

exhortations

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testimonies

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THE WORD

echo [letter to the editor]

DLM True Jesus Church

32 Lorong H, Telok Kurau

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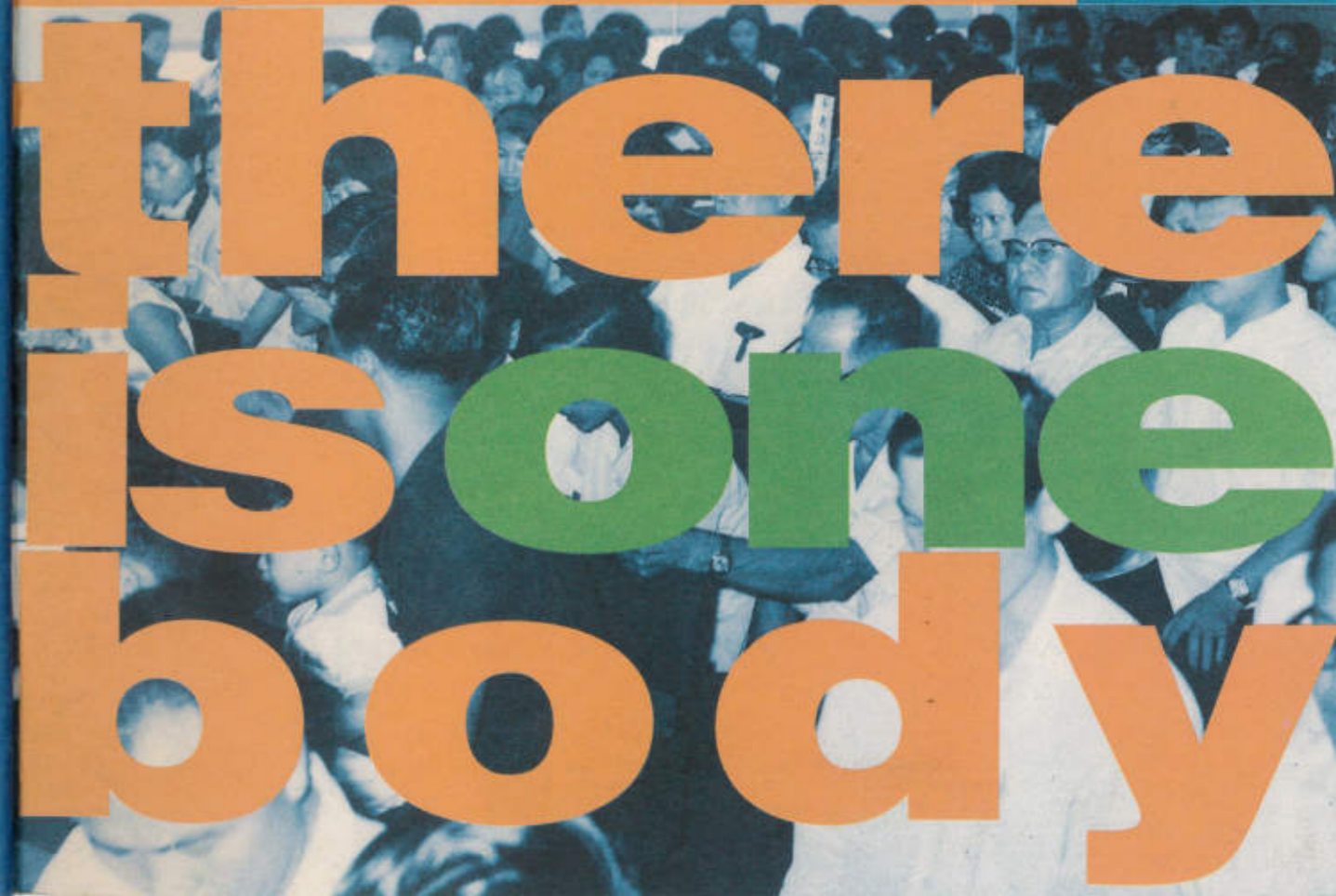
Library

Jesus the True God
the Holy Bible
the True Church

Baptism of Water
Baptism of the Holy Spirit
Washing of Feet
Holy Communion
Sabbath Day

Way of Salvation
Second Coming of Christ

issue 24



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All Bible quotes are from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

There is a page in every issue of Manna, with a call to readers to write some words for the Word. Thank God our readers are beginning to respond, but we believe that more could do so. It is wrong to assume that only the preachers, elders and deacons are qualified to write articles for Manna. It is also incorrect to suggest that only the knowledgeable who are experts in the Bible can contribute articles to Manna. You, too, can write for Manna. You can write about what you see, what you hear and what you have experienced.

You can write for instance about sermons you heard which have inspired you, or a particular verse of the Bible which deeply moved you. You can also write about how you overcame a temptation or avoided a would-be disaster through the help of the Holy Spirit. Readers will be greatly encouraged by your article.

Are you aware that Manna is now published by the International Assembly? It is an international magazine. Your articles will edify many readers the world over.

In this issue, the feature article studies the oneness of the body of Christ from biblical and historical perspectives. It argues for the unity of the church in the truth. As such, the title itself, *There is One Body* is a message that cuts both ways; that the church should not be divisive and fragmented, and that there can only be one true church of Christ amongst the many churches. Its answer to the question of denominations should be of interest to the reader.

Paul Before Felix states that Paul was put on trial for the sake of truth. In similar vein, the True Jesus Church today may be accused of heresy by other churches. To this, the author urges fellow workers of the church not to shirk their duty but to boldly proclaim the one way of salvation. Otherwise, we are condemning people to eternal death by depriving them of the Word of Life.

In *Church in Action*, the writer is concerned over the slow quantitative growth of our church and suggested ways in which we can progress faster. For our evangelistic work to be effective, the author reminds us to follow the "By My Spirit" principle.

When we preach to our Christian friends, have we not been rebuffed with mocking words? *Standing Firm* is a letter written to a sister who was repudiated for preaching the gospel to her friend. It contains much comfort and encouragement. Read it so that you will not be disappointed should you come across such a situation in future.

This issue we also have four testimonies. *God Is Our Refuge*, *An Eternal Paradise*, *The Right Church At Last* and *I Came From The Other Fold*. Don't miss reading them.

We wish to apologise to our readers in our last issue of Manna No:23, that we have omitted Japan in our Situation Report.

there is one body

How Do We Relate To
The World's Churches?

THE Christian Church has had a tremendously eventful history since its inception in the upper room at Jerusalem. During this period of close to 2,000 years, the church underwent persecution, growth, official recognition, apostasy, attempted reformation and final restoration. Christianity today, with its fragmented character and denominational diversity, hardly bears any resemblance to the united community of believers that formed the original church. Why is this so? Has the prayer of our Lord "that they may all be one"¹ failed? Or can it be that the Christianity that the world knows today is not a continuation of the original Christianity initiated by Jesus Christ? We shall investigate. History must be seen from a biblical perspective.

BY SHEE TSE LOONG [SINGAPORE]

APOSTASY FORETOLD

JESUS and the apostles predicted the infiltration of false Christs, false prophets, false teachers and false brethren². Views are divided as to whether there had been a period in history during which the true church was extinct. Some hold that the church could never at any time be uprooted from the world, since the Lord Himself declared that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'³. They concede at most that the church 'fled into the wilderness'⁴ at one time.

A survey of church history reveals that while there was a long period when the official church was totally corrupt, there were small bands of people who separated themselves, some dwelling in the mountains. These splinter groups, albeit rejecting the frivolities of Rome, were not totally sound in their own doctrines (Box 1). Also, one group differed from another in the effort to return to pure Christianity. Very importantly, none could trace their roots to apostolic Christianity. The *visible* continuation of apostolic Christianity was, sadly, an apostate church that grew out of European civilization. Severed of all *spiritual* ties with the church that was founded by Christ, her degeneration and fragmentation were rapid. The gates of hell never prevailed over the unseen spiritual church made up of true believers of all time but the visible true church was nowhere to be found soon after the apostolic era.

Box 1

As the post-apostolic church became plagued with heresy and as church organisation became more imitative of the imperial government of Rome, a puritanical group, led by Montanus of Phrygia in Asia Minor, sought to return to the simplicity of primitive Christians. They believed in the priesthood of all true believers. Tertullian (160-220 AD), one of the very respected early church fathers, embraced their views and wrote in their defence. There are questionable teachings among the Montanists, which include: that Montanus and a few others, including women, were a continuation of the inspired mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit, after the manner of the apostles, and that the new Jerusalem would literally 'come down out of heaven from God' and that it would be fixed in Phrygia.

During the medieval times, about 1170, a group emerged in southern France, known as the Albigenses, so called because Albi was an important centre. This group, also known as the Cathari ("Pure") repudiated the authority of church tradition, circulated the New Testament, and opposed the Romish doctrines of purgatory, image-worship and priestly claims. They were however, dualists, believing that there are two eternal-powers, the one good and the other evil, that the visible world is the creation of the evil power, and that the spiritual world is the work of the

good power. As a result, they endeavoured to shun all that had to do with reproduction of animal life. They saw marriage as perpetuating the human species in this sinful world. Those who had fully embraced their way of life were called Perfecti ("Perfect") and must become celibate and vegetarian. The rest were called Credenti ("Believers") who would work towards becoming part of the 'perfect' before their death. Another aberration was their view of many parts of the Old Testament as of the Devil.

A contemporary group, the Waldensees (Waldensians) was founded by Peter Waldo, a merchant of Lyons who went to a theologian to ask the way to heaven and received the reply: "If thou wilt be perfect go sell that thou hast, and give to the poor"⁵. He proceeded with this injunction by giving his wealth to charity, and founded a lay order of evangelists, the Poor Men of Lyons, who went about preaching two by two, simply clad, barefoot or wearing sandals, taking no purse, subsisting on what was given by their listeners. However, they still practised the hearing of confessions, though holding that a layman was as competent as a priest to do so. Many of their views were extreme; for example, they taught that every lie is a deadly sin and that accumulation of wealth is evil.

ONE SHOULD NOT be too quick to call the Protestant Movement a 'church reformation'. In biblical light, the church would fall away from the truth and then be restored by the hand of God⁵. This is analogous to temple rebuilding of which God said to Zerubbabel, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit."⁶



Martin Luther

Since the church had become a political machine controlling the nations of Europe, any movement against it would naturally take a somewhat political course unless divinely inspired. The Protestant Movement, generally ascribed to Martin Luther, could not steer clear of politics. The very name 'Protestant' was derived from the formal protest made at Spire in 1529 by the Lutheran princes who ruled over the northern states in Germany, against their Catholic counterparts in the southern states. In 1520, Luther wrote *"To the Christian Nobility of the German*

In biblical light, the church

would fall away from the

truth and then be restored

by the hand of God

Nation", in which he called on the German princes to reform the church by virtue of their office.

Luther's following among the princes greatly helped in furthering his movement but at the same time attracted political response from Rome. Under pressure from these princes, Luther wrote and spoke for armed resistance. Similarly, when the peasants revolted in 1524-25, Luther's sympathy for them could not persist and he had to favour the princes. In his fearsome tract, *"Against the Wandering Thieving Hordes of Peasants"*, he asked the princes to 'knock down, strangle and stab'. As a result, 100,000 peasants died and many left the Lutheran fold. From then, Lutheranism was a religion associated with status and power. It fared no better than Roman Catholicism in that it became a tool for rulers to seize power and wealth. Catholic properties were seized in Protestant German states, and monarchies were formed in Scandinavia. An ordinance of 1537, approved by Luther, made bishops salaried officials of the Danish state.⁷

In the same year when Martin Luther presented his Ninety-five theses in Germany (1517), Ulrich Zwingli attacked Roman Catholicism in Switzerland. Five years later, he made a definite break with Rome and established a regime of clergymen and magistrates at Zurich that supervised government, religion and individual morality. The country was divided as a result of this religious conflict, leading to civil wars. Zwingli himself was slain in battle. The movement went onward however, and found its later leader in Jean (John) Calvin, a Frenchman invited to Geneva in 1536. Although faced with initial political problems, Calvin's party regained power in 1541 and within a short period gained full control of the republic, making his brand of Christianity the official religion.

