted their ground and began to bow in order to please men. So some people often refer to them when discussing the Matthew of bowing with the members of GKS. We have always pointed out that many of the "Jehovah's Witnesses" are a wavering people in faith.

They say one thing and do another.

In their publications they show that it is wrong for a Christian to bow to man and they often criticise the Roman Catholics for bowing to images. But here in Nigeria their members are more constant in bowing down to men than those they derogatorily refer to as "Babylonians" or gentiles. In the *AWAKE* magazine, issue of January 22, 1964, they wrote on **"Should Christians Pray Before Images?"** Having cited the instance of Peter and Cornelius, and that of the angel and John, they commented: "The principle illustrated by these two examples is that holy men, and even angels, are only God's servants, his creatures; and that men should neither bow before nor give even relative worship to them, but should worship only the Creator." (Page 5)

Furthermore, they wrote: "They (Christians) know that the Creator deserves their *'exclusive devotion.'* **Thus, they will not bow before any image, or any man, or even an angel.** But they will do what the angel told John: 'Worship GOD'. - Revelation 22: 9." (Page 10, *emphasis ours*)

Last week, it was reported that Mr. A. O. Faluyi, described as the presiding minister at the Witnesses' conference recently held at Ilesha, claimed that they do not bow to men. In a "periscope" by Timesman Dipo Ajayi, Mr. Faluyi was quoted as saying: "Our first allegiance is to our God Jehovah and **we do not bow down to any man.** We love God and honour men, but we regard bowing down and worshipping national flags as idolatry." (Daily Times, Saturday Dec. 20, 1969, page 5, *emphasis ours*) But is it true that the Witnesses do not bow down to men? It is not. It is common knowledge that they do bow down to pagans in this country. Maybe Mr. Faluyi does not know what is obtaining in their fold in Nigeria!

Custom

The stand of the God's Kingdom Society for not bowing down to man is fully justified in the Scriptures. The argument that bowing is a custom of the people, and that custom to whom custom is due is, in this respect, untenable. The best that can be done to a custom that contravenes the law of God is to throw it away altogether. God is above all.

Even now many customs are being done away with in the name of civilisation but why should some insist that the worshippers of God should accept pagan customs?

When the late Obi of Onitsha-Okosi II- visited the late Oba Adele of Lagos in September 1958, he was given a warm welcome by the Oba who said it was first of its kind and would want "many more such visits". "A reply was given on behalf of the Obi by Mr. Chuba Ikpeazu. He expressed the hope that Nigerian rulers would visit one another more often. He added that it was quite in order to break traditions which tended to bar progress." - This was broadcast in the National News Bulletin of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation at 1909 hours Nigerian time on Saturday September 6, 1958.

The trouble with some people is that they are fond of holding rigidly to the customs and traditions of men notwithstanding the fact that such customs are meaningless and are, more seriously, contrary to the law of God. During a conference of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa at Oshogbo in 1957, Chief Obafemi Awolowo pleaded with the Obas to "forgive those who don't prostrate". The *DAILY TIMES* of Nov. 9, 1957, reported: "Chief Obafemi Awolowo, yesterday appealed to Obas and chiefs attending the conference of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa at

Oshogbo to forgive those who might find it impracticable to prostrate to them. He described this as one of the prices they must pay for civilisation. Chief Awolowo said that no one wearing costly and handsome clothes would be willing to prostrate. Chief Awolowo added that in the days gone by, people did not wear costly clothes and so found it easy and convenient to prostrate before Obas and chiefs."

And despite his pleading against prostration, Chief Awolowo is said to be loved by Obas because of his respect for them.

If for reasons of costly clothes a person should be forgiven for not prostrating to an oba or king, why on earth should a man or woman who on the ground of faith in God refuses to bow down to man be reproached or persecuted?

In some parts of Nigeria certain juju priests, no Matthew how young they may be, do not bow down to elders, and no one quarrels with them; among certain tribes, women who are circumcised do not, during that period, bow to any man, and people accept it as a custom without any fuss. But when a Christian refuses to bow in keeping with the law of God, certain people would want him to violate his faith. This attitude is most unkind, unreasonable and wicked. However, any faithful Christian will ever be guided by the principle of rather obeying God than men.

Some people also criticise the members of GKS for not bowing to elders whereas they accept bowing from others. What they are ignorant of is that the law prohibiting bowing is meant for true worshippers of God. There is nothing wrong spiritually if a Christian accepts the bowing of a non-Christian who does not know the law of God. In the first place, we can learn from the instance of Ruth, the Moabitess, who bowed to Boaz, a Jew. Boaz did not object to it because he was aware that Ruth was a stranger or gentile. (Ruth 2: 8-12) But her faith in the God of Israel made her receive the Lord's favour in due course.

And secondly, we of the GKS do not demand bowing from anybody as some people do. A Christian may not object to the bowing of a non-Christian on the ground of discretion since it is not a sin to do so.

To bow down to men or images as certain people commonly do is a travesty of the Christian faith. It is unscriptural to give the glory or honour that is God's prerogative to men or images. God Himself said: "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." - Isaiah 42: 8.

True members of GKS do respect elders as ordained by God and many know this and confess it. Though we do not bow or kneel to elders yet we honour and respect them more than many of those who bow to them but only turn round a few minutes later to insult them or show rude attitude to them over a little misunderstanding or trivial Matthew!

We have taken pains to make the truth of the subject Matthew plain in this *Sermon*. It is always an honour to accept and follow the path of truth. True Christians are by the law of faith bound to bow their knees not to men but to God Almighty and Jesus Christ our Saviour. So, keep in mind God's command: "Unto Me every knee shall bow!" And the Apostle of Christ said: "We ought to obey God rather than men." - Isaiah 45: 23; Romans 14: 11, 12 and Acts 5: 28,29.

DO ALL CHURCHES WORSHIP ONE GOD?

EXCEPT the way to God is as divided and diverse as church denominations are in the world today, all the churches cannot be worshipping the one true God. This is a very serious matter about which personal opinion and unwillingness to listen to reason in the light of the Scriptures may lead not only to self-deceit but also to fatal consequences. The only authority universally acceptable upon which all Christians are bound to depend for a sure and unmistakable answer to the question at issue, is the Holy Bible.

