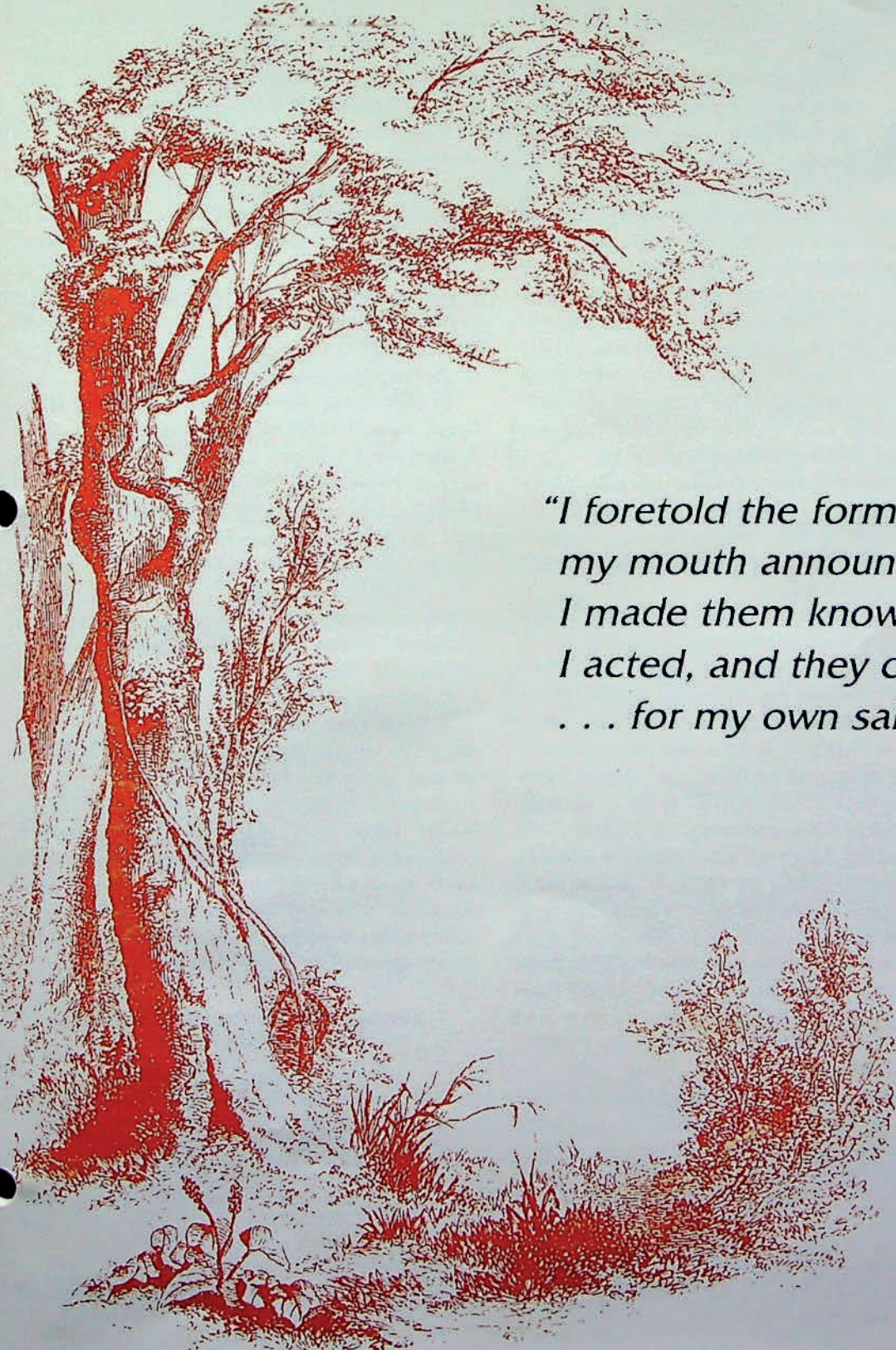


• The Restitution Herald



*"I foretold the former things long ago,
my mouth announced them and
I made them known; then suddenly
I acted, and they came to pass.
. . . for my own sake, I do this."*

— God

Isaiah 48:3, 11

Volume 85, Number 1
October, November 1995

A Message from the Editor ...

ASI WAS VISITING FOLKS IN the hospital this morning I met an 80-year-old lady who had fallen and broken her hip. I introduced myself as her aunt's pastor. She took one look at me, smiled, and said, "You look too young to be a pastor." Her nurse agreed. I took it as a compliment — you see I turn 32 this month, I've been a pastor for 10 years and I am a father of five children. But she didn't know any of that. She just took one look at me and, by appearances, I was too young to be a pastor. So I had to prove myself. After our brief visit and my prayer she may or may not accept me as a true pastor. Time will tell.

I'm guessing that some folks will take a look at the picture of the new editor of *The Restitution Herald* and say to themselves, "Hey, this guy's too young to be the editor of a magazine." Again, time will tell.

As I begin this journey with you, I must admit I'm feeling a combination of excitement and a little fear. For me, these are new waters, but fortunately they are not uncharted waters. There have been many skillful pioneers who have gone before and pointed the way. Ever since S. J. Lindsay produced the first issue — on October 12, 1911 — the editor's chair has been filled with many capable Bible students: F. L. Austin, G. E. Marsh, Sidney Magaw, James Watkins, Harold Doan, Terry Ferrell, Clyde Randall, J. R. LeCrone, David Krogh, Russell Magaw, Hollis Partlowe and most recently Kent Ross. These are men worthy of respect — some of them have been mentors to me. I want very much to follow their examples of excellence in production and faithfulness to those truths of Scripture which we hold to be of great value.

It is my intention that this magazine maintain its dedication and commitment to those foundational doctrines which form the core of

who we are: The unity and supremacy of God; faith in the Messiah, Jesus; the Bible as the word of God; the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth; and immersion into Christ as a sign of the covenant. We will continue to feature articles which specifically address these important issues.

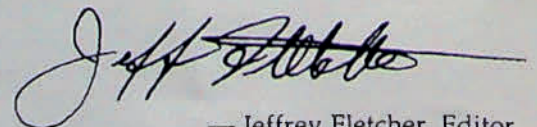
We will also deal with practical issues of Christian discipleship and service. If we truly believe what the Bible says about God, it will bear fruit in our lives. It will touch upon many of the everyday decisions we make.

In this issue we consider first "The Holy Spirit" with articles by Billie Kennedy, Stephen Bolhous and Anthony Buzzard. We then turn to issues concerning ministry in "The Local Church," with articles by Ray Hall, Russ Magaw and Michael Hoffman. We follow this with some ethical considerations in the section "Christianity and Culture"; Mark Mattison and Hollis Partlowe offer their insights here. Finally, we look at the outworking of our faith in "Practical Ministry" with articles by Tom Schmitt and Richard Foster.

I hope that after interacting with these excellent writers you will have much to reflect on and apply in your Christian faith.

Please feel free to write to me and let me know what you think. I welcome your comments, critiques and compliments. If you have an idea for an article that you would like to write, or see written, please jot down your ideas and send them to me at 130 Wayne St., Ponchatoula, LA 70454.

Sursum Corda ("Lift up your hearts")



— Jeffrey Fletcher, Editor



The Restitution Herald

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- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17, PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21);
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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Start the Revival

REVIVAL IS A WORD THAT IS often used and in some cases misused. Revival means more than simply a series of meetings. Webster's dictionary's first definition of revival is "restoration to life, consciousness, vigor, strength, etc."

Revival can only take place where there once was life, consciousness, vigor and strength, but these elements have dimmed or died. Revival is specifically the business of the Christian. It has to do with bringing back to spiritual life, regaining spiritual consciousness and renewing spiritual vigor and strength. It has to do with allowing God's power to once again fill and move the Church and each individual Christian.

Walter Baldt gives us an acceptable definition of revival when he says, "Revival is God at work, restoring His Church to health."

Revival and evangelism, although closely linked, are not to be confused. Evangelism can only come after revival. Revival is an experience in the Church; evangelism is an expression of the Church.

I understand revival to be that which is authored by God in His grace. It means that God draws near with His power and holiness until sin seems exceedingly sinful and sinners become broken before Him. Revival is the grace which comes to us through Jesus, the cross, the resurrection, the Holy Spirit and the hope of the coming kingdom of God.

It means that whole arenas of people and even entire nations begin to come under the mighty, moving conviction of God. God moves in His supernatural intervention and stops man in his downward plunge.

Revival ought to be the great cry to God on the part of every believer for this hour. Some argue that we are too near the second coming of Christ to expect revival. The time of the apostasy is upon us, they say. We can only expect things to get worse and worse while we feebly hold on and endure to the end. Such a view must be balanced by our Lord's promise to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh in the last days. One of the signs of the times we have missed or overlooked is found in Acts 2:38-39. The gift of the Holy Spirit is given to all Christians.

The fruit of revival is always in God's will and plan during this age of grace. It is never the will of God for His Church to be apathetic and powerless.