Calvin sought to establish a society subject to religious legislation. A committee of clergy plus twelve lay members known as the Consistory met regularly. With a presiding Magistrate, punishments and ex-communications were passed for law-enforcement. Pastors who sat in the Consistory would visit households without warning to check every detail of private life and impose penalties on offenses like missing church, laughing during services, wearing bright colours, dancing, card-playing, or maintaining some form of Roman Catholicism. Magistrates sometimes used torture to obtain confessions. Execution of heretics was quite common. Calvin managed to get rid by expulsion, and in some cases, torture and execution, those who opposed his earthly set-up of a Christian society.

Calvinism spread, like Lutheranism, in other lands, aided by political actions. In France, the 2,000 Huguenot consistories became a civil and military organisation as well as a religious one. In 1559, in Scotland, John Knox, a pupil of Calvin, urged the nobility to raise arms against the Catholic administration. By his relentless energy, he swept away every trace of Catholicism and made the Presbyterian Church the established church of Scotland.

English Protestantism was even more clearly political. The breach with Rome was led by the king, Henry VIII, not a dissenting priest. Although more than a century before Luther, John Wycliffe had denounced Roman Catholicism on religious grounds and called for reform, Henry VIII now wanted independence purely for private and political reasons. Late medieval kings had often quarreled with popes and national pride had caused resentment of Roman domination. When the pope could not immediately annul his marriage to Queen Catherine, Henry VIII intimidated the clergy into proclaiming him head of the English church. Through the Parliament, he was granted the authority to appoint bishops in England. It was also passed that payments of revenues to Rome should cease and the Anglican Church was established as an independent national organ under the king.



King Henry VIII

By the mid sixteenth century, there were three varieties of state religion in the west: papal Catholicism, state Christianity (Lutheranism and Anglicanism), and Calvinist theocracy. Each was organically linked to the state where it existed and was a compulsory religion; all citizens in a given province were considered members of the state church because they had been christened (made Christians) by infant baptism. Each tried to use all the apparatus of the state as far as possible, to impose a religious monopoly. This led to civil war within and between the European states. The result of the Protestant Movement was not a *single*, purified, God-restored church, free from the vices of Rome, but *many* self-governed national churches of various forms - Episcopal in England, Presbyterian in Scotland and in



Jean (John) Calvin

Switzerland, and somewhat mixed in the northern lands. The radical reformers and their followers (eg Anabaptists and Puritans), who opposed the official link between church and state, were greatly persecuted by these state churches. Subsequently, each group brought its version of religion into foreign lands through missionary activity. The heterogeneous nature of present-day Christianity is to a great degree, a legacy of the divisiveness brought about by the Protestant Movement.

In the matter of doctrine, it was equally divisive from the start. Protestantism, in seeking to depart from the errors of Rome, was never represented by a unified movement held together by a common doctrine. Leaders differed from one another in theological opinions which remain irreconcilable to this day. Referring to the Holy Communion, Luther remarked that he "would rather drink blood with the papists than mere wine with the Zwinglians." Calvinists thought of Lutherans as virtually unreformed, Romanists masquerading in godly garments. Some Lutherans deemed Calvinist errors worse than those of Roman Catholicism. Both Calvinists and Lutherans condemned the Anabaptists, who in turn viewed the state churches as abominable. Such animosities are evident even in their creeds⁸. Contentions were not merely verbal; the Swiss Brethren for example, faced capital punishment in Zurich, and the Puritans in England were persecuted and imprisoned.

The many churches that sprang from the Protestant Movement with their different creeds and doctrines, do not fit the biblical description of the 'one body' defined by 'one faith' and 'one baptism'⁹. Also, the political orientation of the movement does not conform to the biblical church, which is a kingdom 'not of this world'¹⁰. Apparently, the restoration of God's true church by His Spirit did not occur till many centuries after the so-called Reformation.

THE TONGUES MOVEMENT

CAUTIOUS people in some denominations hesitate to call the Tongues Movement the *Pentecostal* Movement, and with good reasons. One ought not link any movement to the biblical downpour of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost before being acquainted with the history, beliefs and practices of that movement.

We have seen that attempts at church reform go further back in history than Luther's time, and we note the same for the Tongues Movement. For as early as the 2nd century, the Montanists were already 'speaking in tongues', with their leader Montanus claiming to be the very Paraclete (Comforter). He and several prophets also 'prophesied', claiming to deliver inspired messages directly from God. Visions and revelations were also common. We have noted in Box 1 why their beliefs were unsound. 'Tongues' also appeared among persecuted Protestants of France in the 17th Century. The Mormons experienced 'tongues' in the 1830's and claimed they could speak the language of the Indians nearest to them. The most notable occurrence of tongues prior to the modern movement is that of the Irvingites in the 1830's (incidentally the same period as the Mormons), not only because it was chronologically the closest, but because among numerous charismatic people today, there is an increasing interest in Edward Irving, its founder, and a growing recognition of him as the forerunner of the Charismatic Movement¹¹ (Box 2).

We now focus on the so-called Pentecostal Movement that started just prior to the turn of the century, before its differentiation into the modern charismatic

Box 2

Edward Irving was a Presbyterian minister of the Church of Scotland, who served in London from 1822 till his death in 1834. In 1824 he was influenced by a man named Hatley Frere to view that the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation indicated that the coming of Christ would be just a few years away. The following year, he wrote that there would soon be an "outpouring of the Holy Spirit" attested by "signs and wonders". His view that the charismatic gifts would be restored during the Millennium was later modified under the influence of A J Scott, a ministerial probationer in Scotland. He came to believe that the gifts were never withdrawn, but that the church lost them only because of coldness of heart. As such they were as much available as they had been in the apostolic days.

Tongues soon broke out in Scotland (1830) under the influence of Scott. Delegates from London visited these tongue speakers and upon returning started to speak in tongues themselves. By the beginning of September 1831, a considerable number of people in Irving's church were speaking in

tongues. Some could interpret tongues while others could prophesy in English, purportedly giving inspired messages directly from God. The messages however, were simple truths and lacking in substance, which any person with a fair knowledge of the Christian faith could compose. Six persons in this company were known as "the gifted ones" and sat together in a prominent pew during services. Though they were designated specific periods in the service to exercise their gifts, they soon disregarded the limits and interrupted the services with their exhibition of tongues and prophesying. Others in the congregation soon did the same and Sunday services were often disrupted by tongues, sometimes with sudden shrieks, hissing or groaning.

Other gifts soon developed within the charismatic faction of the church. One Robert Baxter, a lawyer, was deemed to have received "the gift of knowledge". He offered to answer "in the power" any questions that might be put to him. He also began to "preach in the Spirit" and made predictions. ▶

► For example, he set the date of Christ's return as June 27, 1835 which was accepted by Irving himself. He instructed his minister brother to baptise his six-week-old daughter "with the Holy Ghost" so that she could speak in the Spirit. Worse still, he was told by revelation to leave his wife. There were other prophets whose declarations "in the power" often contradicted one another.

Tongues at that time were thought of as actual foreign languages. As such, it was deemed unnecessary for missionaries to learn foreign languages and some sought tongues in order to participate in missionary work. Human inducements were commonly used to get people to speak. Often, seekers were

instructed to "yield their tongues" to the Spirit.

Before long, the features hitherto mentioned caused some to doubt and eventually abandon their charismatic views. Amongst them were strong advocates like A J Scott, Robert Baxter and one of the "gifted ones", Miss Hall. But Irving held firm to his conviction till his death. He had, besides those mentioned, other peculiar beliefs. He saw sickness as either punishment from God or attack from Satan and opposed the use of medicine. He also held that Christ possessed the fallen nature though He "did no sin". He told his friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who denied the deity of Christ, that he had learned more about true Christianity from him than all other men he met.

denominations. Although it became more widespread after the 1906 outburst at 312 Azusa Street in Los Angeles, the Movement actually commenced 20 years earlier in Tennessee, led by a Baptist pastor whose objective was "to restore primitive Christianity and bring about the Union of all denominations"¹². It later spread to Wales and Los Angeles.

The manifestations of the Movement as described in its own records or in books written by its adherents, were quite typical everywhere. Tongues were spoken very loudly, even when the gatherings were small. Sessions were extremely long, often lasting through the night. In exhaustion,

many required assistance to stand or to walk. Services had no fixed order, so as to allow the Spirit of God the freedom to lead. In the midst of singing or prayer, someone would spring from his seat and shout at the top of his voice, in tongues or in English. It was not uncommon to see people, including the preacher, suddenly fall flat on their faces and speak for hours in that position. This phenomenon, termed 'being slain in the spirit', would sometimes cause one to fall onto a group of people of the opposite sex. Also, people had to be on stand-by to arrange the skirts of women, or to cover them with towels as they laid on the floor. Some would see visions while lying on the floor, shaking.

**The Bible does teach that
tongues, visions and
prophecies will be restored
in the last days**

Predictions too, were a prominent feature of the Movement. The principal advocate of Pentecostalism in India, Max Wood Moorhead, claimed that God gave a message through a Swedish missionary on 23 September, 1907, saying that Colombo would suffer an earthquake and Ceylon would be sunk in the sea. He gave a lengthy account of how by tongues and interpretation, the prophecy was confirmed to him on four occasions. The favourite topic of the Second Advent was of course much prophesied about. Many of the prophetic utterances were quite precise, as that the Lord will come "this year" or that "this may be the last winter before He comes". The movement had on a few occasions admitted that mistakes could occur. As for the Colombo prophecy, a spokesman said, "The Apostles even made mistakes after 'Pentecost' ... The Devil's voice was also heard among the 'sons of God' ..."¹³.

The Bible does teach that tongues, visions and prophecies will be restored in the last days¹⁴. However, the history of the Tongues Movement will cause an objective mind to realise the true church can not have stemmed from it.

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT AND OTHER MODERN TRENDS

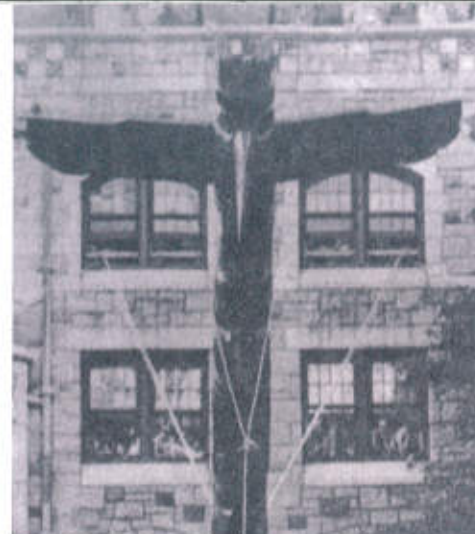
THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT is one of the most significant Christian developments of the 20th century. Christians, long divided by theological and other denominational differences, have always yearned for unity. In 1948, the World Council of Churches (WCC) was established for this purpose. The message of the Second Assembly of the WCC contained these moving words:

"Is your Church seriously considering its relation to other churches in the light of our Lord's prayer in that we may be sanctified in the truth and that we may all be one?
Is your congregation, in fellowship with sister congregations around you, doing all it can do to ensure that your neighbours shall hear the voice of the one Shepherd calling all men into the one flock?"

In about two decades, it had already managed to bring into common fellowship over 250 denominations in more than 80 countries committed to "study, witness, serve and advance the common unity". By that time however, it could be observed that the Council became increasingly involved in issues outside its rightful realm and entered into actions that many Christians found objectionable. It started to launch programs to combat racism, using its funds to back "liberation" movements in Africa and insurrection in the US. Worse, some of the most generously financed groups were avowedly communist and had records of terrorism. In a *Reader's Digest* article (October 1971) entitled, "Must Our Churches Finance Revolution?", the question was asked: "Is this what Christ taught?"

The World Council had also carried ecumenism too far. In the 1970s, in seeking more togetherness with the communists, it initiated "Marxist-Christian dialogues". Marxists were allowed to diligently propound their theories in these dialogues, which would cause an observer to question who was converting who. Another article appeared in the Reader's Digest in November, 1971, bearing the title: "Which Way the World Council of Churches?" It put forward the question: "Has the 'ecclesiastical United Nations' become just another platform from where communism seeks to flay the free world?"