Chief Deji Olugunna in an article published in the *Sunday times* (Oct. 10, 1971) expressed the view that Christian denominations can be broadly divided into four groups, namely, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Protestants and Pentecostals. He then stated: "Each of these organizations has its own God and presents him to the world as the best and the only God. There are the God of the Roman Catholics, the God of the Orthodox Church, the God of the Protestants and the God of the Holy Ghost people—four different Gods of their own interpretation of the Holy Bible.

The Chief added: "Surely, there cannot be so many Gods and faiths. This is the headache of man and the tragedy of the whole world. There is no scripture warrant whatsoever for so many Gods and the various gods must be amalgamated if Christian religion is to be real to man."—Page 11.

But in the opinion of Mr. Segun Bucknor (*Sunday Times*, Nov. 14, 1971) "all the Christian sects believe the same God and in Jesus Christ, the Son of God as their Saviour. They differ essentially only in interpretations of the Scripture and their methods of worship".

The idea of some people that all church organizations belong to Jesus Christ and are worshipping the God Almighty is very wrong and misleading. It is not based on knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. It is possible for a person to claim to be a worshipper of God while in actual fact he, knowingly or unknowingly, is engrossed in the service of the devil. For the reason that Jesus Christ was fully aware of this fact he said: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." —Matt. 7: 21.

Natural Jews

And concerning the natural Jews who purported to be God's worshippers but were not doing His will, 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' righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."—Rom. 10: 1-3

Despite the claim of some of the Jews that God was their Father Jesus told them point-blank that they were the children of the devil. There were exchanges of words between him

and them thus: “But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hat told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but He sent me> Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. **Ye are of your father the devil, and the lust of your father ye will do.** He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”—John 8: 40-44.

Jesus Christ made it abundantly clear that the claims of those natural Jews that they were of God was false. And St. Paul also said: “It is impossible that the word of God should have proved false. For not all descendants of Israel are truly Israel, nor, because they are Abraham’s offspring, are they all his true children; but, in the words of Scripture, “Through the line of Isaac your descendants shall be traced.’ That is to say, it is not those born in the course of nature who are children of God; it is the children born through God’s promise who are reckoned as Abraham’s descendants.”—Rom. 9: 6-8. *New English Bible*.

Even some pagans strongly believe that their idols are media through which they deal with and worship the Almighty God. Their belief which is based on ignorance does not make them worshippers of God. Many of them are good citizens, we have always said quite honestly; but this does not mean they are serving the Almighty God. Idols are the creation of the devil and since they serve them contrary to the commandment of God it is the devil they are worshipping. —Exodus 20: 4-6; Isa. 2: 8,9.

Such were the Athenians, and St. Paul, addressing them, said: “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men’ hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things...**Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:** because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”—Acts 17: 23-31.

Hypocrites

The Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Scribes were sects of the Jews who professed to be worshippers of God. But Jesus Christ in his days on earth exposed their hypocrisy and the falsity or worthlessness of their claims. When he was confronted by the Sadducees on the question of resurrection he told them, “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.” He gave answers that put them to silence and shame. —Matt 22: 23-33,46

Jesus Christ who was well known for his forthrightness, and in whose personality were flashes of divinity, wit and inspiration, denounced the Pharisees and Scribes as hypocrites. Among other things he said: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men,

but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”—Matt. 23: 27, 28.

With reference to the Pharisees and the Scribes, Jesus quoted the Almighty God as saying through Isaiah the prophet: “This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips: but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”—Matt. 15: 7-9.

And when Christ’s disciples informed him that the Pharisees were offended at his utterance, he retorted: “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leader of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”—Read Matt. 15: 12-14.

It will be wrong to think that there are not the counterparts of the Pharisees in our time. Many of the church denominations in the world are false. And they can be identified by their doctrines and many of worship, which are inconsistent with the truth of the gospel and the tenets of Christianity as contained in the Holy Bible. After the apostolic times, since from about 325 A.D. to this age, certain church leaders in succession have been teaching as doctrines dogmas which they invented from their own hearts contrary to the Scriptures.

Doctrines

Doctrines are the basis of the Christian faith; where the doctrines are untrue the faith is built not on Christ, the Rock, but on sinking sand, and any claim to worship God is bogus. God Himself has said, “But in vain they do worship Me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Whoever does not want to worship in vain must give serious thought to this quoted statement of God and ensure that the doctrines he accepts and believes are not the commandments or traditions of men, or that they are in harmony with the Scriptures.

What scriptural authority or Justification has anyone to teach, believe or practise any of the following?

- The doctrine of purgatory

- The baptism of infants

- The baptism of bells

- Baptism by sprinkling or pouring of water

- The use of candles “blessed” or not, for devotions.

- Mary being the “Mother of Almighty God”!

- The ordination of women as prophetesses who see visions or preach from house to house.

- The immortality of the soul

- The fixing of date (1914, 1939-45, now 1975) for the Battle of Armageddon.

- Pouring of libation to ancestors.

These are only a few of unscriptural dogmas and innovations being taught and done in certain church organizations. The truth must be spoken without fear so that the scales of ignorance may fall from the eyes of the people.

Anyone who does not want to remain in darkness or ignorance must be broadminded; he must be prepared to listen to reason and accept facts. It was Disraeli who said, “To be conscious that you are ignorant is a great step to knowledge.” (Symbol

Some people say that, because they were brought up or have been long in a certain church organization, they could not for any reason leave it for another. Suppose that church is not preaching the truth, what would they gain in the end if they suffer the loss of their souls? “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man”, said King Solomon, “but the end thereof are

the ways of death.”—Prov. 16: 25

When St. Paul was in the Jewish religion he thought he was right and he savagely persecuted the Christians. But when the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ dawned upon him and he was converted, he confessed his ignorance. Said he: “For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood (human beings): neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia and returned again unto Damascus.”—Gal. 1: 13-17.

And in his epistle to Timothy he said that he was “before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious”. He added, “But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”—1 Tim. 1: 13.

True Worshippers

It is not safe, therefore, to take things for granted and remain in any church without ascertaining the truth of her doctrines and beliefs. When Jesus Christ engaged a Samaritan woman in a conversation, he told her, “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.”—John 4: 22, 23.