Even the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3 is offered revival by our Lord. Jesus rebukes them for their spiritual lukewarmness and for not knowing that they were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." He then offers them revival. In verse 18 we read, "I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see."

When true revival comes, the results will be seen. It will start in the hearts of individual Christians, expand into the local church and explode throughout the body of Christ.

There has never been a more serious hour than now. With the moral slide of society, family difficulties soaring, and nation rising against nation, it is time for a genuine revival to break out in God's Church.

There are no more powerful words of advice given than in 2 Chronicles 7. Here are found the steps to revival.

Solomon had finished the temple. God spoke to him in the night and set forth His conditions for peace and fulfillment (2 Chron. 7:14-22).

These conditions were given to the people called by God's name. In Solomon's time the people of God were the Israelites. Today the Church is the people of God. If we are to effect change in the world, revival must begin in the House of God (1 Peter 4:17). We, the Church, must be the first to follow the conditions set forth.

God continues and reveals these conditions to Solomon. His people must "humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways" (v.14). This is part of a successful revival. No easy task — but these are the necessary steps.

When we do this, God adds His part. "I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land" (v. 14).

Here is the key to revival in God's people. Do you want revival? You can have it by obeying God's word. It's not God's fault revival is lacking, it's ours. I see revival breaking out all over. Why not in my life, my church, my denomination? Have you been obedient to follow God's plan for blessings?

Isaiah found a new awareness of the character of God (Isa. 6:1-4). After Uzziah died, Isaiah saw what God was like. He is all-powerful — omnipotent; He is all-knowing — omniscient; He is everywhere — omnipresent; He is eternal.

Like Isaiah, we need to see ourselves measured by God's standard. Apart from Christ, we are nothing. Isaiah had to confess, "I am undone. I'm a man of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5). A true picture of revival is found in Isaiah 6:7. What a beautiful message of forgiveness.

Following this forgiveness/cleansing, there is a new zeal to go for God. "Whom shall I send?" Listen to Isaiah's concern: "Then said I, 'Here am I, send me'" (Isa. 6:8). Revival produces people with a servant's heart.

Wherever Paul went, he had either a revival or a riot. In Acts 16:25-34, Paul and Silas were placed in prison for preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. They "prayed, and sang praises unto God" (v. 25). I see these men of God focusing on God's power instead of their problems. Oh, the value of praise. They believed God would deliver them and He did.

Revival is a returning to life. In relationship to our Church, revival will:

1. Rekindle old fire. Remember the day you gave your life to the Lord, the times you have gone the second mile, the times when God wonderfully answered your prayers.
2. Rebuild broken fellowship. "Blest be the tie that binds." We need to share, to care, to walk together. Consider the fellowship of the early Church (Acts 2; 4).
3. Restore Christians' joys again. There are so many defeated Christians, cranky Christians, discouraged Christians. The joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh. 8:10).

Want a revival? Draw a circle on the floor, get inside it and pray! Don't let up. Pray until God gives you your heart's desire.

You can live on higher ground. May God give you a song again. □

by Billie Kennedy

I BELIEVE IN HEALING MIRACLES

IHAVEN'T ALWAYS BELIEVED in them — present-day miracles of healing by God's power. I've been like most other citizens . . . yes, I believe strongly and firmly in the existence of God, the Almighty God of the Bible. Miracles?? I've always known God could do any healing miracle He wished but wasn't sure if He would. Probably He only does it in special cases in the lives of other people, I thought.

Regarding all miracles I generally held to the cessationist viewpoint. That position says, simply, that the age of miracles ended with the close of the biblical era. It seemed logical. After all, when had I ever experienced a miracle, seen a miracle, or encountered someone I knew who had a firsthand miracle experience? Therefore, because miracles were not a part of my world they must not be real (how's that for shallow thinking?). I began to search the Bible to substantiate my viewpoint. I wanted to reaffirm my position against those voices who say the age of miracles is still present: the miraculous gifts of the Spirit are still in operation; God hasn't ceased working, we have ceased believing He still works.

What I found in the Scripture was not a message of miracles having ceased, but timeless open-ended promises of God's healing and miracle-working power. "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases" (Ps. 103:2, 3). "The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up . . .

pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:15, 16). "These signs will accompany those who believe: In my name . . . they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well" (Jesus is the speaker; He exhorts believers to use the power of His name; Mark 16:17, 18).

A pastor friend recently showed me this special healing promise in the Bible. Isaiah 53:4, 5 speaks of the suffering of Christ with the words "surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows . . . by his wounds we are healed" ("with his stripes we are healed," KJV). This statement has generally been understood to refer to the spiritual healing of forgiveness and salvation that is offered us in Christ. But Matthew, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, refers to Isaiah 53 when telling about Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law and others in the community: "He healed all who were ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'He himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases'" (Matt. 8:16, 17). In simple terms, one of the great blessings that comes from Jesus to believers is healing miracles. It seems to me a tragic shame to forego a blessing that the Lord wants to give us!

YES! I believe in healing miracles! Not because I've experienced one or seen all that many (though in the last year we've had some dramatic healing answers to prayer in our church). I believe in healing miracles because the Almighty God of creation offers them in His Word. God is not dead, nor is He withdrawn from us. God is alive and active in the miracle business. If He isn't the God of healing miracles to you, maybe it's because you don't expect Him to be. □



BY STEPHEN BOLHOUS

WHAT WERE NEW TESTAMENT

The following article represents one point of view on the issue of "tongues." Students of this subject may like to sharpen their thinking by interacting with the thoughts here presented.

The New Testament phenomenon of "tongues" has perplexed readers of the Bible for many centuries. What exactly was this ability to "speak in a tongue"? What purpose did it serve in the life of the Church?

Four things may be asserted about the capacity to "speak in tongues" as the New Testament describes it. "Tongues" were revelational; they were foreign languages, not normally known to the speaker; they were for the benefit of the whole church; they were a sign that God was dealing with the world in a new way and that He was judging enemies.

1. Tongues were revelational. When someone spoke in tongues they were, to use Paul's words, "uttering mysteries." Now a mystery is a divine revelation of facts hitherto hidden but now manifested. A tongues-speaker was therefore directly communicating divine secrets to the congregation. Tongues were therefore on a par with inspired prophecy, in which God spoke supernaturally through a human mouth. Paul's equation of tongues and prophecy as possessing the same revelational values is quite clear: "He who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, *unless he interprets*" (1 Cor. 14:5). In other words, if a tongues-speaker interprets his utterance, it has the value of

prophecy. This is a most important point and shows that tongues in the New Testament were inspired prophetic utterances.

2. Tongues were foreign languages. The word *glossa* in Greek means a language. When Luke introduces us to the amazing phenomenon of "tongues" in Acts 2, he makes it quite clear that the Apostles were supernaturally gifted to speak in languages not normally their own, but granted to them as an undeniable miracle to show the activity of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles were "filled with Holy Spirit and began to speak with other languages" (Acts 2:4). The response produced in the audience was "How do we hear each man in his own language?" (Acts 2:8). In Acts 10:46 Gentiles were granted the same miraculous ability when they "*spoke in tongues*" and "the spirit came on them [the Gentiles] just as it did on us [the Apostles]" (Acts 11:15). Luke has certainly confused us if he meant us to understand an entirely different phenomenon. He has used exactly the same expression. So also in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 the phenomenon described is "speaking in a language" (i.e., supernaturally). It requires an interpretation, the ordinary word for translation. Paul speaks of "other languages" in 1 Corinthians 14:21 just as Luke describes "other languages" in Acts 2:4. Paul draws a parallel between the experience of the Corinthian tongues-speakers and the foreign Assyrian
(Please turn page)

by
**Anthony
Buzzard**

"TONGUES"?



"TONGUES"?

(Continued from page 7)

language spoken to the Israelites (1 Cor. 14:21; cp. Isa. 28:11ff.).

3. Tongues were for the benefit of the whole body of the church. This is only natural, since tongues are one of the many gifts which God gave New Testament believers to build up all the believers. Quite specifically, Paul instructs a person gifted with tongues to "pray that he may interpret" (1 Cor. 14:13). This was so that he could "excel in edifying the church" (1 Cor. 14:12). Giftedness was obviously no private affair but one of public usefulness to the body of Christ. This is hardly surprising since the nature of the message revealed in tongues was a direct divine communication and was of the highest value to the whole body.

4. Tongues were a sign that God was adopting a new way of dealing with mankind. Again, tongues were a *prophetic* sign. It is significant that when Peter explains the phenomenon of tongues in Acts 2 he refers to Joel's prophecy which had said that "your sons and your daughters" would "*prophesy*" (Acts 2:17). Speaking in a foreign language supernaturally was a form of prophesying. The new direction which God was taking was of course His intention to pour out His spirit on "all flesh," not just on Israel. God also used the Greek language to inspire the New Testament. At the same time tongues could be a sign of judgment. Paul says that exactly: "In the law it is written, 'With men of other tongues and lips I will speak to this people,' and yet for all that they will not hear me, says the Lord. Therefore tongues are a sign not to those who believe but to those who do not believe" (1 Cor. 14:21, 22). Despite the extraordinary miracle of tongues, many were not moved to repentance.