On the religious front, the WCC is becoming increasingly friendly with the Vatican. In 1965, a Joint Working Group (JWG) was set up to develop ecumenical collaboration between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). Roman Catholic participation and membership in regional councils of the WCC has increased worldwide. The WCC invited the RCC to be represented at its 6th Assembly in July 1983 in Vancouver, Canada.



The totem pole

Both the RCC and the WCC are very open to inter-religious unity. The 5th Assembly of the WCC began a tradition of inviting guests from other faiths. At the 6th Assembly, this openness to non-Christian faiths was exhibited by the raising of a common pagan symbol, the totem pole. A multi-faith statement in advance of the 7th Assembly¹⁵ advocated a "new paradigm of relationship" among "all religious traditions". Here are some excerpts:

"We have to learn to recognise in our neighbours the presence of the divine spoken of in different ways in different traditions: the Shekhina in the Jewish tradition, the Holy Spirit of the triune God to the Christians, the Atman to the Hindus and Sikhs, the Ruh to Muslims."

"In our inter-dependent world, people of one religious tradition alone will not be able to find solutions to the ills of our time."

The 7th Assembly held in Canberra, Australia in 1991 was attended by 15 guests from other faiths. The pluralistic tone was set by scantily-clad aborigines with their tribal dances around an altar. Ecumenism, the concept of 'one household', is gradually, but more than subtly, embracing the people together with the elements of other faiths.

There are other disturbing trends. A number of theologians and clergymen from almost all the major denominations are now expressing their denial of the fundamental tenets of biblical Christianity, such as the inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth and the resurrection of Christ. Accounts of

the Fall, the Tower of the Babel, the Flood, are dismissed as myths. More appalling, such remarks are even found in official church organs, statements and educational materials, as well as study aids.

The Interpreter's Bible, the Commentary of the RSV Bible says: "From the earliest records of primitive sacrifice man has been obsessed by the efficacy of innocent blood to save from disaster. Both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches have perpetuated this primitive tradition...there is also an ancient superstition that there is some magic efficacy in the murder of the innocent."

The *Layman's Bible Commentary* consistently disparages the historical accuracy of the Scriptures, assigning to them legends, fabrications and prophecies composed after the fact. It also teaches that all men shall be saved whether in Christ or out of Christ.

We must not see these recent trends as the beginning of a downward course. They are but a continuation and an aggravation of the apostasy that began soon after the apostolic era. Only in the restored true church where truth is rediscovered, will truth be defended and kept till the Second Coming of Christ.

We do seek unity, but we do not

believe that we can be 'one body'

without being of 'one faith'.

GOD'S RESTORATION OF HIS CHURCH

Truth unites. It is false doctrine that

causes disunity, for all who are called to

be one must be sanctified with truth

THE TRUE JESUS CHURCH believes that she is the true church, restored by God Himself through His Holy Spirit. It should be clear by now that this article does not reckon that the movements hitherto mentioned were God-appointed forerunners in the similitude of John the Baptist, paving the way for the emergence of the true church. We do seek unity, but we do not believe that we can be 'one body' without being of 'one faith'. We cannot unite with any individual or body that does not stand on the apostolic teaching¹⁶ restored to us by God. We therefore reject the notion: "Love unites, but truth divides". Truth unites. It is false doctrine that causes disunity, for all who are called to be one must be sanctified with truth¹⁷.

We are also not bigotted separatists. Though we do not align ourselves with the denominational churches, or claim a share in their historical heritage, it is unjust for us to discredit the labours of their forebears. The Protestant Movement has brought

to us benefits that cannot be overlooked. The Bible, that had been for years accessible only to the clergy, was made available to the common folk. In the days when the death penalty was imposed for illegal possession of the Scriptures, the sacred writings were mass printed and circulated. The ecclesiastical ban also did not deter Luther and Calvin from translating the Bible into the common tongues of their people. Of particular importance to the English speaking world is the great work of John Wycliffe who first translated the New Testament in English and subsequently with the help of a few friends, the Old Testament. Today, the Bible, in whole or in part, has been rendered into thousands of languages, all undertaken by people outside our fold.

The truth of God is essentially the gospel of His love in dying for sinners, and so we who are called to be valiant for truth must be ambassadors of love.

The important question we need to answer is: How do we relate to the world's churches? The question is in fact two fold: Firstly, how do we *view* them, and secondly, how should we *treat* them? The answer to the first is not too difficult. We have already seen that they do not correspond to John the Baptist. However, the assistance they have rendered to us makes them comparable to King Cyrus - not of the stock of Israel, but called the Lord's 'annointed'¹⁸. In this sense, we see God's hand working through the Bible translators. And we know that God has worked and still does work, through any person or event as it pleases Him, since He had even worked through a donkey¹⁹. This is in line with our conviction that in everything God works for our good, for we are His true children who are called according to His purpose²⁰.

The way we should treat the world's churches is well defined in this statement: The possessors of the *truth* owe the greatest debt of *love*. We owe it to the whole world, but especially the professed Christians, to preach the true gospel to them. We need to have the enthusiasm of Aquila and Priscilla

in expounding the full gospel to those who have an inaccurate or incomplete understanding of it²¹. The extreme love of Paul for his kinsmen has to be replicated in each of us. Our hearts should go out to them, despite their misunderstanding or persecution. The *truth* of God is essentially the gospel of His *love* in dying for sinners, and so we who are called to be valiant for truth must be ambassadors of love.

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The Ten Basic Beliefs of the True Jesus Church

The True Jesus Church, being "the pillar and foundation of the truth", must uphold and preach the message of salvation to all nations. This is a commission entrusted, not only to full-time ministers, but also to every individual member of this church. It therefore follows that every member needs to have a clear understanding of his or her beliefs. How well do you know the church's basic beliefs listed below?

1

The True God was manifested in the flesh as the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for the remission of our sins, and was resurrected on the third day. Jesus is the one and only Saviour of mankind, the Creator of heaven and earth, and the only true God (*I Tim 3:16; I Cor 15:3-4; Lk 2:8-11; Phil 2:6-8; Acts 4:12*).

2

The Holy Bible, consisting of the Old and the New Testaments, is inspired by God and is the only standard of scriptural truth for the believers (*II Tim 3:16; II Pet 1:21; Gal 1:6-9*).

3

The True Jesus Church, a restored Apostolic Church during the time of the "Latter Rain" (End Time) and having a spiritual and theocratic government, preaches the Truth, is filled with the Holy Spirit, and abounds in miracles and the manifold power of God (*Joel 2:23; Amos 9:11*).

4

Water Baptism is the Sacrament for the remission of sins and for regeneration. The baptist must be one who has received the Holy Spirit. The baptism must be administered in the following mode:

(*Mt 3:16; Acts 2:38; Jn 20:21-23*)

- In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ (*Acts 2:38; 19:5; 8:16; 22:16*)
- With the head of the baptised bowed and facing downward (*Rom 6:5, 8; 19:30*)
- Complete immersion of the baptised (*Jn 3:23; Acts 8:38*)
- In such natural living water as sea, river, or spring (*Zech 13:1; Mt 3:13; Acts 8:38*)
- Infants of believing parents or families may be baptised (*Lk 2:21; Acts 10:44-48; 16:15*)

5

Receiving the Holy Spirit is for sanctification and divine power and is evidenced by speaking in tongues. To be sealed with

the Holy Spirit is a guarantee of our inheritance into the kingdom of God (*Eph 1:14; Acts 10:44-47; Rom 8:16*).

6

The Sacrament of Foot Washing enables a believer to have a part with the Lord Jesus Christ. It also serves as a constant reminder that a believer should have love, holiness, humility, forgiveness and service. All Christians who have received water baptism must have their feet washed in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mutual foot washing may be practised when necessary (*Jn 13:1-17*).

7

The Holy Communion is the Sacrament to commemorate the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It enables Christians to partake of the flesh and blood of our Lord, and to be in communion with Him so that they can have eternal life and be raised on the Last Day. This Sacrament shall be held as often as possible. Only one unleavened bread and grape juice shall be used (*I Cor 11:26; Jn 6:53-56; I Cor 10:17; 5:6-8; Mk 14:24-25*).

8

The Sabbath day, the seventh day of the week (Saturday), is a Holy Day blessed and sanctified by God. It is to be observed under grace for the commemoration of God's creation and salvation and with the hope of eternal rest in the future (*Gen 2:2-3; Ex 20:8-11; Heb 4:9-11*).

9

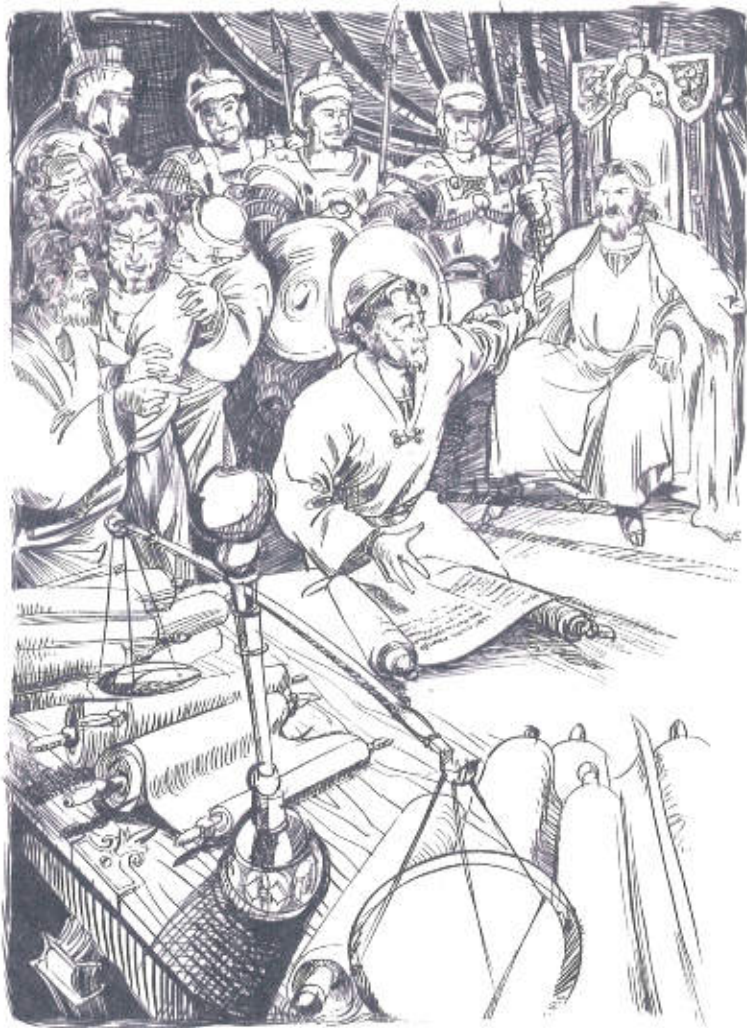
Salvation is given by the grace of God through the faith of believers. They must rely on the Holy Spirit to pursue holiness, to honour God, and to love humanity (*Eph 2:8; Heb 12:14; Ecc 12:13; Mt 22:37-39*).

10

The Lord's Second Coming will take place on the Last Day when He descends from Heaven to judge the world; the righteous will receive eternal life, while the wicked will be condemned (*Acts 1:11; II Cor 5:10; Mt 25:31-46*).

Paul before Felix

The True Church On Trial



IT was a difficult time for Paul, though who could say when any time was not trying for Paul. Well, anyway, there he was, captured by the Jews, in the custody of the Romans, and all these in spite of his attempt to pacify the Jews by publicly observing their cleansing ritual¹. Having failed on numerous other occasions to eliminate Paul², the Jews had no intention of letting him off this time. The more extreme and vindictive Jews scheduled a trial before the Roman governor Felix, having failed earlier in the Sanhedrin to agree on his guilt.

And so our intrepid hero was led again to stand before some big-shot, all for the sake of Christ. And so also we turn our Bibles to Acts Chapter 24 to follow the trial and to see similarities when our own faith in the True Church is called to question.