Those who worship without knowing what they worship or those who are not true worshippers cannot be said to be serving the same God with the true worshippers. While the false one serve the devil, the true ones worship the Almighty God. “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

No sane person has the pleasure to identify himself with the devil because he (Satan) is known to be the author and the very embodiment of evil. He sometimes deceives some people by appearing to them in dreams or visions or by some other sign as an angel of God. And such people not knowing that Satan is their inspirer do go about to parade themselves as prophets or prophetesses or apostles of Jesus Christ whereas in truth they are reprobates. However, in the end they will get every bit of punishment their evil deeds deserve.

Concerning religious fakes who masquerade as the apostles of Christ, St. Paul wrote: “For such 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.” And their works being evil, they will be damned. —2 Cor. 11: 13-15; Gal. 1: 8

In certain church groups both men and women claim to have been equally ordained by God to prophesy—some preaching from house to house and others go along the streets with bells in the early hours of the day. There are those who profess to be “divine Healers” and claim to have the power to repel Satan in the name of Jesus Christ. By such bogus claims they, at the instance of the devil, do make disciples of simple folks. Someone was deceived the other day to swallow a wooden cross. Some preach against medical treatment when sick; for believing

and obeying the “apostles” or “prophets” who teach these “doctrines” many have died untimely!

The mere fact that one prophesies or does wonders in the name of Christ does not qualify one to be a true worshipper of God or a follower of Jesus. Christ himself said: “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”—Matt. 7: 22, 23

In the face of the scriptural facts brought to light in this sermon, it will be very wrong to think or say that all the churches, which are divided on doctrines and method of worship, are worshipping the one true God.

WHO ARE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES?

MEN who are chosen and given commission by God Almighty to testify in truth to His name and word are His witnesses. This commission, which in the Christian Era must be confirmed by the anointing of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ, distinguishes the receivers who are always few and rare from other Christians according to the Scriptures. Whoever claims to be a witness of Jehovah but is not so ordained is a counterfeit witness.

There is a religious organisation whose adherents have great zeal in propagating their beliefs and teachings to the public. We of the GKS admire their zeal but the pity of it is that they, like many of the natural Jews of old, lack the correct knowledge of God. They claim to understand the Scriptures more than all others in other Christian religious bodies. In this arrogance they look down on others and call them cursed names. This religious group is none other than the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society whose headquarters are in Brooklyn, New York, in U.S.A.

One of the points of doctrine concerning which the Watchtower bible and Tract Society has gone astray is its belief and teaching that every one of its members—whether man or woman, boy or girl—is a “Jehovah’s witness”. It is most unfortunate that the late J. F. Rutherford, second President of the Society, who was respected for his knowledge of the Bible, was unable to offer a successful resistance to this stinking error before his death early in 1942.

The name “Jehovah’s witnesses” was not adopted by the Watchtower Society until Sunday July 26, 1931. Before then they had no real identification; their identification was shrouded in nicknames such as “Millennial Dawnites”, “Russellites”, “Peoples Pulpit” and so on. In fact there were not less than three corporations then that constituted the organisation.

Resolution

In their bid to be thought clever than to be clever and being overwhelmed with a feeling of “superiority” to all other Christians, they adopted a resolution at their convention in Columbus, Ohio, July 24-30, 1931, to the effect that they desired to be known as and called “Jehovah’s witnesses” on the basis of Isaiah 43: 10-12.

The resolution stated in part:

“THAT.. the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society and the International Bible Students Association and the Peoples Pulpit Association are merely names of corporations, which corporations we as a company of Christian people hold, control and use to carry on our work in obedience to God’s commandments, yet none of these names properly attach to or apply to us as a body of Christians who follow in the footsteps of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ...

“THAT, having been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ our Lord and Redeemer, justified and begotten by Jehovah God and called to His Kingdom,...therefore we joyfully embrace and take the name which the mouth of the

Lord God has named, and we desire to be known as and called by the name, to wit, “Jehovah’s witnesses.”—Isa. 43: 10-12; 62: 2; Rev. 12: 17.”

This facts are contained in their books, *Life Everlasting in freedom of the Sons of God*, page 361; *Qualified to be Ministers*, page 326; *Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, page 125-126; etc.

Since the adoption of that resolution of 1931, the members of the Watchtower society everywhere have been parading themselves as Jehovah’s witnesses. Many among them are so unintelligent and ignorant that their hearing of that grand appellation, “Jehovah’s witnesses”, at once becomes clear not only as incongruous or out of place but also as reproachful. Ask some of them who made them “Jehovah’s witnesses”, instantly they are at sea and start to stumble or quibble.

Chosen Servants

Now, let us turn to the Holy Bible for some details that will throw light on the subject under discussion in order to see whether it is right for the Watchtower Society to call everyone of its adherents a Jehovah’s Witness.

The Oxford Universal Dictionary Defines the word *witness*, among other things, thus: “One who is called on, selected, or appointed to be present at a transaction, so as to be able to testify to its having taken place. One who is or was present and is able to testify from personal observation.”

It goes without saying, therefore, that a Jehovah’s witness is a person who is called, chosen or appointed and made by Jehovah Himself to see and understand spiritual things so as to be competent to testify to the truth of His word. God said: “If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.”—Numbers 12: 6.

This statement was made to denounce Miriam who in conspiracy with Aaron spoke against Moses. God confirmed that Moses was His servant – a faithful servant indeed. (*Verses 7, 8*) But Miriam, for claiming falsely that she too was a mouthpiece of God, was punished with leprosy. – *Verses 9-15*.

God Almighty ordained His prophets in Israel and inspired them to speak faithfully and truthfully in His name. (Jer. 23: 28) David who was a king and a prophet said: “The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and His word was in my tongue.”—2 Sam. 23: 2.

What is more St. Peter wrote: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”—2 Peter 1: 21.

All those prophets ordained by God in Israel who received His inspiration in the days of old before the first advent of Jesus Christ were His witnesses. “Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and My servants whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am He: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me.”—Isa. 43: 10.