The New Testament Tongues Compared with the Modern Phenomenon

When the criteria above are applied to the modern tongues experience, it will not

be hard to see that there are vast differences. For the most part, modern tongues-speaking remains in the closet, untranslated, contrary to Paul's specific instruction to the tongues-speaker that he is to expect to interpret and *communicate his divinely given mysteries to the church body* (1 Cor. 14:13). New Testament tongues were never to be used in church, however, in the absence of an inspired interpreter. Just as prophets were to be limited to three speakers at a given meeting, so tongues-speakers were not to exceed three and an inspired translation was to be given (1 Cor. 14:27). The obvious reason is that the language of the tongues-speaker was unfamiliar to the congregation who could not be edified unless the revelation was translated into their own language. There is no edification for anyone, according to Paul, in unintelligible syllables, however "special" they may appear to speaker or audience. The modern practice of uttering sounds understood neither by the speaker nor the audience has no place in a New Testament church. Furthermore a "tongue" should give evidence of having the "shape" of language, not gibberish.

The modern idea that every Christian is supposed to be able to exercise the gift of tongues contradicts the express teaching of Paul that each person is differently gifted. "There are varieties of ministries . . . To each one is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good . . . To one the word of wisdom . . . To another various kinds of tongues . . . All do not speak with tongues, do they?" (1 Cor. 12:6, 7, 8, 10, 30).

To insist that everyone can have all the gifts is to put oneself in conflict with apostolic practice. To each is given a gift on a principle of differentiation. If the tongues-speaker finds himself in a situation where there is no one present with the gift of interpretation, the former is to keep silent (1 Cor. 14:28). This must prove beyond doubt that a tongues-speaker does not automatically have the ability to translate his tongue. Attempts to retranslate this verse (for example by J.P. Wierwille in *Receiving*

the Holy Spirit Today, p. 235) would not have the approval of those able to read the original or examine any translation or commentary.

Since the completion of the canon (with the book of Revelation) it may be that God does not need to give further direct revelation. The New Testament is God's inspired revelation and needs no supplementing with other inspired revelation, such as tongues or prophecy. If in fact God were still uttering divinely revealed "mysteries" they would be of critical importance (on a par with the Bible) to all Christians. Modern "prophecies," however, do not have such importance. We must distinguish between the New Testament miracle of tongues and inspired prophecy and modern attempts to copy these. The latter fall far short of the standard of infallible utterance demanded of a true prophet or tongues-speaker. It may be that the modern hunger for "experience" is due to the unsatisfying diet many churches receive from the Bible instruction they are exposed to.

God still speaks to all who search for Him. The inspired Scriptures contain all things necessary for salvation, providing the wisdom which leads to immortality in the Kingdom of God (2 Tim. 3:15). The pressing task of the Church is to understand and implement the revelation already fully granted to it through the prophets and the Apostles and recorded in the Bible. Seeking extra-biblical revelation may sometimes be a well-meaning excuse for not concentrating on the scriptural revelation already granted from Genesis to Revelation. It is of major significance that the last book of the Christian Bible contains a solemn warning: "Do not add to the things written in this book" (see Rev. 22:18). What applies to Revelation may be extended to the Bible as a whole. The Bible is a sufficient and effective guide in all matters of salvation. □

T

HE LOCAL CHURCH

The Value of Forging

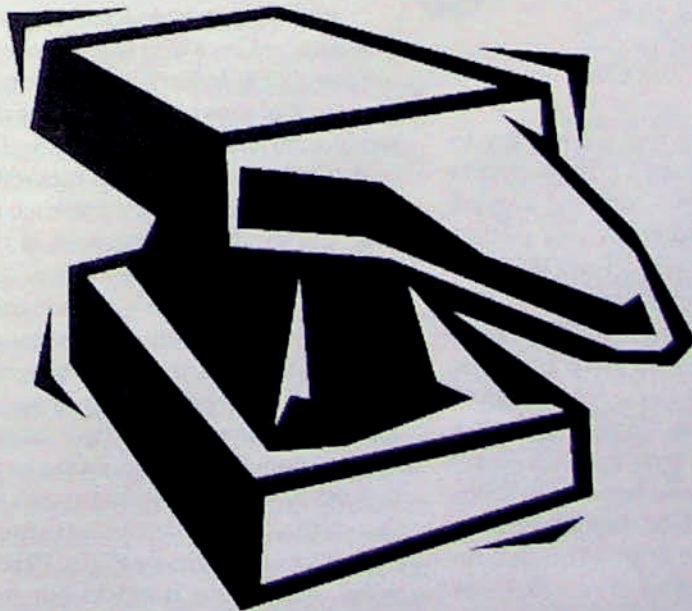
WHY WOULD ANY CHURCH think it desirable to retain the same old pastor indefinitely anyway? Why would any minister want a long pastorate in the same old church, all his life? Dr. James Dobson said in the July '95 *Focus on the Family Bulletin*: "Senior pastors (in U.S.A.) currently change churches on an average of every four years. Most church-going families stay at the same church only about four years."

Evidently there is no priority given to long-term pastorates in the average American church. I suspect the Church of God would be the exception to those statistics. I am sure that on average the Church of God pastor has a little longer tenure, which presents some pros and cons of its own. It appears our communities are changing

faster than our churches, creating some problems in assimilating new people — but some of the changes our communities are experiencing are not desirable to assimilate into the fellowship of the church.

So the one value of forging a long-term pastor/church relationship is that we begin to appreciate the worth of the church based on our biblical understanding and teaching rather than based on an influx of people who church-hop every four years and bring with them a variation of faith and beliefs. Dobson further elaborated on his statistics: "In 1950 only 4% of church members in the average church had grown up in another denomination. By 1993, the figure had risen to 40%. There is now a greater diversity of beliefs within most congregations than there once was between denominations."

Some representatives of the Church Ecumenical movement would think that good. I personally do not believe the diluting of the truth will further the cause of God's kingdom (see 2 Thess. 2:10-12). Consequently, what we perhaps thought obvious about long-term pastor/church relationships is the development of spiritually and doctrinally stronger churches, not particularly larger churches. The larger church in 1995 will be characterized by changes introduced by the majority of its membership



A Long-Term Pastor/Church Relationship

by Ray Hall

who come from a background of church-hopping, in which they have been actively involved in as many as 15 different congregations.

Is Pastoral Church-Hopping Biblical?

I suppose there could be a sense of ease just in knowing that nothing is permanent. We would have no paradigms, examples, models or patterns to help determine our course, and when one messed up we could feel free to let him go with no need to worry about commitment or attachment. Certainly we all mess up, and from time to time it would be refreshing to start over somewhere else . . . and the congregation may be thinking it desirable to get a new pastor, "one whom we've never offended so we can start over, fresh!"

We would be comforted in part if we discovered that long-term pastorates are not biblical, and that a light, easy commitment is substantial enough to fulfill one's dedication to the Lord, but that is not the case. I believe there are paradigms that are legitimate, needful models or patterns for effective church ministry. One such model was Jesus' own ministry as "The Chief Shepherd."

First Peter 5:1-4 says clearly that pastors are to care for "the flock that is *with you*."¹ (This supports the idea that pastors were not running around trying to find flocks they could effectively pastor, but they pastored where they were.) Tend the flock for no other reason than because you have a real love for them, "voluntarily; neither for base gain, but readily."² What is suggested here by verse three is that the minister serves in the spirit of Jesus as a servant and not as one who "lords it over" the church (see also Jesus' own words in Mark 10:42-44). Every church member should honor the pastor as a man in a position that God has allotted or entrusted to him. It is an office or position that no one serves because he is worthy or deserves it, but because God has determined it. Care for the pastor as though God has given him; then I believe his position cannot be easily taken away or surrendered, but demands total commitment and dedica-

tion of the people to the work, and dedication of the pastor to the people God has entrusted to his care.

The Task: What We Want to Accomplish

What is the minister to do in this God-appointed position? "*Be examples to it*" (1 Pet. 5:3). Be imitators of the chief shepherd; model that love, sacrifice, commitment for the sheep. Demonstrate by example the power of the Gospel, and the Spirit that proves it and facilitates it.

This I believe is the whole matter of this article and ministry — *to be examples of the faith*. That is to say, if Jesus Christ Himself were to pastor your congregation, what type of commitment and dedication would you suppose would be demonstrated? Would the congregation be quick to look for another at the first sign of pastoral fatigue or stress? What would be a pastor's concept of long-term ministry, if he were indeed demonstrating the Spirit of God as we have learned it in Jesus?

If the Spirit of Jesus, the "Chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. 5:4), is leading the way for a pastor's ministry, I suspect he will demonstrate that same kind of sacrificial concern and love that we see in Jesus. I personally believe that it is hard, if not impossible, to show that spirit of love when moving every four years to sacrifice for another congregation. I suspect it would be difficult for a church to model the Spirit if they were not demonstrating patience themselves with their pastor, and taking part in the sacrifice and ministry enjoyed by the pastor.