The prosecutor was a man named Tertullus, apparently an eloquent and gifted speaker. Sadly this was one of those common situations where substance gave way to style and truth was subject to intentions and prejudice. Luke records his charge as follows:

“*Since through you we enjoy much peace and since by your provision, most excellent Felix, reforms are introduced on behalf of this nation, in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. By examining him yourself you will be able to learn from him about everything of which we accuse him.*”

Flattery and Tact

DIDN'T YOU cringe at those opening words of flattery? Felix was not a clean ruler at all. History has it that he was a corrupt and rather inefficient governor and Acts 24:26 tells us that Felix had hoped for a bribe from Paul.

When the church is put on trial in the future, we expect religious enemies to make use of political powers against us. Politics if corrupt would favour those who flatter and bribe. But the church cannot use the same means to defend herself, to do so would be immediate capitulation to the enemy, Satan³.

Paul was put on trial for the sake of truth - he had to answer for the truth and he had to answer truthfully! Here is his magnificent Spirit-inspired⁴ reply:

“*Realising that for many years you have been judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defence. As you may ascertain, it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Jerusalem; and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues, or in the city. Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. But this I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our Fathers, believing everything laid down by the law or*

BY TAY ENG GUAN [SINGAPORE]

written in the prophets, having a hope in God which these themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward God and toward men. Now after some years I came to bring to my nation alms and offerings. As I was doing this they found me purified in the temple without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia – they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, if they have anything against me. Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, except this one thing which I cried out while standing among them, “With respect to the resurrection from the dead, I am on trial before you this day.” ””

In contrast with Tertullus’ flattery (note that flattery = untruthful praise), Paul graciously acknowledged Felix’s experience and hence the ability to judge fairly. Acts 24:22 states that Felix had a rather accurate knowledge of the Way.

Speaking truthfully does not always mean stating exactly the opposite of what a liar says. It is saying what is appropriate for the occasion. Sometimes it means just keeping quiet as our Lord did sometimes.

So, when we are made to answer for our belief, remember that flattery will not endear us to God but truth and tact will be God’s providence for us if we allow Him to work in us.

Slander and Fact

Prosecution

For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the world ...

Defence

As you may ascertain, it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Jerusalem; and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues, or in the city. Neither can they prove to you what they bring up against me ... But some Jews from Asia – they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, if they have anything against me.

WHEN we preach to Christians of other churches, the True Jesus Church has been accused of causing trouble in the Christian community. This is very distressing for those who would like to live and let live and indeed even for us who have been preaching the truth according to the Bible to our friends from other churches.

But to Tertullus’ charge that he was a pestilent fellow and an agitator of the Jews, Paul calmly countered that he had not been in Jerusalem long enough to incite a mob and that proper investigation of the facts would reveal that he was not doing any such thing in the temple then.

Paul also asked that those who claimed to be witnesses of his supposed misdeeds should appear in court and allow themselves to be cross-examined.

When the True Jesus Church was established by God through the Holy Spirit in China at the beginning of this century, her phenomenal growth through the Word of God evidenced by signs, wonders and miracles surprised many. Some Christian denominations were unhappy that whole congregations of theirs had converted to the True Jesus Church.

A number of them began to oppose the true church.

We should not be surprised that we would be slandered for doing nothing wrong. We should ask our detractors to furnish concrete evidence of any such misdeed and indeed we ought to go one step further to invite such persons to our church to see for themselves if what they have heard was true. We brainwash believers? Ironically, the attrition rate in some of our churches is contra-evidence to that accusation.

Sect, Cult or Different

Prosecution

... a ringleader of the sect of Nazarenes

Defence

But this I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our Fathers, believing everything laid down by the law or written in the prophets.

The most painful barb to some would be others calling our church a cult. These very people would often ask the church to cool down her preaching to other Christians so that we would not look bad. Or perhaps, we should couch our language in more ambivalent tones, for example, “We know the True Jesus Church can be saved but we are not saying that other churches cannot be saved.” To such we remark - then why would anyone want to cross over to our church if he is already attending another? Perhaps because he can find better friends or our love is warmer? That surely cannot be

the reason to be baptised in the blood of our Lord! Remember also that the 3rd Article of our Common Faith states unequivocally that our church is the revived true church of the apostolic days.

Well, Paul faced exactly the same accusation. You see, the situation of the early church then was almost exactly the same as that of our church now. The Christians then were regarded as a deviant Jewish denomination when viewed from the mainstream Jewish community, a situation akin to that of the True Jesus Church being viewed as a deviant Christian denomination when viewed from the mainstream Christian community. They even called the Christians then a sect!

'Sticks and stones will break my bones but words will not harm me – so goes a popular saying. But the truth of the matter is that labels do affect a person's preconceptions. This is exactly what an enemy would do if he is unscrupulous; it is character assassination.

What is most important to the church now is for members to realise again that this labelling is to be expected and to take comfort in the knowledge that the early believers were similarly unfairly labelled. We say that we are different⁵ and point out the following based on what we have seen from Paul's situation:

1

'Different' does not equate to wrong. 'Mainstream' or majority does not always mean right.

2

'Deviant' with its negative connotations ought only be used for bizarre and immoral actions. In actively defending our faith⁶, we can clearly state these most obvious traits of the church – sex confined to married couples and the culling in of the other non-Biblical extreme, no forced celibacy of the workers of God; no separation from the family, indeed filial piety is strongly espoused; subjection to the government even to the point of agreeing on Biblical grounds to taking up arms for the nation.

3

There is no individual charismatic leader of the church whose word is doctrine.

4

The use of the Bible as the sole authority for our doctrines.

Common Ground – The Holy Scriptures

Defence

... believing everything laid down by the Law or written in the prophets.

THE MORMONS have their Book of Mormon, the Jehovah's Witnesses subscribe to their own translation of the Bible and the Roman Catholics say that when the Pope speaks on doctrine, he is infallible. But the True Jesus Church uses the Bible and the Bible alone. Neither does she insist on any one authorised version but she is willing to examine all translations bearing in mind that even translators have their own prejudices, to come to an understanding of the truth. Our members read the KJV, the RSV, the NASB, the NIV, etc.

Paul said that he believed everything laid down by the Law or written in the prophets. There was a common ground for Christians and Jews then to discuss their differences. Paul would always go to the synagogues first and expound about Christ from the scriptures⁷. Today the True Jesus Church engages in the same manner by preaching first to those

who already have knowledge, albeit incomplete, of Jesus. It is only right that such should listen to the Word first for they already have a measure of faith⁸. Just like then, we use the Bible as a common ground for revealing God's truth.

A Clear Conscience

Defence

So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward God and toward men.

SOMETIMES the enormity of the consequences of our belief weighs heavily on me. If we are right, then many, many souls will be condemned to eternal punishment. If we are wrong, we would have severely offended God by restricting His gracious will.

Actionwise, if we are right, we must quickly preach the gospel to as many as we can so as to save as many as God will. And if truly we are wrong, we must recant our beliefs and seek the truth.

Because of this, it is vital that we have a good conscience before God and before men. We cannot continue our work just because we have already put in so much effort and time into our faith. We cannot continue merely for the sake of our reputations. We must examine ourselves and our beliefs to humbly convince ourselves that what we are doing is for the benefit of humankind and according to the will of God.

Paul did not claim to have a clear conscience when he persecuted Christians⁹. For who could have a clear conscience in killing someone without the express command of God. He acknowledged that he persecuted the church beyond measure. He was motivated by pride and a sense of outrage. However, when he was converted, he was more convinced than before that he was right this time but his actions were not violent nor stubborn, instead it was marked by a great love issuing from a good conscience, a pure heart and sincere faith¹⁰.

After writing this, I must remark that many of our workers have good consciences before God. None have gained riches for being in the ministry. There are none who have remained in the church and continued to preach the basic

doctrines even though they are convinced that what we are preaching is false.

It is not easy being a True Jesus Church member if one does not understand nor truly believe in the basic doctrines. Let us do ourselves a favour – search the scriptures and know for certain. Otherwise, one may find oneself severely shaken when accused by someone from another church.

What It Boils Down To - Doctrinal Difference

Prosecution

He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him.

Defence

Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, except this one thing which I cried out while standing among them, "With respect to the resurrection from the dead, I am on trial before you this day."

TERTULLUS accused Paul of agitation and perversion by profaning the temple. Paul replied that the main reason the Jews were unhappy with him was that he preached the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is not difficult to see why churches may be unhappy with us. We humbly preach that we need to be baptised for the forgiveness of sins and that receiving the Holy Spirit is evidenced by the speaking in tongues. Added to that, we preach the oneness of God and the oneness of the church. All these are considered as not mainstream teachings.

Paul admitted to angering the Jews for only one reason. This was the difference in beliefs. And such difference too, he proclaimed boldly because that was precisely what he wanted to preach to the Jews – that only Jesus could save them from their sins and that they could not rely on their traditions and their pedigree to save themselves. In the same way, the True Jesus Church cannot help but continue preaching that Christians must follow the one way of salvation, regardless of the strength of the opposition.

As in the days of Paul, we ought to continue to welcome discussions on the truth based on the scriptures and be ready to defend our faith.

Conclusions

TO ANY FAIR and informed mind, Paul obviously won the case. But as it is in real life or rather in a world controlled by Satan, he was not acquitted immediately. He languished in prison and was further tried to suffer for His name. In spite of this, Paul continued to preach the one way of salvation as God allowed His great servant to suffer for His name.

We see a great parallel in the life of Paul and indeed that of the early Christians to the path laid out for the True Jesus Church today. We must not shirk our duty in the face of name-calling and persecution. If we are swayed because of a desire not to hurt anyone, we have miserably failed to see the whole picture. God has revived this true church in the last days to proclaim the one way of salvation. We would be condemning people to eternal death by depriving them of the Word of Life.

Saladin's Golden Ring

It is said that the great king Saladin, at the end of his days, forged a magical golden ring to give to his true heir. He had three sons, however, and only one of them could wear the ring. What was he to do?



I WILL recount the story in full in due course. For now, let me just say that I intend to use this tale as an allegory in which Saladin stands for God, and each of the three sons for one of the major monotheistic traditions of the world – Christianity, Judaism and Islam. What is the value of recounting this tale? Simply to pose the age-old conundrum - who is true, and who is not? And how will we know?

Since ancient times, people have argued with, fought and killed each other for the right to call themselves the possessors of the truth. Each side thinks, "If only my enemy believed as I did. Then the world would be fine." Unfortunately, that is precisely the problem, that each side thinks so.

But why this insistence? When Paul was preaching to the Athenians, he said :

And he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might seek after

him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us, for "In him we live and move and have our being," as even some of your poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."¹

Since we have been created in the image of God, it is natural that all of us have the urge to find out exactly who God is, to follow the stream back to its source. In that much, all people in the world are united.

However, the difficulty comes when we start getting down to specifics. Exactly what kind of God? And exactly what kind of worship? Where are we going, and how do we get there? This is when the consensus breaks down and like the disgruntled bricklayers of the Tower of Babel, we begin to drift off and go our own way.

Human fear and pride get in the way. Fear, for we all fear the unknown, and would fain be rid of the terror of simply not knowing - not knowing what lies beyond the stars, not knowing what realm there is

after death, not knowing why there is evil in the world, not knowing why we love and hate. The unknown is indeed fearful, for it may bring life or it may bring death.

Pride makes us imagine that our limited mortal capacities can plumb the depths of the divine and fix God in a doctrine, as if God could be fixed anywhere. Solomon recognized this when he built his temple:

*"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less this house I have built!"*²

To the prophet Isaiah, the Lord declares: "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts."³

Paul says: "For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood."⁴

Well, what we have established thus far is that all human beings have an urge to seek out the divine, and that the divine is ultimately a mystery to us. The first step, therefore, is to learn humility, to say, like Job: "Therefore I have uttered what I did not

...what we have established thus far is that all human beings have an urge to seek out the divine, and that the divine is ultimately a mystery to us. The first step, therefore, is to learn humility, to say, like Job: "Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know."

understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know."⁵ We would do well to start out in this posture, as this is the proper place for all human beings. When we remind ourselves of our mere mortality, we are better able to share in the common human quest for God, instead of the all-too-common bickering and loud proclaiming that usually goes on.