The address was not director to every Israelite or Jew. The Most High was addressing His CHOSEN servants and they were the prophets whom He ordained as His witnesses. It is very wrong, therefore, for the Watchtower Society to cite this text to support their claim that everyone of their members—man, woman, boy or girl—is a Jehovah’s witness.

Of all the prophets of old John the Baptist was the last before Christ. He was a

Jehovah's witness sent to testify to the identity of Jesus Christ, the Light. It is written of him: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light."—John 1: 6-8.

Anointing

The ancient prophets of God were typical of Jesus Christ and his anointed servants in the Christian Era. Concerning Jesus Christ, the Almighty God Jehovah through His prophet Isaiah declared prophetically: "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people."—Isa. 55: 4.

When Jesus Christ was brought before Pilate, he stated positively that he came to the world to bear witness to the truth. And he is known as the faithful and True Witness.—John 18: 37; Rev. 3: 14; 1:5.

The early Apostles of Jesus Christ were also ordained witnesses of Jehovah by reason of their anointing.

During Christ's ministry on earth he promised to send the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, to his apostles. He added: "...And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." (John 15:26, 27). After Christ's resurrection and before his ascension he confirmed his promise to the apostles saying: "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 Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.**"—Acts 1: 8.

When the place of Judas Iscariot was to be filled, Peter the apostle, addressing the disciples of Christ that were gathered said: "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, **must one be ordained to be a witness with us** of his resurrection." —Acts 1: 21, 22.

Matthias was thus ordained to take part in Christ's ministry and apostleship. He with other 11 apostles received the anointing of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. —Acts 1: 26 to 2: 1-17.

The apostles, having been anointed, started their activities in preaching Christ as true witnesses and proved themselves worthy of their calling. As it is written: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."—Acts 4: 33.

Although Jesus Christ had many disciples—both men and women—in his days on earth but it was the apostles who were always referred to as his witnesses chosen of God.

St. Peter, speaking about Jesus Christ and his good works, said: "And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, **but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.**" (Acts 10: 39-41). From this statement of St. Peter it is clear that NOT all disciples are witnesses.

Apart from the 12 apostles who received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, others were later on chosen and anointed by God through Jesus Christ as His witnesses. The case of Saul who became Paul the apostle is a striking instance. His own confession to King Agrippa gives a clear understanding of how a person can be made or ordained a witness of God through Jesus Christ.

He declared: "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: **I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee.**"—Acts 26: 13-16. see also Acts 22: 12-15; 23: 11.

Can the members of the Watchtower Society say that they are chosen and ordained by Christ like Paul the apostle or his other fellow apostles? Are they all anointed? Have they seen vision or heard the voice of Christ? Or is their witness that of hearsay?

The Bible does not say that every Christian is a witness of God. The mere fact that a person preaches the word of God does not make him a witness of Jehovah. He must be chosen and have the necessary and clear qualification of anointing from God to be a witness, otherwise he is a bogus witness.

Similarly, one must have a genuine qualification in teaching before he can be recognized as a teacher. Teaching is a profession and it is those who take to that profession that are known as teachers in society, and not just any man who gives instructions to his children or servants.

The witnesses of God are people who devote their lives exclusively to the work of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. We have the example of the apostles who, having been called by Jesus Christ left their various secular occupations for his ministry. Said St. Paul: "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men."—1 Cor. 7: 22, 23.

Rutherford

The former President of the Watchtower Society, the late J. F. Rutherford, wrote in his book *CHILDREN* thus: "Then the Lord addresses His faithful servants, who are wholly devoted to Him, and says: 'Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen...therefore ye are my witnesses saith the Lord, that I am God.' (Isaiah 43: 10, 12)...**Jehovah's witnesses are His servants, and not the servants of any earthly organization.**" (Page 229). *Emphasis ours*

But are the members of the Watchtower Society who call themselves Jehovah's witnesses not servants of earthly organizations? Are some of them not civil servants or workers in firms, business enterprises and so on, who must get permission from their bosses before they can be absent from duty? Are they all WHOLLY devoted to God's service?

Rutherford was quite right. The true witness of Jehovah must be WHOLLY devoted to His service and be free at all times to go from place to place in preaching the gospel. And they, like St. Paul who was also a witness, do live of the gospel. —1 Cor. 9: 13, 14.

By reason of the anointing of those called to be Jehovah's witnesses, they do not need to be taught by men in any seminary like the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead and so on. Rather they, the ordained witnesses, are taught by God through Jesus Christ in spirit. As it is written: "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." —1 John 2:27.

The late J. F. Rutherford of the Watchtower Society had the understanding of the difference between the anointed Christians who are of the class of the apostles whom Jesus Christ designated as “Little Flock” (Luke 12: 32) and the “Other Sheep” (John 10: 16) who are not anointed. He did not believe that every member of the organisation is a witness of Jehovah. Rather, he had the knowledge that Jehovah’s witnesses, are the anointed Christians who lead and teach other believers in Christ.

In his book RICHES published in 1936, he wrote: “Those who prove entirely faithful to God in doing this work foreshadowed by the prophets are made part of his ‘elect servant’ class, of which Christ Jesus is Head and Chief. Such faithful ones are brought into the temple of God and **are appointed and anointed specifically to be witnesses to Jehovah.—Isaiah 43: 10-12... It is upon such faithful ones that God bestows His ‘new name’, calling them ‘Jehovah’s witnesses’**; and these continuing faithful unto death are the ones that are changed in ‘the first resurrection’ into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Revelation 20: 6). This would show that Jehovah’s witnesses are embraced within the picture or drama made by Jehu and Jonadab.”—Pages 67 & 68) *Emphasis ours*.

Rutherford termed the anointed ones “Jehu class” and others not anointed as “Jonadab class” He then wrote: “The obligation is now upon Jehovah’s witnesses to instruct the Jonadab class in order that those of good will may act intelligently.” (Page 121). If all are Jehovah’s witnesses who when are of the “Jonadab class” being instructed?

Furthermore he stated: “All who are found faithful and true are gathered into the temple that is, made a part of God’s capital organization. These are anointed and made a part of the “faithful and wise servant” class, to whom Christ Jesus committed the interest of his kingdom on the earth by making them the official witnesses of Jehovah and the representatives of Christ on earth—Matthew 13: 41-43; 24: 45-51.”—RICHES. Pages 340-343.