The statement that a church needs to make the love of God known to the community will have to be demonstrated in the framework of a devoted pastor/church relationship thriving in the Spirit. The commitment of a pastor/church relationship is the proof of the Spirit of God in them. This is the testimony to our community Jesus promised: "By this shall all men know you are my disciples, if you have love one to another" (Jn. 13:35). I believe it has to be seen in our bond to our pastor, shepherd, elder, minister if it is to be seen at all. Certainly the neighborhood might not ever guess if you were not perfectly in tune with your pastor, but I suspect they already know if you resent him, and if they



know that . . . you already have one very large strike against your ever modeling Christ to those people. Is the ministry of salvation and the kingdom something to live for and sacrifice for, something to give our all for, or have we been playing word games, and hypocritically teaching something we never intended to model?

It is no wonder that Americans are losing confidence in the Church. The love we are professing as a church is deceptive if the commitment found in that love can't build any greater relationships.

Expectation of the Early Church

The Apostle Paul certainly didn't break any longevity records as he visited cities in Asia and Europe, helping to better establish churches. Paul was not a model pastor; he was an Apostle and evangelist. He did ask to be used as an example in many instances, but "always on the move" was not one of those traits he encouraged any to mimic. So what would Paul recommend to the church as the number of years it would take to make a good pastorate?

Paul gave instructions to Titus to establish churches on the Isle of Crete. What kind of men was Titus supposed to find? And what would be the characteristics of their ministry? Paul wrote Titus and said, "ordain elders [pastors] in every city . . ." (Tit. 1:5).

The picture that automatically comes to my mind is one of home-town boys growing up in their communities, carrying on their father's businesses, when along comes Titus and instructs them to be pastors of the small groups of believers in their local communities within the city. Since every city would then have its own ordained ministers pastoring their local congregations, I cannot identify any reason why a minister would leave his home town to go and shepherd another pastor's responsibility. That concept would undo what the word "ordain" means: "To stand something in its place, or cause to stand."³ If we read all the compiled instruction to pastors (shepherds, overseers, elders, bishops, etc. Acts 20:17, 28-29; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; 1 Tim. 3:7), we will see that there were great de-

mands and responsibility placed upon these men; these were not positions to be taken lightly, or which could be assumed one moment and dropped the next, or deserted when the going got rough, or exhaustion set in, or tedious patterns surfaced, or disappointment, discouragement, or the many other symptoms that I believe even Christ encountered in ministry (see also James 5:7-11).

I cannot comprehend these men in Acts 20:17, 28-29 listening to this admonition from the Apostle Paul, and then turning around thinking they were at liberty to leave their flocks and find others. Instead the text reflects the awesomeness of their responsibility as dramatized by the price that was paid for the Church. "The Chief consideration that will make a minister faithful and self-denying is, that the church has been bought with a price. If

the Lord Jesus so loved it — if he gave himself for it — the minister should be willing to deny himself; to watch, toil, and pray, that the great object of Jesus' death — the salvation and service of the church — may be obtained."⁴ Then too must the congregation follow the lead of their shepherd in the example and pattern of Jesus as we bear together the burden and responsibility given us by our Lord.

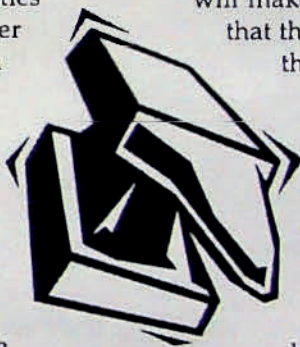
There is not an option to either choose or reject, support or deny, stay or leave, but the long-term pastor/church relationship is obedience to the tenor of Scripture. The love of God seen through Jesus His Son can only be modeled through our dedication and commitment to one another. Concessions will need to be made by pastors and congregations to make it possible for the Spirit of God in Christ to be seen in the fellowship. The whole Church needs to give priority to long-term pastor/church relationships so that the Spirit of God may be seen in us. □

¹ Benjamin Wilson, *Emphatic Diaglott*, Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1942, p. 782.

² *Ibid.*

³ W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Revell Co., 1966, "Ordain," Titus 1:5.

⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*, Kregel Publications, 1962, p. 501.





How You Can Help Your Pastor

THE PASTOR TODAY IS THE MAN ON the hot seat. He is supposed to be the man who can do everything!

He is supposed to be the visionary for the church. He has to be a strong leader with good business and administrative skills. He has to be entertaining; he has to produce a very thought-provoking sermon every week (that's a challenge in itself), or maybe a whole series of them. He's often in charge of the financial aspects of the church. He's usually responsible for counseling church members with complex personal problems that he may not be equipped to handle. He's got to visit the sick and the families where someone has died. He has to preach the funerals; he has to perform the weddings.

It's an impossible assignment! It's built for burnout, it's built for exhaustion and it's built for trouble (James Dobson).

Focus on the Family chief James Dobson is so concerned about pastors that two years ago he began *Pastor's Weekly Briefing*, a fax newsletter aimed at encouraging pastors. Dobson has turned the newsletter over to H. B. London, Jr. and his staff. I've subscribed, and its pages assist me as a pastor needing appreciation, understanding, and information helpful to my work, etc.

Like Dobson, as Pastors' Pastor I have a burden for the men and women in the Church of God called to this office. I keep in contact via telephone and an occasional visit with Church of God pastors in North America, attempting to keep them focused.

You also have a burden for your pastor in your church. No doubt you pray for him, offer him your services, and assist in any way you can. In this article we will discover additional opportunities for helping your pastor.

Continuing Education

Each Church of God pastor is required to add at least 10 hours of continuing education annually

to his experience. The 10 hours comprise a Continuing Education Unit (CEU).

Pastors have a hard time taking time to find a suitable CEU experience, paying for it, and knowing how to make the most use of it. Make sure that your church clears the way for your pastor to attend these educational and professional seminars. See to it that his costs are covered for these events. Make it convenient for him to go. Find child-sitting services so he will not need to worry about his family while away. When he returns, listen to his stories about the experience. Thank him for sharing what he has learned.

Family Services

Occasionally your pastor needs special attention. His family life can get out of sorts. He may find himself at odds with spouse and/or children as his work conflicts with family life.

Take the time to hear his concerns for more time with his family. Be sure to encourage him to take a day off weekly to enjoy his family. Assure him that the church elders can handle any emergency while he is gone.

Sometimes your pastor needs professional help when church crises and family crises seem to crash down on him at once. Be sure to respect his needs. Allow him to make appointments for psychological and spiritual help.

Respect His Leadership

Pastors are one of the four or five leadership gifts which Christ imparted to the church. Paul wrote to the Ephesians that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers were appointed by Christ "to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12, GNB).



Since Christ is the head of the Church of God and He has appointed these leaders to prepare the membership for ministry, then you have a responsibility to respect Christ and the leaders He has appointed.

Work with your pastor as he begins to cast a vision for the church. Share your insight as to what has worked in the past and how the vision of the church will change people and ministry. Be willing to do your part in achieving the vision.

Take extra time to share the vision with others in the church. Remember that the vision took time to formulate, so it will take time to make it happen in the life of the church.

When your pastor becomes involved in board meetings, Christian education meetings, community functions, etc., underscore his leadership. Stand by his work. Express to him appreciation for what he does.

Become a willing follower of the pastor's leadership. Heed his preaching, follow his Bible reading program, increase your time for a devotional life with God, focus on prayer a few more minutes in your day.

If his ideas demand too much time from certain people, be sure to suggest to him an alternate plan. Instead of criticizing him before others, take your opposing views to him first. Openly discuss your ideas and agree to abide by the outcome.

Compensate Him as a Professional

Pastors routinely wear many hats. They accomplish a huge body of work weekly in public relations, management, communications, spiritual skills, personal skills, educational skills, presentations, visitation, and counseling. In other similar civic and professional occupations, several persons are employed to perform the many services a pastor does alone. His financial compensation should be equal to that of other professionals.

Make sure that office and professional supplies are at his use without cost to him. He should have

free access to office machines which will aid the work of the church and the calling of his ministry.

One of the best helpers for the pastor is a secretary. This position could be either for a volunteer or a paid part-time person. Every pastor needs a secretary to help him keep abreast of his daily schedule and appointments, to accomplish clerical office work, and to handle phone calls, thus freeing him for the task of leadership. If there is one thing you can do to boost a pastor's morale, discuss with him the value of a secretary. Then make sure that secretarial help is secured.

Final Thoughts

You and your pastor are a special team with a divine leader. Your horizontal relationship first depends on a vertical relationship you both share with God. Without that divine relationship, you share only on a personal level. But because of the vertical contact, your relationship is spiritual, having the potential to lead you both into the coming Kingdom of God at Christ's return.

Because of that shared vertical experience, Jesus, the head of the church, could rightly declare to Peter, "I will build my church, and not even death will ever be able to overcome it" (Matt. 16:16, GNB).