But surely, that will not get us very far, beyond a recognition of commonality with our neighbours. There must be more than simply throwing up our hands to an ineffable "cloud of unknowing."⁶ And there is:

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*⁷

Here is the foundation of our faith. When people say that God can never be known, they are right, but only partially so. It is true, as we have discussed, that in essence, God is unknowable. But it is precisely for that reason that Jesus came into the world, as a person of flesh and blood, to know us and to be known by us. Jesus is eminently knowable, and we come to that knowledge,

*... not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that we might be justified by His grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.*⁸

Paul says that we are a "new creation"⁹ transformed from the inside out. Look at the apostles - changed from timid fishermen to bold evangelists. Peter, who denied Christ three times, was able to boldly proclaim Him before the people, persuading thousands of people at a time through the Word of God given through him. John and James, formerly "sons of thunder" now become meek servants of the Lord, giving their lives for God, John becoming the messenger of the love of God for all humanity.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul tells us what the fruit of the Spirit is: "joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law."¹⁰

Jesus insists that the transformation be even more thorough than merely what those words might indicate. Read the Sermon on the Mount in the fifth chapter of Matthew. We are to be poor in spirit, we are to mourn, we are to be meek, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers. We are to shine as lights in the world. We are to go beyond. Not only are we not to murder, we are not to hate. Not only are we not to commit adultery, we are not to lust. Not only are we not to seek revenge, we are to love our enemies. Think about all of these things! No wonder Jesus says that the gate is narrow. If any one is able to live up to the words of Matthew 5 and 6, that person and only that person can call himself a transformed Christian.

Most importantly, Jesus says, "You will know them by their fruits."¹¹ Know who? The children of God. Thus we come to the most important point, and the answer to the question with which we started. How, indeed, shall we know who is true? You will know them by their fruits.

The point, then, is not necessarily how loud we preach, or how even how many people we are able to persuade to come to church. That is only part of the story, a small part. The substance of our ministry, the substance of our evangelism, is in the lives that we lead.

*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*¹³

Need we say more? People came to join the early believers because they admired the way that they were living life. They were different. They were joyful, and it showed. They helped those who were needy.

We are to be poor in spirit, we are to mourn, we are to be meek, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers. We are to shine as lights in the world. We are to go beyond. Not only are we not to murder, we are not to hate. Not only are we not to commit adultery, we are not to lust. Not only are we not to seek revenge, we are to love our enemies. ...if any one is able to live up to the words of Matthew 5 and 6, that person and only that person can call himself a transformed Christian.

They praised God and studied His words, and lived the Christian life of togetherness.

Make no mistake. Being a Christian is the most radical thing that you could do with your life. It means changing, giving up the things that you thought were most valuable. Maybe Nietzsche was right when he said that the only Christian was Christ.

However, it is up to us to try to live up to that ideal, because as long as we do so, God will give us the strength that we need to make good on our determination.

So then, who is true? I give you the story of Saladin.

The great king Saladin was dying. He knew it. Not immediately, of course, but Saladin knew, from the aching in his bones to the weariness of his heart, that his days were nearing an end.

He called his three sons to his presence. Saladin also knew, as the three sons knelt before his throne, that each was filled with jealous thoughts, for each hoped to inherit his father's kingdom.

"My sons," began Saladin, "I will not live forever, and it is time for me to give thought to which of you shall be my successor. I know that you have striven with each other mightily for the right to the crown; this should not be so, my children.

People came to join the early believers because they admired the way that they were living life. They were different. They were joyful, and it showed. They helped those who were needy. They praised God and studied His words, and lived the Christian life of togetherness.

Therefore, because I fear the bloodshed that may erupt after I am gone, I am imposing upon you a test. A test to see who would be the true heir to the kingship, let us say."

Saladin took out from the folds of his robes three gleaming gold rings. "These rings," he said, "I have worked long and hard to forge. They are for you."

The three sons looked at each other with looks that contained anticipation and calculation.

"These rings are alike in size, weight, feel and appearance. However, there is one important difference. One of them is a magical ring, forged with my power, wisdom and spirit. He who wears that ring is my true heir."

"But father," cried the three sons in dismay, "how are we to know which of us has the true ring or not?"

Saladin looked at his three sons and smiled: "By the one of you who demonstrates in his life, who lives up in his conduct, to the bearings of the son of a king. By your lives shall the people know which of you will be king. So, now, go and do accordingly."¹⁴

BY JULIUS TSAI [BOSTON, USA]



The Role of the True Jesus Church in the Christian Community

Living in a complex society, everyone has his purpose and goals in life. In the case of Christians, the goals do not relate to our lives on earth. What kind of role ought we to play, to achieve our goals and a sense of purpose in life? Likewise, the composite church made up to individual believers, also has a role to play in the Christian community.

THE CHURCH is the body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:24); and Christ is the head of the church (Eph 5:23; Col 1:18). The head plans and directs. The body functions when it receives instructions from the head. Since God has numerous plans for the world, His creation, He needs a strong and healthy body as His tool to perform His will.

However, only one body shall serve one head (Eph 4:4); therefore, there is only one church that shall bear the works of God, though many claim to be His body. God wants His creatures to worship the only true God in the true church (1 Jn 5:20; Jn 15:1-5; Jn 17:3). Thus with the Lord's mighty power, the True Jesus Church was established through the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9) in 1917 in Beijing, China. God chose the True Jesus Church as His tool to show His power and to inform the world of the good news of salvation.

For thousands of years, salvation has been the main concern among Christians. Unfortunately, the

BY VERA WONG [BOSTON, USA]

increasing number of denominations has resulted in different interpretations of the Bible. Many preach the precepts of men, contrary to the teaching of the Bible, and this is misleading.

Since the True Jesus Church has been chosen, its members should make use of this opportunity to do a good job. To do a good job, we must first be obedient to God. Being obedient means not taking or adding any words from the Bible, or altering His plan with our own knowledge (Deut 4:2). The Lord's plans are stated in the Bible, and our job is to understand His will accurately as the Spirit leads.

For many years, the whole household of the True Jesus Church has proven to be a strong body that God can employ. The five basic doctrines that adhere to the Bible show that the body is functioning well, and not deviating from His will (1 Tim 6:3-8; 1:3-4). This sets the True Jesus Church apart from churches of other denominations.

Being different, practices of the True Jesus Church may have been regarded as peculiar by others. However, praise the Lord, He has preserved the members'

faith so that they still continue to practise what God expects.

Though different from the world, members should neither waver nor be crushed in their faith; instead, they must make use of every opportunity to do God's work.

Members of the True Jesus Church must evangelise, bear witness for God and glorify His name, so that believers from other folds may be saved in the right manner (Mt 28:18-20).

Often, the hostility members encounter from the rest of the world causes them to fall. This may result in them feeling very discouraged, and possibly, even cause them to resign. However, members must always remember God's words of encouragement – to be patient and evangelise through times of hardship (2 Tim 2:1-3).

Members of the church are just like students in a school. The deeds of the students reflect the values inculcated by the school; similarly, the deeds of the church members reflect the church. Therefore, members must be wise and behave. We must edify the church (2 Cor 13:1-10).

Finally, to be good children

of God, we must do His work with hope and willingness. We should neither murmur nor complain when we encounter problems (Phil 2:13-16).

As the children of God, though we may come from all over the world, we walk on the same path to heaven. Each and everyone of us has the same purpose, goal and destination; therefore, we should consider ourselves brothers and sisters in Christ. And since we have received the blessing of being chosen by God to be members of His true church, we must repay His mercy by doing what He expects of us. Showing our love, patience and kindness in evangelising, we together as the body will be directed by the Head, to be the salt and light of the world (Mt 5:13). May the Lord Jesus bless and guide the True Jesus Church members in their every task, to bring God's plans to fruition.

Practical Christian Living



THERE ARE many campus fellowships within the United States. At the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), there are probably at least 30 or more Christian fellowships alone, not counting other active religious and spiritual groups. In this article I do not want to just introduce the UCLA campus fellowship, but hope also to introduce you to the importance of "college years" as a formative period in the direction of our faith and our lives.

Some members have not undergone, or will not undergo tertiary education; this does not mean that they are "lesser" or "less valuable" members in God's community. Knowledge of a whole array of sciences or humanities does not necessarily make a better Christian – only a seemingly more educated one. But in our church we need a variety of people – those who can draw, who can speak to masses, who know how to preach one-to-one, who can write, who can sing, in short, who are willing to give up some of themselves to build up the community of God's people – the church.

There are many out there with beautiful hands, beautiful feet and beautiful

The Campus Life and Beyond

BY JASON HSU
[LOS ANGELES, USA]

voices who have not used their hands to work for God's church, who do not use their feet to walk where God would have them walk, and who will never lift their voices in praise of God. What all this has to do with any college student in the church is this: those who choose not to submit their members as instruments of righteousness (Rom 6:13) can very easily lose their direction of faith. Our college years greatly influence who we are and what we will become – not only in terms of our career, but also in terms of our spiritual character. I have seen, in my few years as a True Jesus Church (TJC) member at UCLA, many members whose faith have plunged headlong after they've gone to college. I can vouch for this myself because I too have experienced this dip in my faith.

But I also know of many who have become extremely fervent in their faith after attending college. The question is what makes the difference.

And so, we come to a major point in this article. I believe that campus fellowship is crucial in helping to maintain the faith of TJC members at any college or university. We face many extra responsibilities and challenges when we attend college. We need to learn to be independent from our parents, but at the same time not to neglect them. We have to keep our holiness, yet still find our place within this social world. We must still pray though it may be inconvenient living with unbelieving roommates. We should read the scriptures, although we don't seem to have the time. This is where arranging our priorities becomes a problem of the first order. A campus fellowship can often help us solve these problems through the mutual encouragement of brothers and sisters.

To me, the TJC Campus Fellowship at UCLA is more than just an organisation. It is like a small family within the bigger family, a small assembly within the bigger assembly of God. This is because we can manifest our love, as part of God's community, internally (sharing our problems and concern with each other openly), as well as externally (sharing the gospel with our fellow students).

The UCLA fellowship has about thirteen members who gather weekly for a few hours to study the Bible, discuss special topics, have question and answer sessions with the local preacher, sing hymns

Mutual encouragement among the members is of primary importance in college life and the life of the church. As members of the church, we should constantly unify and exhort one another to good works at whatever stage of life we may be in - whether we are going to college, are already in college, or are just entering the working world. In other words, we need encouragement through our entire journey of faith.

and have activities. We also have alumni, truthseekers and members from surrounding universities and colleges joining us. Every school day, we try to congregate for at least one combined prayer. Through all these, I know that the existence of a TJC campus fellowship is a great help in maintaining our faith.

I would like to end with an exhortation that we come to a realisation of the direction of our faith. Future college students should try to attend a school with an existing fellowship where there are other brothers or sisters. Mutual encouragement among members is of primary importance in college life as well as the life of the church. As members of the church, we should constantly be in one accord; exhorting one another to good works at whatever stage of life we may be in - whether we are going to college, are already in college, or are just entering the working world. In other words, we need encouragement throughout our entire journey of faith. Even apostle Paul continued to be encouraged by many brothers and sisters till the end of his life. He said in II Timothy 1:16-18:

May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me; he was not ashamed of my chains; but when he arrived in Rome, he searched for me eagerly and found me - may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day - and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

Many times it is not just the words of encouragement we say, but the life of encouragement we live that makes all the difference.



The Statistics

CHURCH IN ACTION

SITTING HERE, having just watched another year come to a close, I couldn't help thinking of the old cliché, 'how time flies'. It seems only yesterday that I, together with a number of TJC youths, listened to a stirring exhortation by a minister to mobilise ourselves in the last decade of this century and prepare the church for the twenty-first century. Four years have since passed. Where do we, as a church, stand? Ever since I could remember, we have always emphasised the need to evangelise and to pastor the members. Yet, in reality, how well are we doing? Have we ever taken a close look at our efforts to date and objectively analysed the results?

Faced with these questions, I decided to take whatever materials that are available and attempt to find some answers. The answers are not encouraging.