In the book SALVATION published in 1939 Rutherford wrote: “...It is now seen that the anointed remnant, that is, the little flock on the earth who are Jehovah’s witnesses, and those who form the company known as the Jonadabs...go on together in peace and in harmony, serving God and His kingdom.” (Page 71).

The book CHILDREN released in 1941 was one of the last publications of the late J. F. Rutherford who for 25 years was the President of the Watchtower Society. He died on January 8, 1942 Under the sub-heading “**Ordained**” in chapter seven of that book he stated: “The word ordained, as defined by the best authority (Doctor Strong), means ‘to make; to appoint; to anoint; to constitute; to commission. **Only the Lord, therefore, could truly and properly ordain one to become a witness for Him.**” (Page 225) *Emphasis ours*.

Now are all those men, women, boys and girls of the Watchtower Society we see in the streets truly and properly ordained by God to become His witnesses? How were they ordained? Is mere association with their society the ordination? And if they were not truly and properly ordained by God will it be out of place to call them counterfeit witnesses?

Before concluding, we wish to make it known that despite the unchristian attitude of the Watchtower Society towards the GKS; we are still open-minded in our dealings with its members knowing that some of them are honest thought misguided. Moreover, we are always guided by our Savior’s injunction at Matthew chapter 5 verses 43 to 48, which counsels love and tolerance.

We have endeavored to present the facts as they are in the light of the Scriptures so that the general public as well as honest members of the Watchtower Society may be well-informed. The points at issue are often twisted or misrepresented by Watchtower adherents,

especially the fanatics among them, to confuse people when confronted by inquirers as to the points of doctrine on which the GKS differs with them.

In their house-to-house activities they do misrepresent and slander the GKS and her first President, adding that he was once a Jehovah's witness. For the fact that in most cases GKS members are not present when they engage in their campaign of calumny, our own version is not immediately known.

Though the medium of this journal we put forward to the public our views on doctrinal issues in accordance with the Scriptures and leave them to the good conscience and impartial judgment of people of good-will.

From the Bible facts already adduced and from the admission of the Watchtower Society itself in their publications that it is the Almighty God alone that chooses and selects His witnesses, it will be ridiculous for any of them to say that Saint Urhobo was not a Jehovah's Witness simply because he did not tow the Watchtower line.

The fact is that since St. Urhobo was chosen by God Himself and he preached His word truthfully and uncompromisingly till his death, he was in all respects a Jehovah's witness.

The resolution of the Watchtower Society, which has made even ignoramuses in scriptural matters, to lay claim to the holy title of "Jehovah's Witness", is very unscriptural indeed. It is unfortunate that the late Rutherford acquiesced in committing that spiritual blunder. However, what he wrote in his works later were enough to have helped the Watchtower Society to take correction as to recover from their spiritual mess. IN an effort to cover their errors they have kept Rutherford's books and pamphlets, some of which were really enlightening, out of print.

Paul the apostle made it clear that in God's organisation, all worshippers do not hold the same office; hence he said: 'And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.'—1 Cor. 12: 28.

Knowing that some not appointed into offices would also claim to be what they are not, he then asked: "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?...do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?..."—1 Cor. 12: 29-31. See also Romans 12: 3-9.

If all cannot be apostles; if all cannot be prophets; if all cannot be teachers; CERTAINLY ALL CANNOT BE WITNESSES TOO!

The Watchtower witnesses should learn to remove the bean from their eyes first before hurrying to people's homes as they often do "to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye".—Matt. 7:3-5.

Their claim that they are all "Jehovah's Witnesses" is, in the light of the truth exposed in this article, scripturally unjustifiable and therefore baseless. If they dispute this the onus rests upon them to bring forth their evidence from the Holy Bible. Otherwise, let them take the path of honour and accept the truth as being advocated by God's Kingdom Society through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We make this appeal to the reasonable men and women among them for whom we have respect. "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth."—2 Corinthians 13: 8.

IS JESUS GOD ALMIGHTY?

THAT the almighty God and Jesus Christ are NOT one and the same God is quite clear in the Holy Bible. Whereas the Almighty Father has no beginning and is self-existent, Jesus the Son WAS CREATED. The person of God the Father is in all respect distinguished from the Son. And at all times—be it in his pre-human days, or during the incarnation, or after his glorification and exaltation—the Son Jesus has always been and will ever be subject to the Father.

Some people take offence when their church denominations, because of their wrong or false teachings, are mentioned for criticism. But how can one who is sincere and God-fearing be offended when what he has said or written is credited to him? He can reasonably be irritated only when what he did not say or do is attributed to him.

It will be ridiculous for any member of GKS to take offence when anyone says that the Organisation or her President teaches that the soul dies or that baptism does not wash away sin. We really teach people so through sermons and booklets and other publications because so it is in the Bible—the ignorant or unscriptural criticisms of some notwithstanding.

It is unchristian to take offence when one is told the truth or corrected for teaching wrong doctrines. St. Paul said God gave the Scriptures for reproof, correction and instructions in righteousness so that the children of God may become perfect.—2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.

Most of the troubles in matters of doctrines among the Christians in the world today, arose from grossly misleading decisions reached at certain ancient religious assemblies—notably, the Council of Trent, 1545-1563 A.D. For the reason that the clergymen who took part in those meetings were influenced more by political, cultural and traditional considerations to please men rather than by scriptural truth and revelations, they led Christendom astray.

Although the 16th century movement for reform in the Roman Catholic Church, which resulted in the setting up of the Reformed and Protestant Churches, caused a considerable stir, the shackles of pharisaical traditionalism and dogmatism still remained. In spite of the fact that some men made the supreme sacrifice by reason of their conviction during the Reformation, it is a matter for regret that their successors are still found submerged in the tide of errors concerning the Christian faith.

The Trinity

Since the Council of Nicaea adopted the Athanasian Creed and declared the doctrine of “The Trinity” as an article of faith, dist has been thrown in the eyes of many who profess Christianity. They have been plunged into a state under which they are unable to distinguish between the Father of Jesus Christ—Jehovah the Almighty God—and Jesus Christ himself who is the Son and Mediator between Him (God) and men.