Death may overcome you and your pastor someday, but because of the vertical presence of God through Christ, the church will exist throughout the generations — until the return of Christ.

Ensure that both you and your pastor build on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ as the cornerstone of the building (Eph. 2:20 ff.). Allow Christ to inhabit the church long after both of you have died. What you have thus done today will last for eternity — through the lives of the next generation brought to Christ through the church.

By helping your pastor, you will in turn help yourself and the ministry of the church, extending his and your work forever. □

Since Christ is the head of the Church of God and He has appointed these leaders... you have a responsibility to respect Christ and the leaders He has appointed.

By Russ Magaw

(Church of God Ministerial Association Pastors' Pastor)



How to Begin a Men's Ministry

WITHIN THE CHURCH THEY PROVIDE the spiritual strength, the deepest commitment, the real backbone of the church. Of whom do I speak? The *women* of course. That is a gross generalization that has too often been true. It is not a negative that many women are spiritually strong. It is a serious concern when more men are not. My vision has been to set about changing that in the church I pastor. When asked to write an article on how to begin a men's ministry, my initial reaction was that I know very little about that, but I can share what has occurred in my local situation.

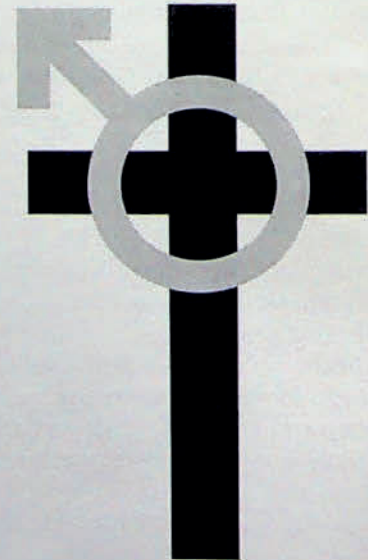
Let me first share that there is a wealth of good material on the subject available. Dale Galloway authored a book entitled *20/20 Vision*. Fuller Evangelistic Association has plenty of material on the subject. There are numerous other sources.

I began with a desire to see far more of the men in my congregation growing spiritually through regular time spent in God's Word, allowing God to speak to them in all areas of their lives. I have found the Navigators 2:7 material to be excellent in teaching the very basic spiritual disciplines of Bible reading, memorization and daily devotions (quiet time). The first book of the series of six is called *Growing Strong in God's Family*. I use it as a nine-week course. We meet for 90 minutes each week and about two hours of homework is required per week. One great advantage is the finite time commitment. They knew this would not go on forever.

Upon completion of the nine-week course, the men in the group asked if we could continue meeting. (That was not hard to answer.) We began reading a book by Patrick Morley called *The Man in*

the Mirror. We began each session by sharing something we had read from the Bible in the past week and what it meant to us. It is a wonderful experience to hear a group of seven or eight men talking about their relationships with Christ, their victories, defeats and growth. After sharing time, we would discuss the chapter for the week. One of the ideas that Morley stresses in the book is accountability to each other. I appreciate his definition. He says accountability is "to be regularly answerable for each of the key areas of our lives to qualified people."

That very well expresses why we all need to be in a small group with a spiritual emphasis. We all need to regularly give answers. The power of accountability is difficult to overstate. It helps give



IN YOUR LOCAL CHURCH

us the discipline we need to keep growing and to apply all the "one another" commands in some very practical ways. A couple of the men in the group read the Bible every day and very rarely miss. Almost all of them read at least five days a week. Part of being accountable to each other means I ask each week how many days they have read. It has been a joy to see their growth. We all recognize the importance of the accountability and know without doubt that it makes a tremendous difference in our lives.

After we finished Morley's book, I asked if they wanted to read another book. Their answer was, "No, let's study the Bible." We began a verse by verse discussion of the book of 1 Peter and found it very interesting to apply it to our daily lives.

Several examples come to mind of the importance and power of this group of men meeting together on a weekly basis. It is not unusual for some of the men to show up very tired and very dirty after work. Often someone has not had supper. They come because it is important to support each other and because we are being encouraged spiritually by each other. One of the group members was in the process of moving, and every member of the group showed up to help *without ever being asked*. What I think may be the most powerful statement about the group is that through all the hoopla about Michael Jordan coming back into basketball, when his first game was on a

Tuesday night, the subject was never mentioned within the group on Wednesday. Not once. The group has more important things to talk about, namely Jesus Christ in our lives, marriages, work, thoughts, finances, parenting, tempers, etc. Being a part of this group of men has been one of the highlights of my week and a lot of fun.

Let me share some basic thoughts on starting a men's ministry.

Time is a highly precious commodity

1. Approach it as a lifestyle, not a program. Meeting together is obedience to Scripture. We meet weekly with a very specific spiritual purpose. It is not a social group. None of us really need another purely social time. We are involved in each other's lives at numerous other times because of the spiritual bond we have developed. Because of the time spent in God's Word, individuals also regularly accept the opportunity to serve others in the congregation.

2. Accept it as a slow process. There are no quick fixes to spiritual growth. Time is a highly precious commodity. Asking for

time commitments is sometimes met with great resistance. I really like being able to ask for just nine weeks to start with. When that time is very meaningful and significant, the willingness to continue on increases dramatically.

3. Do personal recruiting. I have found it most effective to approach individuals with the idea of being part of a growth group. I opened the group to everyone initially and then "went after" specific people I really wanted to see take part. Leaders, or potential leaders, were at the top of my list. As the group grows in size, I want them to multiply the effort by starting groups of their own (2 Tim. 2:2).

4. Keep a spiritual emphasis. My purpose was not to have the men listen to what Michael Hoffman has to say. It was to get them to listen to what God has to say to them personally. We do not meet to chit-chat, tell jokes and goof around. (We do enjoy being together, laugh a lot at ourselves and have a good time.) We do meet to share what we have heard God say to us in the last week, encourage each other spiritually, rejoice in every victory, and pray together. We have learned to do that better over a period of time.

5. Stay flexible. Our summers seem to get crazy. We have not formally met, but we do see each other on Sunday and stay in touch. We want to be disciplined

By Michael Hoffman

but meeting times are not etched in stone.

6. Lead rather than teach. I do not teach the group. I am a member of the group. I facilitate discussions. I lead by example in my own spiritual disciplines, attendance and sharing. My greatest desire is to let God speak, convict and challenge as He sees fit. He does it rather well.

7. Never allow group members to confess someone else's sins. We aren't there for others, we are there to grow personally. I allow anyone to confess anything they need to as long as it is their own sin. I just refuse to deal with the sin of anyone not present.

8. Accept and rejoice in small victories. Growth comes slowly. I celebrate every indication of it. It is not a defeat if a man has only read one day of the past week. It is a victory that he read the one day rather than none. The spirit is to be one of encouragement. Spiritual giants do not grow overnight. Enjoy and celebrate the process.

9. Keep trying. Our group "clicked." Many times a group won't. I do not look at it as a defeat. I view it as an opportunity to try again. I see no failure in coming together for spiritual purposes. The group may not continue, but the time is still very beneficial. Keep trying. There is tremendous joy in the journey. If you stagnate too long, you tend to stink.

It is my passionate belief that God intends men to be spiritual leaders within the church and home. Becoming such leaders has not, does not, and will not happen by default. We have to work at it. I can think of very few better ways to invest my life and time. I highly encourage you to make a start. It is worth every bit of the effort. Lives will be impacted in the ways that matter most. God will smile. □

Resources for Starting Up a Men's Ministry in Your Local Church

Editor's Note:

The 90s is the decade of men's ministries in the local church. If your church has no ministry to men you may be missing out on a great way to reach people for Christ. One part of this movement is a group called Promise Keepers. I recently attended one of their leadership seminars where they shared these principles to remember when developing an effective men's ministry.

- There are at least five entry points for men — conferences, special events, equipping seminars, congregational gatherings, and small groups.
- An effective men's ministry is focused on relationships, not programs.
- An effective men's ministry has clear goals.
- An effective men's ministry is for MEN only.
- An effective men's ministry is supported, but not necessarily led, by the pastor.
- An effective men's ministry develops a core group of lay leaders.
- An effective men's ministry has flexibility and variety.
- Don't implement too much too soon.