FIRST, I looked at some global statistics provided by the World Evangelisation database, 1990, International Bulletin of Missionary Research. According to this database, the world population is estimated to be 5,297 million in 1990; of these, 1,759 million are Christians, making it 33.2 percent of the population. When this is compared to the church's International Assembly 1994 official statistics, which states that there are about 75,000 TJC members, the message is clear. Our standing in the Christian world is negligible, even if we were to include estimates of mainland China membership of about 500,000.

Perhaps, I should be more focused and compare ourselves with two specific church groups. Of the 1,759 million Christians, 962 million are Roman Catholics, 324 million Protestants. You may argue that I am not comparing like with like. These two churches have centuries of history. TJC has yet to celebrate her centennial commemoration. If we had the luxury of time, we too could have matched their membership and geographical spread. But the truth is, we do not have such luxury. We do not know what time frame God has assigned to us. Regardless, we

still have to produce the results. Besides, using time span as our defense is not conclusive. Consider the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement which started at the turn of this century and now has millions of adherents.

Now, what about our standing by geographical regions? In the United Kingdom, with a population of 57.4 million, 69.4 percent are Christians, comprising 9 percent Roman Catholics, 48 percent Protestants, and 2 percent marginal such as Jehovah's Witnesses (nearly 98,000), Mormons (67,000), Scientology (45,000). [Source: Operation World by Patrick Johnstone, 1990, Send The Light] Despite more than two decades of existence, we have yet to make an impact in this country. We are still unknown amongst the Christian community at large. Our membership there of around 1,800 still comprises primarily those of ethnic Chinese origin, and even then, our number is insignificant, amongst the total immigrant Chinese population of some 125,000.

Let me take another country where we have a much longer history, Taiwan. Here, there are just over one million Christians, of

which 275,000 are Roman Catholics, and 670,000 are Protestants. The Presbyterian Church has 95,000 members. The True Jesus Church membership is 44,000. In this country at least, our membership breaks the 10,000 barrier. (The only other place that can match this is Sabah, a state in Malaysia, with some 12,000 members.)

From these facts, I could only conclude that we are still far from achieving the Lord's commission to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15). It is so easy for us to say that we are already doing our best. But the problem is, "our best" may not be good enough.

How can we progress faster? This question is a popular sermon topic expounded by numerous speakers over the years. I do not intend to join their ranks. But what I hope to do is to share some less 'traditional' evangelistic activities undertaken by some of our churches, usually on an ad-hoc basis, and also by other Christian groups to see if there are any lessons to be learnt.

...it is crucial to recognise that in any church work, especially in the important task of saving souls, the "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit" principle holds true. We must not lose sight of the fact that we are merely stewards entrusted with the task. The work itself belongs to God; hence we have to rely on His Spirit to guide and to direct.

The "by my spirit" principle

BUT BEFORE THAT, it is crucial to recognize that in any church work, especially in the important task of saving souls, the "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit" principle holds true. We must not lose sight of the fact that we are merely stewards entrusted with the task. The work itself belongs to God; hence we have to rely on His Spirit to guide and to direct. As in the apostolic time when the footsteps of the missionaries were led by the Spirit (e.g., Acts 8:29,39; 10:19; 16:7), today the footsteps of the true church must also be led by the Spirit. For our evangelistic work to be effective, first and foremost,

we have to pray, and ask the Lord to have mercy on the souls of humanity and to open the door of salvation.

But prayer alone is insufficient. We also have to take positive steps to propagate the message. As the apostles acknowledged, they had "to devote (themselves) to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). Assuming that many concerned members are already investing time and efforts in praying for the church's ministry, let us see what actions are being taken to propagate the message.

Examples from the True Jesus Church

APART FROM the 'traditional' approaches adopted by many, such as holding evangelistic meetings at church chapels, some of our churches have taken the courageous step of venturing into the outside world, away from the safe enclosure of the church compound. For example, they rent community centres and auditoriums to hold large scale evangelistic gatherings. Also, I understand that in Taipei (Taiwan), our members have taken the initiative of holding evangelistic meetings at local hospitals, with organised teams to invite patients from the wards to attend these services. These are supplemented by regular follow-up visits on those patients who attended the meetings. Since its implementation some ten years ago, I was told that more than two hundred have come to believe through these hospital meetings.

Recently, a new trend is to have hymnal evangelistic meetings, where the message is presented, not so much from the pulpit, but through hymnal presentations by choir groups. In this category, a beautiful testimony I knew was in London church, where some of the religious education students would

get together, usually during their school holidays, to rehearse and practise for what they called their hymnal outreach. These young soldiers of the Lord, with age groups ranging from early twenties to as young as ten, would then gather at crowded public places such as the London Chinatown and town centres, being surrounded by strangers and uncertain of their reception, to present the evangelistic message through hymns with their youthful voices. At the same time, other members would be placed at strategic locations, to distribute gospel tracts and to talk to any interested



Chun Yang Choir (Taiwan)



Mount Horeb Choir (Korea)

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Examples from other Christian groups

bystander. I could not but be marveled at their courage and praise God for their zeal. This is especially so, since their reception was not always favourable. I know of one occasion when they had items thrown at them. I could still remember some of them relating that episode to me, not with fear or anger, but with joy and thanksgiving. If only more of us could have such courage and zeal to try 'something different', perhaps many more would be in the true fold today.

I am sure that there are other commendable actions taken by some of our churches that I am unaware of, and are therefore not mentioned here. To them, I apologise, and invite them to share their experiences with our readers by writing to the Manna Committee.

LET US move on and see what the other Christian groups are doing. Now the more conservative among us would probably frown at this analysis. These are secular churches, devoid of the Spirit of God, what can we, members of the true church, learn from them? Some may even ask why we should even learn from them in the first place. I would like to suggest that there are lessons to be learnt. If anything, the spirit of service exhibited by some Christians, their dedication to propagate the salvation message, is worthy of our emulation.

There are young educated Christians who, for the sake of preaching the gospel "to the end of the world", have left the comforts of their homes and probably sacrificed good careers, to live amongst total strangers with cultures alien to their own. By staying with these communities, they strive to build up a rapport of trust and over time, communicate the gospel message to them in their local tongue. These Christians may not be preaching the complete gospel, but I do not believe we can belittle their work. How many of us from the true church have taken such steps?

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Let us keep an open mind and learn from their good works. The Lord Jesus once told His disciples that He was sending them to reap what they did not sow, since many had laboured and they could benefit from these labours. It should be with this magnanimous spirit that we look at the works of other Christian groups.

When I survey the many methods taken by these groups to propagate the gospel, one is commendable. This is the so-called 'tent-makers' missionaries, who

follow in the footsteps of Apostle Paul by supporting themselves with their own vocations while bearing witness for God. These are not trained missionaries, but 'ordinary' Christians who, because of their desire to propagate the gospel, have sought employment in other countries. This means that they need not burden their churches for financial support, yet at the same time could be ambassadors for Christ. By working in society, they also have better opportunities to meet up with a wider range of the local nationals than the 'professional' missionaries. To support these 'tent-maker' missionaries, a number of Christian churches organise training and orientation programmes for interested parties, from running Bible study seminars to providing practical guidance on how to reach out for Christ across cultural and linguistic barriers. And when these 'tent-makers' are in the field, their churches continue to support them through regular contacts. Counselling facilities are also available.

As for those who are not full-time ministers, or 'tent-makers', they can still dedicate part of their time to God by joining 'mission

trips'. These are usually short-term trips abroad organised by various Christian groups, primarily to preach the gospel. I know of Christian friends who have spent their annual holiday leave entitlements in this manner, and returned feeling physically tired but spiritually enriched. By using this approach, these secular churches have extended the evangelical work to their 'ordinary' members, by allowing everyone to actively participate in their overseas missions.

Christian groups are also propagating the gospel to people from all walks of life, even so-called 'social outcasts', such as criminals. They have taken up what they call 'prison missions', where they visit prisoners and preach to them the message of the Lord's salvation with the belief that even if in this world, these prisoners have ruined their chances, the door of salvation is still open to them, provided they repent and return to God.

Finally, many charities set up to help the under-privileged are also sponsored by Christian groups. Whilst the main objective of these charities may be to provide some physical and mental relief to the

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society's needy, indirectly they too have lived up to the spirit of propagating the Christian message, by being a light to the world, to let humanity know that they are the disciples of Christ. This is especially true since volunteers in these organisations are usually dedicated Christians who just want to do some good in this increasingly cruel and uncaring world.

As I write this, I couldn't help thinking that perhaps we too could encourage tent makers,

organise 'mission trips', reach out more to people from different walks of life, and be actively involved in charitable deeds to alleviate society's needs, for the glory of God.

The way forward

ALTHOUGH the above examples are by no means exhaustive, it does show that we in the true church can build upon the good works already taken by our ministers and dedicated brothers and sisters, and where appropriate, learn from some good evangelistic approaches of other Christian groups, to propagate the complete gospel of salvation through even better, and more effective means. We have the spirit of God with us, and if God is with us, what is there that we cannot achieve? The important question is whether we still realize our commission; perhaps the passage of time and the good life we lead have numbed our initial zeal and conviction.

Individual conviction apart, we can also actively find opportunities to participate in the church's organised evangelistic activities. For instance, the International Assembly Standing Committee has recently revised its evangelistic and pastoral strategy, in that each General Assembly will be responsible for managing and

implementing the holy work in a particular country. If adopted, this new approach can provide more opportunities for every member to take part in the overseas holy work.

As each GA focuses on its 'adopted country', it can organise training, pastoral and evangelistic programs that are tailored to that country's particular needs. And based on the human and financial resources required to implement these programs, it can mobilise every local church to participate in the holy work, such as having regular visits to the adopted country to conduct RE and choir training, spiritual and evangelistic meetings, short-term Bible courses and so forth. In short, everyone can then play an active role, unlike the present situation where the majority of us are divorced from the actual field-work of world evangelism, and may find it difficult to relate to the needs of this ministry. Let us therefore be prepared to volunteer our services when the church asks for assistance.

An integrated organisation, staffed by full time administrators to manage and direct the different areas of the global ministry may be the next step forward, as this strategy will free ministers from administrative burdens, and allow them to concentrate on their primary goals of evangelism and pastoral care.

To progress, the church as a whole has to continue to enhance her infrastructure, in order to properly support the numerous concurrent activities. Although each local church may have her own programs, she still has to co-ordinate her activities with other churches. An integrated organisation, staffed by full time administrators to manage and direct the different areas of the global ministry may be the next step forward, as this strategy will free ministers from administrative burdens, and allow them to concentrate on their primary goals of evangelism and pastoral care. With full-time administrators, they can also co-ordinate and support the efforts of the workers in the field.

A good global communication network is also vital in building this infrastructure. Whilst nothing can replace face-to-face meetings for encouraging rapport and fellowship, we can and should make more use of existing technologies since in the long run, they are more efficient and cost effective. A good example is Internet, a sprawling worldwide network which connects more than two million computers and 20 million users. Currently, we already have some members registered with Internet, and who also regularly share sermons or testimonies which they have heard with other members through TJC.net, a 'distribution list' within Internet set up by one of our members in the U.S. More use could be made of this network amongst the churches. Later, we can even venture into desk-top videoconferencing, where PCs can be turned into videophones that send pictures captured with the computer's camera in real time across high speed telephone lines, enabling TJC to conduct meetings across geographical boundaries with her delegates sitting in the comfort of their own homes.

As Christ's valiant soldiers, it is time to mobilise and march forward into the battlefield, so that the world will recognize the True Jesus Church as a church in action.

The world of information technology may be baffling to the uninitiated, but this does not mean that we can ignore its impact. In fact, once we have mastered it, this growing 'information highway' can help us to reach out to millions who have computers in their homes. The gospel message can be broadcast to them at the press of a button. The potential is enormous.

Individual conviction, willingness to join in the church's activities, upgrading the church's infrastructure with full-time administrators, assisted by latest technologies, these are merely some suggested ways for the church to "preach the gospel to all creation". And this must always be our goal.