The Athanasian Creed states in part: “That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father,

of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. The Father uncreate, the son uncreate and the Holy Ghost uncreate... so like wise the father is Almighty, the son almighty: and the Holy ghost Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties: but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods: but one god... and in this Trinity none is afore, or after other: none is greater or less than another; but the whole three Persons are co-eternal together: and co-equal."

On the basis of the Athanasian Creed it is written in *The Explanatory Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, that "the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost **are all one and the same God**". (*Emphasis ours*)

The *Sunday Times Pastor*, under the heading of "Real significance of Christmas" some time ago wrote: "The first Christmas day was a mysterious day: **it was the day on which God the Almighty left His throne in Heaven and come in the form of man to live among men.**"—*Sunday Times, December 24, 1967. (Emphasis ours).*

In effect the *Sunday Times Pastor*, is saying that for the period of Mary's conception and throughout the time Jesus Christ was on earth there was no God in heaven, and when he (Jesus) was killed and buried there was not god in existence. **If it is God the Almighty Who left His throne in heaven and came in the form of man to live among men, whose voice then came from heaven during Christ's baptism saying, "This is my beloved Son. In whom I am well pleased."**?—Matt. 3: 16, 17.

God the almighty is not subject to death—He is immortal. And so He could not be the one who came to the earth in the form of man and was betrayed and killed by wicked men. Of Him (God) it is written: "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to Whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."—1 Tim. 6: 16.

It was the Word the Son of God who was incarnated as the angel Gabriel told Mary: "The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that **holy thing** which shall be born of thee shall be called **Son of God**".

As a result of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ in his earthly mission God the Father has highly exalted him far above all the angels (Phil. 2: 9-11; Heb. 1: 1-8) and rewarded him with immortality by which he has power over death and hell or grave. And he (Jesus) declared: "I an he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" —Rev. 1: 18.

The doctrine of "Trinity" is very unscriptural, unreasonable and blasphemous. It is responsible for the ignorance and confusion of many people about God and Jesus Christ.

Even Herbert W. Armstrong or the Ambassador College, Pasadena, California, who is often critical of some other churches, has admitted that "there is great *confusion* today among religious leaders concerning the through nature and office of Jesus Christ—the saviour of the world". In leaflet entitled "**is Jesus God?**" his difficulties and lack of understanding about the subject matter were manifest. He argued that the word "God translated from the Hebrew "Elohim" is a uniplural name such as "church" or "family". He added: "**Christ and the Father are ONE God, not two Gods—One 'ELOHIM'**. That is why 'Elohim' said, 'Let us mad man in OUR image' (Gen. 1: 26)... Jesus is the LORD ---the Eternal of the Old Testament."

Armstrong's point of view is a deviation from the truth of the Scriptures. Granted that the word "God" is a collective noun what passage of the Bible expressly states that it is made

up of the Father, and the Son? If that was why God said, "Let US make man in OUR image" why did He talk to Adam in a personal singular sense, "I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. 2: 18) and not "We will make him..."? Why did He tell Abraham "I am the Almighty God" and NOT "We are the Almighty God"? Such instances abound in the Holy Bible.

Some religious leaders, out of sheer ignorance or deliberate desire to mislead their flock, do not want to admit that gods are many. But St. Paul stated: "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,0 but to us there is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (1 Cor. 8: 5, 6). The apostle did not say that the ONE God is made up of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Rather he said "there is but ONE GOD, the FATHER".

God of gods

The word god bears the meaning of one who is mighty or powerful. And so Jesus Christ is a god; the devil too is a god and St. Paul referred to him as "the god of this world". (2 Cor. 4: 3, 4) Rulers and judges, especially those who rule and administer justice in the fear of God and by reason of the powers vested in them, are gods. And because of the respect they deserve the divine law say, "Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people."—Exodus 22: 28.

All other gods, including Jesus Christ, who are the creatures of the Most High, are subject to Him (the Father). In Psalm 82: 1, 6 it is written: "GOD standeth in the congregation of the mighty; He judgeth among the gods. I have said, ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High."

For the fact that the Creator is supreme He is known as the "God of gods, and Lord of lords." (Deut. 10: 17) And the Psalmist declared: "For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods." (Ps. 95: 3) If there is only one God or if gods are not many as the clergy teach, why the foregoing divine statements by the prophets of God?

There is nothing wrong therefore to say that Jesus Christ is god as there are also other gods. But the point is that Jesus Christ is a different or separate entity from the person of God the Father.

Those who say that Jesus Christ and the Father exist co-eternally are very wrong indeed. The Bible shows vividly that Jesus Christ derived life from or was created by the Father. It is only the Almighty God, the Father, Who is self-existent as signified by His name JEHOVAH. Concerning Him the Psalmist declared, "...Even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God."—Ps. 90: 2.

The Word

Jesus Christ was created before all other things and thus has the unique honour of being the BEGINNING of the creation of the Almighty God. (Rev. 3: 14) In fact it was through him other perfect things, both visible and invisible, were created. But it is a pity that this vital truth revealed in the Scriptures still remains a mystery to many who claim to be Christians.

When God said, "Let us make man in our own image" He was talking to the Word (Jesus Christ) through whose instrumentality man and other things were created. And Jesus Christ spoke through King Solomon in spirit thus: "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old... When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when

there were no fountains abounding with water... While as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there... Then I was by him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him. “—Prov. 8: 22-30.

In John 1: 1, it is written: “In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” god Almighty has no beginning, and so the “beginning” in this next means when the Word or Logos (Greek) who is God the Son was created or brought into existence. If God Almighty and Jesus Christ the Word are one and the same God or Person, it will not make sense to say that “The Word was with God”.

It was the Word and NOT God Almighty who came to the world in the flesh and was called Jesus Christ. As it is written: “and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”—John 1: 14.

After the creation of Jesus Christ, God the Almighty Father made him His creative agent and so made other perfect things through him. Thus it is stated: “All things were made by him; and without him (Jesus Christ) was not any thing made that was made.”—John 1: 3.