For information about Promise Keepers write to:

Promise
KEEPERS

P.O. Box 18376
Boulder, Colorado
80308

Nobody's Friend

*My name is Gossip. I have no respect for justice.
I maim without killing. I break hearts and ruin lives.
I am cunning and malicious and gather strength with age.
The more I am quoted, the more I am believed.
My victims are helpless. They cannot protect themselves against me because I have no name and no face.
To track me down is impossible. The harder you try, the more elusive I become.
I am nobody's friend.
Once I tarnish a reputation, it is never the same.
I topple governments and wreck marriages.
I ruin careers and cause sleepless nights, heartaches, and indigestion.
I make innocent people cry in their pillows.
Even my name hisses. I am called Gossip. I make headlines and headaches.
Before you repeat a story, ask yourself: Is it true? Is it harmless? Is it necessary?
If it isn't, don't repeat it.*



— This first appeared as an ad in *The Wall Street Journal*.
(Contributed by Joyce Burdon)

Our Fathers Who Aren't in Heaven

The Forgotten Christianity of Jesus, the Jew

By Anthony F. Buzzard



Anthony Buzzard contends that traditional Christianity has lost its grip on the Messianism of the Bible — that Jewish theme which Gentiles found, and still find, unfamiliar. If the various denominations are to find unity in a common belief in the Bible, it will have to be through a return to the Messianic Jesus and His Kingdom Gospel. No theme could be more heartening in our distracted world than the Hope of a better world coming on earth when Jesus returns to take over the reins of world government. Such is the amazing Plan which unfolds in the pages of Scripture, pointing to the divine hand in history and giving supreme meaning and purpose to the believer, whose object is to obtain a place in the coming Kingdom as an administrator with Jesus of a new world order.

8 1/2" x 11" format, professionally bound, 277 pages, copious footnotes and bibliography. \$13.50 plus \$2.00 for shipping and handling. Please make checks payable to: Atlanta Bible College, P.O. Box 100,000, Morrow, GA 30260. Call 1-800-347-4261 for more details.

Is Anything Wrong with Trick or Treat?

CHRISTIANS ARE DIVIDED OVER whether to celebrate certain holidays. The confluence of corrupted Church history, ancient pagan practices, and modern commercialism all combine to present the contemporary Christian with a confused and enigmatic message. Is Christmas about the birth of Christ, the giving (and receiving) of gifts, or Santa Claus and Christmas trees? Is Jesus really "the reason for the season," or is Madison Avenue? Is Easter about the resurrection of Christ, fertility myths, or easter egg hunts? Or none of the above? That all depends on who one talks to.

If these knotty questions dog us during Christmas and Easter, they absolutely pounce on us during Halloween. Many jolly gift-giving egg-hunting Christians stop abruptly in the middle of a "ho" when it comes to the haunted houses and the horror movies. In addition to the questions asked above, we are now faced with a holiday which lacks even a Christian veneer. Are we now being asked to celebrate death, the occult, and all that is opposed to our religion? Or are we just missing some good candy and a good party or two?

Just what is this thing we call "Halloween"?

Some History

According to a Church Father named Chrysostom (c. AD 344/354 - 407), All Saints Day, once known as "All hallows" and "Hallowmass," was celebrated by the Church to honor all saints, known and unknown. "Its origin probably lies in the common commemoration of martyrs who died in groups or whose names were unknown."¹ In the seventh and eighth centuries, the celebration was held in May in a Roman temple called the Pantheon which had been recaptured from the barbarians by Emperor Phocas and given to Pope Boniface IV. "No longer were Roman pagans gathering to pray to the goddess Cybel, for their dead," writes John

W. Howe. "Now the Roman Catholics were gathering to pray to the goddess Mary for their dead. And they did so in the same temples."²

In the ninth century "All Saints" was moved to November 1 to accommodate the ancient Druidic and pagan practices of the recently conquered Saxons and Scandinavians. "All-Hallow E'en," the evening before "All Saints Day," was also the eve of the Celtic new year, a time to celebrate death:

The Druids believed that on this particular night the souls of the dead returned to their former homes to be entertained by the living. If acceptable food and shelter were not provided these evil spirits would cast spells, cause havoc and terror, and haunt and torment the living. They demanded to be placated. Look closely. Here is the beginning of "trick-or-treat." Evil spirits demanding a "treat." If they didn't get it, you got a "trick."³



Some Christian Responses

With these facts in mind — or in some cases in spite of these facts — different Christians have chosen to respond to Halloween in many different ways. One obvious solution is to ignore it, refuse to acknowledge it. No trick-or-treating, no parties, no special events. But is it really possible to so completely insulate ourselves and our children from it? From paper skeletons on doors to pumpkin-shaped cookies, the holiday is all around us.

This leads us to the second solution: Embrace it. After all, none of us believes these little trick-or-treaters at our doors are evil spirits sent to torment us, and none of these little cowboys and princesses think they're disguising themselves as evil spirits to avoid detection by the real spirits. Celebrating pagan rituals and worshipping false gods is one thing; accepting cultural remnants of dead civilizations is another. After all, the planets in our solar system and the days of our week are named after pagan gods. If we're going to ban trick-or-treating and Halloween parties we should be consistent and start referring to Thursday as "the fifth day" instead of "Thor's day."

But is naming the day of the week comparable to parading around as dead people? Other Christians feel that they can neither ignore nor embrace Halloween. Thus they choose a third alternative: Replace it. Take back our Christian celebration from the pagans. Scrap the Halloween parties and hold All Saints parties instead. People can come dressed as famous Christians from the past. Services can be held to remember and commemorate good Christians, ancient and modern, who have died.

But some will still object. Even before All Saints was merged with Celtic custom it was celebrated on the ashes of pagan Rome. Why observe a remnant of the Roman Catholic liturgical year?

Questions of liturgy and tradition aside, is this third alternative any more effective than the first? Perhaps a Christian party or service is a good supplement for a positive alternative, but will it help screen out the worldly Halloween experience for our children?

Is there not a fourth alternative? I believe that there is.

An Alternative

Each of the options listed above has considerable merit. That is what makes this question such a grueling one for Christians. Which option one chooses is bound to be determined by the overriding convictions and principles a Christian has about Church structure and the Church's relationship to the world. But there is yet another principle to be considered.

I am talking about the fully scriptural principle of conscience (cf. Rom. 14:5, 6). I believe it is the responsibility of each Christian to break events like Halloween down into their constituent parts and judge each part on its own merit in light of the truths he or she has gleaned from Scripture. For me that means "Halloween in moderation."

Personally I have no religious scruples against eating someone's pumpkin-shaped cookies around October. And as I'm not opposed to the principle of dressing up in costumes, trick-or-treating is not out of the question in my book. On the other hand,

I'm personally repulsed at the idea of children running around dressed like mass murderers, wielding fake swords drenched in fake blood and wearing hockey masks of "Friday the 13th" fame. But then again I'm a pacifist. Nor would I want my children dressing up as devils and the like. But if Barney the dinosaur is still around when I have children, I won't be opposed to letting Junior don the purple garb.

But there are other dangers to consider. The breakdown of community in our cities and towns has made this practice less safe. Planned routes, adult supervision, and close inspection of trick-or-treat goodies help reduce unnecessary risk. Nasty pranks and malicious vandalism are other concerns (I'm assuming that Christians will not participate in these types of activities). All of these things, like other elements of Halloween, need to be weighed and judged on their own merits apart from theoretical questions of religious ritual. The day may come when violence and vandalism put a permanent end to one of America's favorite pastimes. One way or another, as Christians we have one responsibility: In all circumstances to do what glorifies God. "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17, NIV). □

Notes

¹ *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 2nd edition, "All Saints," p. 51.

² John W. Howe, "What Is Happy about Halloween?" *Christianity Today*, October 21, 1977, p. 17.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

by Mark M. Mattison

Dr. Jekyll ^{and}

Mr. Hyde

THE CHRISTIAN IS A POSSESSOR OF two natures — spiritual and carnal. In living the Christian life, there is a conflict between the two. Each wants to control the life.

“For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please” (Gal. 5:17, NASB). Make no mistake! Anyone who takes up a cross to follow Christ is in for a real battle.

Many other passages of Scripture speak vividly of this conflict. Let’s examine a few of them. The battle between the two natures is clearly seen in Romans 7. The pronouns “I,” “me” and “my” occur about 35 times in this chapter. “I” trying to sanctify itself is the cause of the sad defeat. The battle is between the two “I’s” — the old Saul and the new Paul. Paul wanted to do good but seemingly couldn’t. This experience can discourage and perplex any believer, especially a young convert. The flesh is supposed to be dead, but it reappears with its strong habits and desires, and he is led to doubt his acceptance with God. The great Apostle cries out along with all who have entered the battle. He calls his old nature “this body of death” (v. 24).

There is no reason to conclude that Paul was not describing his experiences as a struggling believer at the time. He confessed, “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (v. 15, NIV). He recognized that, even as a committed disciple of Christ, he had an indwelling principle of sin that once owned him and expressed itself through him to do things he did not want to do. The pull of the flesh is overwhelming sometimes. All who have made a sincere

effort to run the Christian race have learned that, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 25).

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

The law reveals sin to be sinful (Rom. 7:7-13) and condemns the carnal nature, but is no help in overcoming it. Paul explained: “I would not have come to know sin except through the Law: for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, ‘you shall not covet’” (v. 7, NASB).



or the Believer's Two Natures

"The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:24-25). Although the law had a very important part in God's overall plan it could not cleanse one from sin. That was not its purpose. The law can be compared to a mirror that shows the smudge on our faces, but cannot remove it. It points us to the soap and water that can. Likewise, the law points us to Calvary where we can find forgiveness of sin, newness of life and assurance of eternal life in God's coming kingdom.