In conclusion, we really ought to actively participate in the evangelistic work while we still can. Take a close look at the world around us. Can we not see the signs of the last days? The heartless genocide in Rwanda, the devastating winter floods in continental Europe, the killer earthquake at Kobe, Japan, the fierce fighting in Bosnia and Chechnya,

the list is endless. They have one common message; namely, our time is running out, and we cannot afford to take things easy and progress at our own chosen pace. As Christ's valiant soldiers, it is time to mobilise and march forward into the battlefield, so that the world will recognize the True Jesus Church as a church in action.

BY LEE JIN [SINGAPORE]

STANDING



Dear May,

THANK YOU for your letter. It is good to hear from you, although I am sorry to read that you are feeling down. Please do cheer up. I know you are concerned about the spiritual welfare of your friends and have tried to preach to them. It isn't easy when you hear some of them criticising our church.

May, do you still remember what Simeon said as he carried the baby Lord Jesus? "This child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel" (Lk 2:34). In the same way, the true church will be a stumbling block to the unbelieving. But to those who are humble, God will be their light to lead them out of this dark world. They will turn to Him who created the universe. Just as the Bible

FIRM

says, God's word is hidden from those who are considered wise in this world, and is revealed to the "babes" instead (Mt 11:25). Therefore, do not be dismayed. Continue to preach. God will bring His lost sheep back to the fold.

In our work, obstacles are inevitable. The Lord Jesus said, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master ... If they have called the master of the house Beel'zebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!" (Mt 10:24-25). When Paul was in Rome, the ruling Jewish authorities said to him, "... with regard to this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against" (Acts 28:22). Today as His followers, we too shall face difficulties, and be called unpleasant names. Just consider these as trials, as a form of spiritual training that will strengthen our own faith (Jas 1:2-4), and develop our fortitude.

When you feel discouraged, remember the advice of the author of Hebrews to fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2-3) who never gave up. He persevered until He accomplished the task assigned to Him. He endured opposition from sinners and the sufferings on the cross. In so doing, He has set an example for His followers.

Jesus never had an easy audience during His ministry. As you may recall, the Jews of His time despised Him. They saw Him as a thorn in their flesh, said He was possessed; claimed He misled the multitudes. Some even called Him a madman (Jn 7:12, 20; 10:20).

When we preach the gospel of salvation, we too shall meet with different responses, just like the seeds that fall on different types of soil. We cannot determine whether they will receive the message. This rests with God. As Paul says, we only sow. It is God who makes the seed grow (1 Cor 3:7). The important point is that we must not stop. Like a farmer who has to face winds and storms in order to finish his sowing, we must accomplish the commission entrusted to us.

If our audience rejects the message, they lose their eternal life. These are people whose ears have grown dull. Their eyes are closed. They refuse to believe that Jesus is the Son of the living God, the One who is in the bosom of God (Jn 1:18). Therefore, Jesus said, "You will die in your sins unless you believe that I am He" (Jn 8:24).

However, if a person is willing to be like the people at Berea who "received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so" (Acts 17:11), he will receive the message of salvation. He will understand that the True Jesus Church is indeed the holy city, the new Jerusalem and the tabernacle with the presence of God (Rev 21:1-4), the true tabernacle erected by the Lord Jesus Himself (Heb 8:2). This is the church with the commission to contend for the Truth and to correct the wrong teachings of modern day churches.

A great religious darkness is overshadowing humankind today. Many religions have emerged and man is at a loss about which to choose. The true church that preaches the complete gospel according to the Bible, has the presence of the Holy Spirit and performs signs, miracles and wonders is

the ark of the last days. It is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. It is imperative that we preach the complete gospel to all nations of the world.

May, those who lack understanding will simply follow the crowd, so we can just ignore those who criticise us. Keep to the faith you hold. Be very careful with your words and conduct. The Bible teaches us to "maintain good conduct among the gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation" (1 Pet 2:12). Also, "show yourself in all respects a model of good deeds; and in your teaching show integrity, gravity and sound speech that cannot be censured, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us" (Tit 2:7-8). In fact, the Lord Jesus teaches, "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (Mt 5:11-12). So when we suffer for the Lord and His Word, we should be patient. Speak and exhort with love. If others refuse to listen, do not quarrel with them. As Peter advises, "Always be prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do so with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet 3:15).

Finally, take care of yourself. Stand firm in your convictions. I pray that the Lord will continue to guide and direct you in your service for Him.

Yours In Christ

Angelina

ADAPTED FROM YOUTH COMMUNION

Haven't received the Holy Spirit yet?

WHEN I FIRST started praying for the Holy Spirit, I really didn't like the idea of having to go out to the front of the chapel. Being a grown-up, I didn't want everyone to know that I didn't have the Holy Spirit. On top of that, I heard about all those members who had to pray for years and years before they received the Spirit. Thank God, I now have the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps you've been praying for quite a long time and you still have not received the Holy Spirit. But you haven't given up. Okay, so you feel dejected, but that's only natural. What I'm trying to say is that I really admire your perseverance. I doubt very much if I would have lasted very long. Perhaps that's why He gave me His most precious gift so early because He understood. In many ways you're far stronger than I am. We all know His promise, that He will pour out His Spirit on all who ask, so there is no doubt that He has His intended time for EVERYONE. He is omniscient, He knows our inner hearts; our deepest secrets and innermost fears. He understands our strengths and our weaknesses. He knows how far He can test us. He knows our limit, and tests no one beyond their endurance.

God listens to our every prayer, and stores them deep in His heart. He feels what we feel, and listens with understanding, gentleness and compassion to our every need. Assuredly, He knows your every prayer, and understands how you feel when they are not answered; that you feel so alone, perhaps let down, dejected. He wants so much to give His Spirit to you, to pour out His love on you. But He must hold back. God is love. He loves us all, far beyond any human understanding of the word. He knows you are praying, perhaps losing hope. That saddens Him, He wants to comfort you. But His greater purpose must be achieved. It is true that we all receive His Holy Spirit. It is His promise to all those who call upon Him. But we must ask ourselves: why is it that some receive the Holy Spirit so soon? Why do others have to wait so long? God's ways are truly mysterious and very, very wonderful. We know that He always works for the good of those who love Him and are called according

to His purpose. I know that it was God's will that I received the Holy Spirit so soon, just as it is God's will that you, and many others, must wait. Why is this? Due to our strengths and our weaknesses? Maybe. He knows us, for He made us. His greater aim must be achieved. He is constantly refining us. Maybe this is your test. It is certainly your blessing.

It is during these times of trial, sadness and weakness that God is with us most. He understands at all times how we feel, and because He must refuse our request does not mean He is not there, or that He doesn't care. It only means that He is waiting with eagerness for us to be ready, when He can pour out His love on us without restraint. The Holy Spirit is the most precious gift His love can offer, and He wants so much to fill everyone. He is constantly watching, waiting eagerly in love for the time when He can grant our requests, fulfill our needs. But the time must be right. It is for us to make this time come. He must see our sincerity and perseverance. It is not too difficult. He understands our weaknesses, and is there, constantly to support us; He knows our efforts and that is what counts. He is a God of love, compassion and understanding.

In praying for the Holy Spirit, we must have faith, believe that He will give the Holy Spirit to us. Our hearts must be humble and we must be genuinely repentant. Trust in Him, speak with Him, share the depth of your need with him. He is there, just let Him into your heart. He only waits for you to open the door.

So please don't feel ashamed of not having received the Holy Spirit yet. It is especially during this time that God is with you more than ever, reaching out to you, taking care of you and nurturing you. It means He loves you. We must respond. He wants you now.

**BY HEATHER MACDONALD
[ELGIN/EDINBURGH, U.K.]**

Testimonies

God is our Refuge



HALLELUJAH, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ I testify.

What I am about to relate is an incident which happened not only to me but also to six other sisters. It is an incident which tells of the great and wondrous love of our Lord Jesus.

In the summer of 1990, about 30 of us went on a Singapore-Phuket-Hongkong trip for our vacation.

On our last day in Phuket, some of us decided to go for a swim in the sea to cool ourselves from the scorching heat. We were swimming, playing and laughing in the water when one sister called us. Although she was quite far from the shore, she seemed to be in shallow waters. Curious, we decided to swim to where she was. Once we reached there, we were surprised to find that we could actually stand. So, we decided to stay there. Suddenly a massive wave came and swept away the sand beneath our feet. We could no longer stand. The waves were too strong for us and they kept pushing us further into the sea. Only one sister managed to swim back to shore. Seven of us remained in the waters.

I managed to stay close to four other sisters, one of whom I

clung on to as I was petrified. I held on to her so tightly that I nearly strangled her. Thank God she managed to escape from me and swim safely to shore. I found it increasingly difficult to keep my head above the water as the waves kept pushing me under. I was terrified. I believed that I was going to die. Then one of the sisters said, "Shout 'Hallelujah'". So, with what little breath I had, I shouted as loud as I possibly could. I desperately wanted to be saved.

The brothers and sisters on shore were looking on helplessly as they could not do anything. It must have been a traumatic experience for them too, to see us out there, on the verge of death.

By this time, I was clinging on to a little sister to stay afloat as neither of us were strong swimmers. The two sisters who were with us, thank God, managed to swim away. However, as they were swimming away from us, I felt disheartened. "Don't go", I thought, "I'll die." Somehow I managed to stay afloat and searched to see where the other two sisters were. To my horror, they were being swept even further away. I shouted "Hallelujah" even louder. "Oh God", I thought, "please save us. Don't let us die now." At this point, I saw one of our

brothers running into the water. "Thank God," I said to myself. But to my dismay, he swam past me, and I realised that he was going to save the other two sisters. Therefore, I shouted even louder. I was extremely afraid. I did not want to die. Thank God that He heard our cries and sent some lifeguards to rescue us safely, while the little sister's father brought her out.

Following the incident, we all gathered in a room to give thanks to our Lord Jesus. Much tears were shed that day; both by the survivors and by those who were not at the scene. Seven precious lives could have been lost but yet again our Saviour lifted His almighty hand and saved us from the snares of death. As it says in Psalms 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in our trouble."

This incident not only depicts the daily providential care of Christ; it also reminds us that our lives are short; it can be taken away from us any time. We must therefore live a life worthy of the Lord's calling.

May all glory be unto God. Hallelujah. Amen.

**BY ELAINE SHEK
[EDINBURGH, U.K.]**

An Eternal Paradise

WITH THE bustle of life enveloping us, our weathered hearts often yearn for a peaceful and tranquil corner where we can seek out the truth and beauty of life.

Here's a story of a devout Buddhist who encountered an eternal paradise when she came to know Christ.

September 2, 1986 was an unforgettable day for Hsieh Li-Man. She was to be initiated as a Buddhist nun the following day. It was also the day the Lord Jesus chose her through a vision, guiding her to the True Jesus Church.

The vision, the mission

"The Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel as his own possession ... Whatever the Lord pleases He does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps. He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from His storehouses." (Ps 135:4-7)

On 2 September, 1986, I was, as usual, sitting by my table studying the Buddhist scriptures, eager to be admitted to the Buddhist Academy.

LI-MAN'S faith in Buddhism could be traced back to her mother's influence



during her childhood. After the death of her mother, Buddhist teachings became an even greater solace to her.

In June 1986, she quit nursing to prepare for the admission examinations of a Buddhist Academy. Having worked in mental hospitals as well as hospitals for lepers, she felt there was nothing worth a second glance in this tragic life.

I looked up at the clock. Nine forty-seven. My heart was calm and filled with happiness. I knew I would soon be freed from the tortures of this mundane life. I would regain the spiritual paradise within me.

But, all of a sudden, I felt a force coming from above, sweeping my Buddhist scriptures to the floor. I couldn't help but look up.

Then I saw a shining cross; Someone was hung on it. I began speaking in an unknown tongue and started perspiring profusely. Yet I remained perfectly conscious.

Li-Man did not understand what was happening. She even thought she was schizophrenic. She did not know the one hanging on the cross was the Jesus Christ people

often talked about. She had never heard of Jesus' gospel.

Immediately after, I saw the words "TRUE JESUS CHURCH" written at the centre of the cross. On the left was the word 'Vision' and on the right was 'Great Commission'. On the extreme left was a telephone number: 3964139.

She did not know what that meant. There was just a great force which moved her to the telephone to dial the number. That was the number of the Taipei office of the True Jesus Church.