That God created other things through Jesus Christ was confirmed by St. Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians in which he spoke of the wonderful grace of God given him to preach among the Gentiles. He added: “And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, **who created all things by Jesus Christ.**”—Eph. 3: 9.

And in his epistle to the Colossians St. Paul wrote concerning Jesus Christ as one “who is the image of the invisible **God, the FIRSTBORN of every creature**”. He stated further: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”—Col. 1: 15-17.

Jesus Christ himself stated that he derived life from the Father. (John 5: 26) And throughout the period of his ministry on earth he never indicated that he was God Almighty Himself Who came in the form of man, rather he stated categorically that he was sent as a subordinate by the Father. He said: “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”—John 5: 30; see also John 6: 38; 12: 49.

When Jesus Christ was to raise Lazarus to life he prayed to his Father for help. (John 11: 38-44) After he had accomplished his ministry on earth he said prayerfully to God the Father: “I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.”—John 17: 4, 5.

If Jesus were god Almighty Himself his sayings would have reflected his self-sufficiency and not as one who was carrying out the instructions of a superior or who expected reward from another. And when he (Jesus) was faced with violent death, he prayed: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” (Matt. 26: 39)

It will be unreasonable to suggest that he was praying to himself. The truth is that Jesus directed his prayer to the Father, God Almighty, Who is in heaven.

Jesus Christ did say, “I and my Father are one.” (John 10: 30) He did not by this mean

that They were one and the same God. Rather he meant that They were united or were one in purpose—acting together in harmony. The oneness he meant is clearly shown in his prayer to the father on behalf of his disciples. He said: “Neither pray I for these (apostles) alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; **THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE**; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that **THEY MAY BE ONE EVEN AS WE ARE ONE...**”—John 17: 20-23.

No reasonable person will infer that Christ’s prayer implies that all his disciples should be one and the same person. The fact is that he prayed so that his followers may be of one accord or be united; in other words, they should be one in purpose.

Subordinate

Despite the fact that Jesus Christ like God the Almighty is a spirit (as the angels also are spirits) and holds very high office, he has never snatched at equality with the Father.

He stated quite positively that his Father the Almighty God is greater than himself. He told his apostles: “Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father; **for my Father is greater than I.**” (John 14: 28) If he was the Father Himself who came in the form of a man why did he say, “I go unto the Father”?

What is more, St. Paul stated: “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.**”(Cor. 11: 3). But contrary to this glaring truth of the Scriptures, the Athanasian Creed says, “And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other: none is greater.”

The Holy bible further shows that Jesus Christ, at the height of his glory during and after his millennial reign when all things shall have been made subject to him will still be subordinate to the Father. As it is written; “For he (Christ) is destined to reign until God has put all enemies under his feet; and the last enemy to be abolished is death. Scripture says, He has put all things in subjection under his feet.’ But in saying ‘all things’, it clearly mean to exclude God Who subordinates them; and when all things are thus subject to him, then the Son himself will also be made subordinate to God Who made all things subject to him, and thus God will be all in all.—1 Cor. 15: 25-28, *N.E.D.*

That God Almighty and Jesus Christ are not one and the same God, has been made abundantly clear in the light of the Scriptures. Whosoever does not know or have the accurate knowledge of God and Jesus Christ so as to worship Them in truth cannot be saved. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” (1 Tim. 2: 3-5). And Jesus said “This is eternal life: to know thee Who alone art truly god, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” –John 17: 3. *N.E.B.*

May God Almighty give Hi sheep among the readers wisdom and understanding through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

GOD'S KINGDOM ADVOCATE VOLUME 2

IS IT ONLY IN CATHEDRALS GOD CAN BE WORSHIPPED? – No. 1

The quality of worship rendered to God Almighty is not assessed by the magnificent or otherwise of the house in which people meet to worship. It is not a sin to have a decent place for worship but what is important is whether we worship God in truth and out of a pure heart.

The word “cathedral” is defined in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English as being “typically a large building for worship, usually ornamented inside and out with art and/or wood-and-stone work in beautiful patterns.” And “worship” means to express in word and act deep love and respect, gratitude, trust, loyalty and dependence upon a higher power, human or divine. This may involve prostrating oneself before the higher power or rendering sacred services or offering gifts and praises to him.

The Holy Scriptures show clearly that the Almighty God has a closer relationship with man than with any other creature in the earth. It is His purpose that man whom He made in His image and whom He endowed with such attributes as wisdom, power, justice and love, should worship and praise Him. He Himself said: “This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.” – Isaiah 43:21

And of particular relevance to those of us living in this age of the last days of this evil world is the message of an angel of God whom St. John saw in his vision on the Island of Patmos. It is written: “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” – Revelation 14:6, 7

Before answering the question as to whether it is only in cathedrals God can be worshipped, let us look into how the ancient faithful worshipped Him and how the use of buildings for worship originated.

The Bible shows that the worship of God from the beginning required faith, obedience and sincerity expressed in certain acts of reverence. Cain and Abel, the first and second sons of Adam made offerings to God. While the offering of Abel was accepted, that of Cain was rejected by the Lord. (Genesis 4:1-8) Concerning Abel, Saint Paul wrote: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” – Hebrews 11:4

And the Bible states that as early as the time of Seth, the third son of Adam, “...then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.” (Genesis 4:26) Subsequent generations of the faithful maintained these early forms of worship involving prayers and offerings. They kept their relationship with God faithfully. Thus Enoch “walked with God”, and Noah whom He found righteous before Him in that generation expressed his gratitude by building an altar on

which he offered burnt offerings to Him after the Deluge. – Genesis 5:24; 6:9; 8:20

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Indeed Abraham, the “friend of God” as well as his son Isaac, and even Jacob, his grandson, maintained that simple system of worship in their semi-nomadic pattern of life. They did not build any house for the purpose of worship. But wherever they pitched their tents for a period of time they built sacrificial altars and called upon the name of the Lord. – Genesis 12:7, 8; 13:4, 18 etc.

There is also the instance of the pillar of stone set up by Jacob at Bethel where he made offerings to God after he in a dream was assured of divine blessings. – Genesis 28:10-22; 35:1-3, 9-15

Israelites

When Israel had grown into a nation and had been delivered by God from the bondage of Egypt, they were commanded through Moses the prophet to set up the tabernacle. It was a tent building – a movable sanctuary - the pattern and even the furniture of which were prescribed by God. (Exodus chapters 25 - 31) And the details of its erection are recorded in chapters 35 – 40. This was done in the wilderness during their journey to Canaan.