Although the law was holy, just, good and even "spiritual," it was limited and could not do for us what Christ did for us (Rom. 7:12, 14). The law is blameless. Sin is the problem. The law reveals sin, defines it and calls it by its right name. It condemns the carnal nature. We must acknowledge that the sin nature remains within and will repeatedly try to express itself through "our members." The Holy Spirit working in us is the only solution, the only remedy for our deep need.

In Romans 6 sin is personified as a master to whom the sinner is enslaved. The remedy is the death of the slave and rising to walk in newness of life (vv. 3-5). As Christians we belong to another, to Him who was raised from the dead. We have been raised up with Him. God be praised! We are not all that we

should be, not all that we shall be, but thank God we are not what we were. We were dead "in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1, 5), but we are now alive in Christ with a clearly prophesied future. All that we are or ever hope to be is because of the Lord Jesus, what He has done for us in the past, what He is doing for us right now, and what He will do for us in the days ahead. We are talking about a very important issue here. Where one goes in the hereafter depends on what one goes after in the here and now.

SCRIPTURAL TERMS USED TO DESIGNATE THE OLD NATURE

The flesh (Rom. 8:8; John 6:63); the natural man (1 Cor. 2:14); the outward man (2 Cor. 4:16); the old man (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9); the carnal mind (Rom. 8:7). All of these passages refer to the sinful nature that we all inherited from Adam. Although it is considered "dead," sometimes it rises up to war against our new life in Christ, and it will take over our lives if we drop our guard.

SCRIPTURAL TERMS USED TO DESIGNATE THE NEW NATURE

The new man (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10); the inner man (Eph. 3:16; Rom. 7:22); sons of God (Rom. 8:14; 1 John 3:2).

Through Christian conversion one dies to the fleshy nature and is born into the family of God.

One has a new nature in contrast to the old. It is from above — from God (John 3:3). The believer is justified and sanctified in Christ, but he still feels the influence of the old nature throughout life. There is constant war going on inside. Small wonder that Scripture admonishes us: "Make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14). That is, don't buy any groceries for the fleshy nature. Let it starve to death as you generously feed your new life in Christ.

The flesh can be made very religious. It is just this which distinguishes "religion" from Christianity. It was the religious part of the nation that crucified the Lord Jesus. That is what a religion, even when given by God, culminated in when perverted and misused by the old nature.

Romans 7 is a biography of a Christian trying to walk two ways at once — struggling with the flesh but wanting to yield to Christ. Romans 8 is the victory chapter. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death" (vv. 1-2, NASB). Have you passed from Romans 7 to Romans 8? If not, yield yourself completely to Jesus Christ and ask Him to fill you with His Spirit (Luke 11:13; Eph. 5:18), and let Him lead you gently down life's pathway. **DO IT TODAY! WITHOUT DELAY! □**

by Hollis Partlowe

The Call to Practical Christianity

by
Thomas
Schmitt

IF YOU WANT YOUR LIFE IN JESUS TO BE meaningful and relevant then you will be involved in practical, tangible actions of faith. I become more convinced of that every time I read God's Word. I also have seen the truth of that borne out in my own walk of faith.

In Luke 3, we find John the Baptist telling the people to produce fruit in keeping with their repentance. That fruit was to share a second cloak or extra food with those in need. John spoke of "practical faith" as the cornerstone of walking in the new light of Christ.

Jesus used tangible means to express who He was and to teach about the kingdom of God. Jesus fed the multitude so the disciples could see the principle of moving on faith (Mark 6:30-44). He also sent 2,000 prize hogs into the Sea of Galilee to show the value of one man to God (Mark 5:1-20). In Luke 10:25-37 Jesus showed that all men are neighbors and should care for one another, and in Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus used meeting the practical needs of others as the basis for separating the sheep from the goats. There are many other examples of Jesus' concern for others expressed in concrete ways.

An entire issue of *The Restitution Herald* could be devoted to the over 3,000 verses in the Bible that God spoke about His concern for the poor, the orphans, and the disadvantaged. Let it suffice at this point to say the Bible is crystal clear on the issue of practical Christianity. I find the issue to be very exciting, and yet very challenging.

Because of the biblical call, I have been involved in various ministries to assist others and to help me demonstrate my faith. One of the most rewarding has been building homes, through construction work and donations, with Habitat for Humanity. I recently was on my fifth short-term construction project. This trip was with a group of young people from Illinois to Americus, Georgia.

We were in southern Georgia in mid-July to build homes with God's people in need. It's said that every home is a sermon of God's love. And it was love for God that kept our group on the roof, digging footers,

sanding cabinets, and sheetrocking in weather that saw the heat index as high as 126 degrees.

While there, I met Silas. Silas had been the head concrete finisher for a local company, but when he had health problems they let him go, without benefits or money. He quickly sank into poverty. Habitat learned of his plight and built him a new home. Now Silas is using his skills to lay the concrete foundations of homes and better lives for 24 other families. What made Silas' ministry even more impressive was the fact that the prolonged exposure to the sun and intense heat could kill him. It reminded me of the book of Romans where we're told that in order to gain one's life, one must lose it. Silas was willing to lose it all to gain a better tomorrow for others, in Jesus' name and love.

I was also able to see two ladies whom I had met on previous trips. Both had been living in poverty and on welfare. One of the ladies is now a supervisor for a store and is sending her daughter to college. The other lady is working full-time and helping others. Both will tell you that the turning point in their lives was when Christians put their faith into action and reached out to them in God's love.

Our group also grew from the experience. Our young people were able to help Jesus (see Matt. 25) and also see the service exemplified by the long-term volunteers in Americus. The team members were all willing to go again; one was ready to do her laundry and head back the next day. It is through living out their faith that they will grow stronger in their faith and church involvement.

I've seen the benefits and therefore encourage you to get involved in a practical ministry. It may be far different from building homes, but it will be beneficial to your walk with Christ. Far more important encouragement comes from Jesus' half-brother James. He tells us in James 1:27 that pure religion is meeting the needs of orphans and widows. And he follows that up in the second chapter, verse 26, with "faith without deeds is dead." May you show your faith in Jesus through practical, loving expressions. □



The Discipline of Service

Excerpted from Richard J. Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* by Marie Walker

AS THE CROSS IS THE SIGN OF submission, so the towel is the sign of service. When Jesus gathered His disciples for the Last Supper they were keenly aware that someone needed to wash the others' feet. The problem was that the only people who washed feet were the least. So there they sat, feet caked with dirt. It was such a sore point that they were not even going to talk about it. Then Jesus took a towel and a basin and so redefined greatness . . . Jesus completely redefined leadership and rearranged the lines of authority . . . Therefore the spiritual authority of which Jesus spoke was an authority not found in a position or a title, but in a towel.

Self-righteous Service Versus True Service

If true service is to be understood and practiced, it must be distinguished clearly from "self-righteous service" . . . Self-righteous service comes through human effort. True service comes from a relationship with the divine Other deep inside. We serve out of whispered promptings, divine urgings . . . Self-righteous service is impressed with the "big deal." True service finds it almost impossible to distinguish the small from the large service . . . Self-righteous service requires external rewards . . . True service rests contented in hiddenness . . . Self-righteous service is highly concerned about results. True service is free of the need to calculate results . . . Self-righteous service picks and chooses whom to serve. True service is indiscriminate in its ministry . . . Self-righteous service is affected by moods and whims. True service ministers simply and faithfully because there is a need . . . Self-righteous service is temporary. True service is a life-style. It acts from ingrained patterns of living. It springs spontaneously to meet human need . . . Self-righteous service is without sensitivity. True service can withhold the service as freely as perform it. It can listen with tenderness and patience before

acting. It can serve by waiting in silence. "They also serve who only stand and wait."

Self-righteous service fractures community. In the final analysis (once all the religious trappings are removed) it centers in the glorification of the individual. Therefore it puts others into our debt and becomes one of the most subtle and destructive forms of manipulation known. The result is the rupture of community.

True service, on the other hand, builds community. It quietly and unpretentiously goes about caring for the needs of others. It puts no one under obligation to return the service. It draws, binds, heals, builds. The result is the unity of the community.

Service in the Marketplace

Service to be service must take form and shape in the world in which we live. Therefore, we must seek to perceive what service may look like in the marketplace of our daily lives:

1. At the outset there is the *service of hiddenness*. It is a ministry that can frequently be engaged in by all people. It sends ripples of joy and celebration in any community of people.
2. There is *service of small things*. Bonhoeffer, in his book *Life Together* says that "The second service that one should perform for another in a Christian community is that of active helpfulness. This means, initially, simple assistance in trifling, external matters. There is a multitude of these things wherever people live together. Nobody is too good for the meanest service. One who worries about the loss of time that such petty, outward acts of helpfulness entail is usually taking the importance of his own career too solemnly." The service of small things will put us at odds with our sloth and idleness. We will come to see small things as the central issues.