Another kind of beginning

THE TAIPEI OFFICE church clerk, Sis. Hu, answered the call. After attempting to answer the queries of a confused Li-Man, she gave her these words before putting down the receiver: one receives according to one's measure of faith. After the telephone conversation, Li-Man began to have doubts. And again, she was moved by the Holy Spirit to dial the number. This time, Bro. Hsu answered and testified to her about his experience of receiving peace in Jesus Christ. It was later arranged that she would attend service at Taipei church that very night.

That night, I was in great distress and depression. I thought the right thing to do was to see a psychiatrist, not go to church! When it was time for me to meet Bro. Hsu, I was still lazing on the chair, not intending to go. But, the chair became so hot that it was not possible for me to continue sitting on it. Grudgingly, I went down to meet Bro. Hsu. The whole thing was just too ridiculous. Buddhism was so good but now, a God popped out of nowhere.

Trying to sound as hostile as I could, I asked Bro. Hsu, "Can I wear slippers to your church?"

Bro. Hsu merely smiled and hastened her to go and get changed.

Upon recollection, Li-Man feels she had behaved childishly:

I went to my room, flopped onto my bed and started reading the Buddhist scriptures, intending to ignore

Bro. Hsu's invitation. But almost instantly, the bed also became so hot that I could not lie on it.

She jumped out of bed, greatly shaken, not knowing what to do.

It was in this manner that Li-Man finally went to church. But the service had already ended by the time they arrived. Nevertheless, a preacher elucidated the vision and explained to her the wonderful calling of God.

Everyone there was trying to persuade me to believe in Jesus as the Lord, to leave the erroneous beliefs of the past. But I simply could not accept that in just a day. So, I snapped very loudly, "Whatever you may say, I'm still going to join the nunnery tomorrow!"

Back at home, Li-Man arranged to meet some Buddhist friends at the Taipei station at 8.00 am the following day. They were to go to Fo-guang Shan (Mountain of Buddha's Light). However, God intervened once again.

Most unusually, Li-Man slept till almost 3.00pm the next day. When she did not turn up at the station, her friends came to look for her. Although they had the keys to her flat, God did not allow them to see Li-Man, who actually was sleeping most soundly on her bed. They even waited for her "return" until 2.30pm. Just after they left, Li-Man woke up.

It was already 2.30pm when I woke up. I was really panicky. I wanted to telephone for help. Strangely, the telephone broke down. After that day, my Buddhist friends came to look me up several times but each time, I would be dead asleep.

"Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol, Thou art there! If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Thy hand shall lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." (Ps 139:7-10)

Li-Man remained adamant in becoming a Buddhist nun. Some days later, she set out on her own to buy the tickets to travel to Fo-guang Shan. On the way, however, she sprained her ankle.

By then, Li-Man was convinced that she was

psychologically abnormal. She moved house and sought the company of a few girlfriends.

I moved house mainly because I wanted to escape from the concern of the brothers and sisters in church. Little did I realise that it served to keep my Buddhist friends from influencing me instead.

Li-Man's injured ankle became the tool of God in bringing her to church to hear the gospel. Treating the injury cost her all of the little savings she had and she could no longer afford to travel to Fo-guang Shan. She even blurted out her new address and telephone number to Bro. Hsu accidentally. With the concern, prayers and encouragement of the brethren in church, Li-Man returned to church to search for the Truth.

Each visit to the church would be a battle between two great forces. There would always be a voice whispering in her ears: "Don't go! Don't go!" The Lord Jesus had chosen her, that she might receive the peace and deliverance she had longed for. Yet the devil would not let go; she was tormented and confused.

This spiritual war reached its zenith when Li-Man was to undergo baptism.

The Lord God is to be praised

IN OCTOBER, there was to be a baptism during the spiritual meeting. Li-Man was not able to fully submit to God and would not accept baptism. But then, the spirit of God moved her to agree and a friend who had accompanied her to hear the gospel signed up for her.

On the day of baptism, the devil was shouting in her ears: "Don't go! Don't go!" The noise in her ears gave her such an excruciating headache that she started vomiting and finally fainted. The brothers and sisters in church did not succumb to the hindrance of the devil. They prayed for her in one accord, standing by her throughout this spiritual battle.

Immediately after the baptism, she recovered from her faint and was all right. The hair-raising voice which had tormented her was gone. She became as bubbly and cheerful as she used to be in the past. The manifestly great change indeed led many to praise the mercy and grace of God, thereby strengthening their faith.

Li-Man continued to attend services and prayers, leading a life of spiritual nurture. Although the devil tried to disturb her peace, through the prayers and care of the brethren, she was able to remain victorious.

Remembering the past, Li-Man was absolutely convinced that she was no longer subjected to abstract profundities. Today, she lives a fulfilled life, full of love and hope. She now recognises that worshipping idols cannot solve any problem, either for herself or her family. Only the love of Christ can truly deliver us from trouble and fear.

When she was first converted, she could not sever herself from her Buddhist background, especially her friends. She went through a period of struggle when her friends could not forgive her "betrayal". After days of prayers, God answered her through the mouth of a preacher: faith and friendship are two separate entities. With that, the remaining tussles within her were all removed. She was no longer doubtful nor stubborn. She has found the true path in the light of Christ.

*"O Lord, keep me with Thee, Thy brightness to know
And Lord, keep Thy true light within me aglow
Lord, lead me onward, worldly cares I forsake
To Thee, O my saviour, this promise I make."*

BY HSIEH LI-MAN
[TRANSLATED]

HALLELUJAH, praise the Lord.

In the name of Jesus, I bear testimony about how God brought me to the True Jesus Church (TJC).

My name is Neo Kim Liang. I came to "know" the Lord in 1989. That was during my first year at university. Someone from the Navigators (a christian group) asked me if I was interested to know more about Christianity. All along I'd been interested but did not have the opportunity to learn more about it, so I agreed to have Bible study with them with alacrity. After five sessions of Bible study, my Bible study teacher told me that in order to become a Christian, I had to say a "sinner's prayer". I followed their instructions, confessed my sins and "accepted Jesus Christ into my life". After "church-hopping" for a while, I joined a Chinese (Anglican) congregation at a Junior College chapel.

I came to hear about the TJC during my third year of university when one of my classmates approached me. He pointed out the differences in doctrines between the TJC and other churches. As I read those verses he showed me regarding the way to salvation, I was shocked and perplexed. I had never thought of those verses in that way before! Ever since I became a Christian, the concept "just believe and you'll be saved" was so deeply rooted in my mind that I found it very difficult to accept that baptism was necessary for salvation. However, I could not deny those

The right church at last

BY NEO KIM LIANG
[SINGAPORE]

verses on baptism for salvation, eg Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21. I consulted my Bible study teachers who told me that Acts was a historical book and thus, should not be used to teach doctrines. They also strongly advised me to stop all discussion with my classmate because they had heard that the TJC was a cult group. One of them was even told by her pastor that the TJC's tongue-speaking was very funny.

Subsequently, my classmate invited me to an evangelistic meeting at the TJC. I pulled a friend along as I was curious about this church, especially the tongue-speaking. I tried to find fault with the sermon but could not find any. After the service, there was a 15-minute prayer. We were asked to kneel (something new to me) and pray. Then suddenly everybody started to produce funny sounds. They sounded different from the tongue-speaking in my church and I tried to figure out how they managed to produce those sounds. During that prayer, I did not experience anything as my heart was hardened, but my friend could feel slight movement in her hands.

After that, I decided not to attend the TJC anymore as I was not convinced. I was more inclined

to the advice of my Bible study teachers. However, I was not satisfied with their explanation on those verses which said baptism was necessary for salvation. They said that baptism was a work and Christ had completed the work of salvation when He died on the cross, and that it is by grace that we were saved, not by works.

Thank God, my classmate did not give up and continued to tell me more about baptism and the history of the churches. But what really held me back was the claim that the TJC was the only true church and that other churches did not have the complete truth. I found this difficult to accept. Other churches had been around for centuries. How could their doctrines be incomplete? Nevertheless, I decided to attend the TJC on Saturdays and at the same time attend my church on Sundays. After seeking the truth at the TJC for some time, I found the message delivered during service very biblical and the speakers very humble. Also, I started doctrinal studies with a TJC member.

After some time, I became tired of attending two churches, so I decided to settle down at one place. I approached my church

evangelist and asked him what he thought of the TJC. To my surprise, he spoke favourably and told me he even subscribed to one of her Chinese publications - the "Holy Spirit Monthly". He found the TJC's teachings very biblical except certain doctrines which he considered quite extreme (eg foot-washing). He agreed that baptism was necessary for salvation (Editor's note: This is not the official view of that church) and would not object to my going to the TJC. I asked another sister of that church and she too agreed that the TJC was a good church. My confidence built up, I decided to attend the TJC full-time.

After having attended the TJC for a year, I'm fully convinced of the doctrines and my perspective of Christianity has changed. I thank God for His mercy in allowing me to be baptised into the true church.

May all glory be given to God! Amen.

I came from the other fold

IN JESUS' NAME I thank God for the opportunity to bear this testimony.

Almost three years ago in 1991, I resigned from my job. As it was not God's will, I had a strong urge to go back. After a few sleepless nights, I left my new job and returned to the old one. It was only after two years that God's reason for this became clear. A brother from the True Jesus Church joined the company and introduced me to the true gospel. It was a humbling experience ... God's intervention ... and His grace.

I had been worshipping in a Presbyterian church for over 22 years. Thus it came as a shock to me to be told plainly that the baptism which I had gone through was not in accordance with the teachings of the Bible and that spiritually speaking I was not saved at all.

While searching for the truth, I attended an evening service in the True Jesus Church at Telok Kurau. The speaker spoke on Nehemiah chapter 13 which talked about the Sabbath being profaned. It dawned on me then that my Sunday-keeping was not acceptable. The fourth commandment is clear in this regard. Jesus Himself observed the Sabbath (Lk 4:16, 31). So did the apostles in the early church (Acts 17:1-2; 13:14, 44; 16:13; 18:4). This led me to question and to search the scriptures. During my struggle, I would sometimes wake up between 2-3 am to study the scriptures and to let God speak to me through His Word.

I had always believed that once a person accepts the Lord Jesus as Saviour, the Holy Spirit resides in him and he is saved, and that baptism is only an outward confirmation of a professed faith. I was given two issues of the Words of Life which I read and then passed to my pastor one Sunday for his views on the doctrines taught therein. Two weeks passed without any news from him. When I managed to approach him, he told me that due to his busy

schedule he had yet to read the booklets. After one and a half months of waiting, I felt the need to approach him again as it concerned my own salvation. The pastor told me that he had browsed through the booklets and felt that the doctrines were quite similar to the doctrines of his church. As for speaking in tongues, he said it was more inclined towards the Pentecostal view. I pointed out the difference and the necessity of baptism for salvation and quoted 1 Pet 3:20-21. He said, "Oh yes, I'll have to talk to you about that." We were interrupted at this point and the conversation ended.

I felt that my questions were not satisfactorily dealt with. Despite the advice of many of my church members to speak with the pastor, I never had a chance to do so. Thus I decided to zealously seek the Scriptures myself. There were times I did not fully agree with the Words of Life but my doubts were quickly resolved, when I discovered that they had biblical support. Searching the Scriptures convinced me that baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16) and that one does not necessarily have the Holy Spirit once he accepts Christ (Acts 8:14-16; 19:1-2).

I recall praying to God, asking Him to lead me to a church where I could grow spiritually and experience Him in a special way. The brother who preached to me had initially thought that it would be difficult to share the truth with me since I had been with my former church for such a long time. God is indeed merciful and faithful. He knows our spiritual yearnings and will always in His right time bring them to pass. Though it took me 22 years to come to the true church, I will always remember God's grace bestowed on me, a sinner. Now that I am truly baptized into His name, my prayer is to continue to seek God's Word and to know Him better.

For those who are presently seeking the truth, may your hearts be open to His leading. Do not study the Bible with a prejudiced mind. Compare the doctrines with what you have learnt at your previous church. Let God speak to you just as He has spoken to me.

Jesus said, "But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst." May all glory be given to God.

BY IRENE CHUA
[SINGAPORE]