In course of time, however, King David during his reign felt constrained by his high regard for God to build a permanent and fitting house of worship made of stone for him to supplant the tabernacle. This was after he had consolidated power and built a permanent place for himself. He told Nathan the prophet: “...See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains...” – 2 Samuel 7:1-3

It is noteworthy that God immediately made it clear that He did not request for such an house to be built for Him. He sent Nathan to tell the king: “...Thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in: For I have not dwelt in an house since the day that I brought up Israel unto this day; but have gone from tent to tent, and from *one* tabernacle *to another*. Wheresoever I have walked with all Israel, spake I a word to any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people, saying, Why have ye not built me an house of cedars?” – 1 Chronicles 17:3-6

Nevertheless, although God did not allow King David to build the house for Him, He was impressed with his good intention and so gave concession for his son Solomon to build it. (1 Kings 8:17-19) King David later stated to Solomon: “My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God: But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight.” (1 Chronicles 22:6-8) And so the king gathered materials in abundance for the building and made adequate arrangement to have the work completed by Solomon. – 1 Chronicles 22:2-5

King Solomon began the work of construction in the fourth year of his reign, and the temple was completed seven years. – 1 Kings 6: 1, 37, 38

The splendor of the temple was great. Its description and the account of its dedication to God

are recorded in 1 Kings chapters 5-8, and 2 Chronicles 2-6. But because of the unfaithfulness of the Jews from time to time God forsook them, and successive kings desecrated the temple. And when Jerusalem was sacked by the soldiers of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the temple was looted and destroyed. – 2 Kings 25:8, 9, 13-17

However, after the return of the Israelites from Babylonish captivity many years later through the help of God whose mercy is everlasting they built the temple in Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel of the tribe of Judah.

The Bible shows vividly that the tabernacle and temples built in ancient times were typically significant. It was not that God came down from heaven to dwell in them. This was acknowledged by King Solomon in his prayer during the dedication of the temple. Said he: “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?” – 1 Kings 8:27

God Himself declared: “...The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool: where *is* the house that ye build unto me? and where *is* the place of my rest? For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD: but to this *man* will I look, *even to him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” – Isaiah 66:1, 2

What is more, the martyr Stephen in his brilliant answer to the accusation of blasphemy against him just before he was killed, said: “But Solomon built him (God) an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven *is* my throne, and earth *is* my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what *is* the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?” – Acts 7:47-50. See also Acts 17:24

Spiritual Temple

The ancient tabernacle and temples under the Mosaic Law and the Levitical Priesthood were types or shadows of things to come as clearly stated in the Bible. And the advent of Jesus Christ brought about a change of the priesthood and the law. Saint Paul stated: “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.” – Hebrews 10:1; see also Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 7:11, 12; 8:3-5

It is essential therefore to mention at this stage that the tabernacles and the temples that were built in those days foreshadowed Jesus Christ and the anointed Christians who are his body members. They make up the spiritual tabernacle or temple or house of God, the literal tabernacle and temples having been done away with as the places of communication between God and His people. God now speaks to men through Jesus Christ His Son and through His servants called to be apostles and anointed with the Holy Spirit. – Hebrews 1:12; John 17:18-20; Matthew 24:31; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 20; 1 John 2:27 etc.

When Jesus Christ told the Jews to destroy the temple and that he would raise it up in three days, he was not speaking of the literal temple but of the spiritual one which he himself is. (John 2:19-21) And Saint Paul stated: “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to

come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;" – Hebrews 9:11

Furthermore, with reference to the anointed Christians Saint Paul stated: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are." – 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; see also Hebrews 3:6

Christian Worship

It is no longer necessary for the people of God to go to Jerusalem in the land of Palestine to worship God. This was made clear by Jesus Christ during his dialogue with a woman of Samaria, as it is written: "The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth." – John 4:19-24

It becomes clear at once that what is important in the service of God today is not the place of worship but the quality of the worship in terms of righteousness reflecting His spirit, and firm belief in the truth of His word. Where people worship in cathedrals or magnificent buildings and the truth is absent their services will not be accepted by God. So too, if they have not truly repented of their sins as to put away evil doing, their services will be unacceptable. God said "...but to this *man* will I look, *even to him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." – Isaiah 66:2

It is important, very important, that we hold firmly to the truth and eschew false doctrines and unwholesome traditions of men in our worship of God. Otherwise, our worship will be in vain. Jesus Christ said told the Scribes and Pharisees: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men." – Matthew 15:7-9

Christians are free to worship God anywhere, however small the place may be and however few they themselves may be provided the place is clean, there is sincerity, and the truth is with them. It could be in a home, a school hall or classroom, a town hall or any other available and convenient place. Jesus Christ said: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name (in truth of course – Psalm 145:18), there am I in the midst of them." – Matthew 18:20

It is therefore wrong to look down on any church or group of Christians for not having a magnificent church hall in which to worship. Even the early Christians worshipped in their own homes. That was why St. Paul while writing to the Christians in Rome stated among other things: "" – Romans 16:3-5 (New International Version); see also 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2

A proper understanding of the Scriptures will make one know that the true worship of God is not to be confined to a particular place. It does not end with church service but covers every aspect of a Christian's life anywhere and at any time, including his dealings with his fellow man or woman, be it husband or wife, parent or child, master or servant or anyone else. Whatever we do, good or bad, will be rewarded us accordingly by God through Christ Jesus. – Ecclesiastes 12:14; Jeremiah 17:10; Romans 2:6; 2 Corinthians 5:10 etc.

It was Saint Paul who admonished: "...Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*, lest they be discouraged. Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." – Colossians 3:17-24

True worship, which is acceptable to God, must be devoid of envy, selfishness, strife and wrong use of the tongue, but should be a reflection of the wisdom from above which the apostle James described as being "...first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy..." (James 3:13-18) The same apostle also stated: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world." – James 1:27

And so it is not in cathedrals only God can be worshiped.