(Continued on back cover)

The Discipline of Service

(Continued from page 23)

3. There is the *service of guarding the reputation of others*. Or, as Bernard of Clairvaux put it, the service of "Charity." There is a discipline in holding one's tongue that can work wonders in our inward person. Nor should we be a party to the slanderous talk of others. Guarding the reputation of others is a deep and lasting service.

4. There is the *service of being served*. It is an act of submission and service to allow others to serve us.

5. There is the *service of common courtesy*. Such deeds of compassion have fallen on hard times in our day. As Paul counseled Titus, we are "to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all men" (Tit. 3:2). The service of courtesy is sorely needed in our increasingly computerized and depersonalized society.

6. There is the *service of hospitality*. There is a desperate need today for homes that can be open to one another. Just a chance to be together and share — that is the stuff of hospitality.

7. There is the *service of listening*. The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them. The most important requirements are compassion

and patience. To listen to others quiets and disciplines the mind to listen to God. It creates an inward working upon the heart that transforms the affections, even the priorities, of the life. When we have grown dull in listening to God we would do well to listen to others in silence and see if we do not hear God.

8. There is the *service of bearing the burdens of each other*. "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). The "law of Christ" is the law of love, the "royal law" as James called it (Jas. 2:8). Love is most perfectly fulfilled when we bear the hurts and sufferings of each other, weeping with those who weep.

9. Finally, there is the *service of sharing the word of Life with one another*. We are dependent upon one another to receive the full counsel of God. The smallest member can bring us a word — we dare not despise the service.

Service that is duty-motivated breathes death. Service that flows out of our inward person is life, and joy and peace. The risen Christ beckons us to the ministry of the towel. Perhaps you would like to begin by experimenting with a prayer that a number of us have used. Begin the day by praying, "Lord Jesus, I would so appreciate it if You would bring me someone today whom I can serve." □

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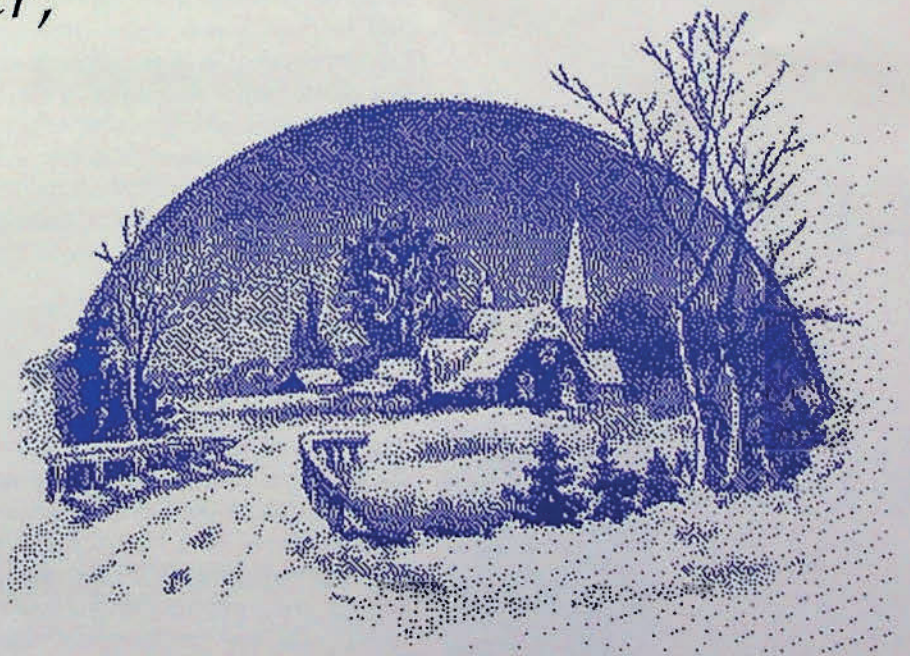
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"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

— Luke 1:32, 33 (NIV)



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- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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The Birth of Jesus According to Luke

*A Savior has just been
born in David's town,
a Savior who is
Messiah and Master.*



ABOUT THAT TIME Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

An Event for Everyone

There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises:

Glory to God in the heavenly heights,
Peace to all men and women on earth
who please him.

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherders were impressed.

Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told! □

— Scripture quotations from *The Message*.
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Jesus, God's Only Begotten Son

ONE OF MY FAVORITE stories about my grandfather, E.J. Demmitt, occurred when the Oregon Bible College Chorale toured Ohio and the members visited our farm for an afternoon of recreation.

One chorale member returned to the group and said that he had spent the afternoon riding on a tractor with our "hired man." Since we didn't have anyone working for us at the time, my brother Alan questioned him rather closely about this encounter. It seemed that this anonymous chorale member had met an older man working in the field and had accepted an offer to ride with him on the tractor. The older man talked to him about the farm, its history and the work that he was doing, but never bothered to give his name.

After getting a better description than "the hired man," Alan figured out that this mysterious host was none other than our grandfather, the owner of the farm. Alan greatly enjoyed retelling the story that night at the Brush Creek Church of God and later to Grandpa's friends, but nobody enjoyed the story more than Grandpa. Years later, he would ask that unfortunate chorale member, "Remember me? I'm the hired man."

I hope Jesus has that same sense of humor.

How many people throughout these nearly two millennia have called upon Jesus for salvation, have trusted in Him and lived their lives for Him, but have had greatly divergent views on who He is? If Jesus only responds to those who have a totally correct understanding of Him, most, if not all these who are called Christians, will be very disappointed.

We're fortunate that this doesn't appear to be the case. Even in the New Testament we encounter people with foggy information about Jesus who are blessed by Him. Did the shepherds know that Jesus was God's Son? Simeon, who blessed Jesus in Luke 2, knew that Jesus was the Messiah, but could he imagine all that would happen in His earthly ministry?

Think of the blind man healed in John 9. After the healing, the Pharisees interrogated him as they sought to bring charges against Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. When they told the former blind man that Jesus was a sinner, he replied, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25, NRSV).

Jesus Himself refused to argue with the Pharisees over theological titles. In John 10, the Pharisees accuse Jesus of blasphemy because they say that He is making Himself out to be God. Jesus counters by saying that Scripture has called other people gods and that He is actually claiming to be God's Son, but then He lays down this challenge: "If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (John 10:37-38, NRSV).

These verses prompted one seminary professor to say that instead of having red-letter editions of the New Testament which highlight the words of Jesus, the red letters should highlight the actions of Jesus. This should certainly tell us that a confession of Jesus as Lord is not just an abstract theological thought but a statement of

There is no one else like Him.



BY GREG DEMMITT

acceptance of His actions and His teachings.

Again, although I believe that we are held accountable for our teaching, for the things that we do and the attitudes we hold because of our beliefs, I hope that we aren't expected to have a totally 100 percent accurate metaphysical and ontological view of who Jesus is and how God has worked through Him. I hope we don't even have to know what *metaphysics* and *ontology* mean.

I say this because I know that at times my thinking has been inaccurate and it is always incomplete. I discovered that again as I considered the title of this article, *Jesus, God's Only Begotten Son*. When I was given that title, I immediately thought of the way the New International, Revised Standard, and New Revised Standard versions translate John 3:16 as God sending His "one and only son" or "only son" instead of His "only begotten son."

I had always assumed that verse as well as John 1:14 emphasized the uniqueness of Jesus, the only person who was born as the Son of God instead of reborn through the act of conversion. I thought it emphasized His virgin birth and the Holy Spirit's role in Jesus' conception.

I was wrong. While Jesus was born of a virgin and is the only person who has never been anything other than God's child, by nature a son and not adopted, these verses are not specifically referring to those truths. They are simply emphasizing the uniqueness of Jesus in all aspects.

The modern translations of *monogenes*, which the King James translates as "only begotten," are preferred on linguistic and theological grounds, as well as in the application of the Old Testament statements that the Messiah would be begotten of God.

Linguistically, *monogenes* is a compound word. *Monos* is often used in the confession of the one God (John 17:3; Rom. 16:27; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15). While *genes* is distantly related to *gennaos*, which means beget, become the father

of, adopt, or create, its meaning is better explained by the English word *genus*, meaning "A group of animals or plants within a family, closely connected by common characteristics" (*New Webster's Library of Practical Information*).

According to *The New International Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Colin Brown, *monogenes* literally means "of a single kind." Jerome translated it as "only begotten" in the Vulgate, which probably explains why it was translated that way in the King James Bible. Jerome used that translation to counter the Arian belief that Jesus was made and not born.

The Arian-Trinitarian controversy did include disagreement concerning Jesus' origin. Arius claimed that Jesus was a created being, although His creation occurred before anything else. Athanasius taught that Jesus was "eternally begotten" (cf. the Nicene Creed: "and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds"). While the language of the Nicene Creed isn't biblical, it *still* doesn't require the personal preexistence of Jesus, while the Arian concept of a created being does.

To see how Jesus could be eternally begotten, we must look at God speaking of the begetting of the king in the Old Testament: "I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, 'You are my son; today I have begotten you'" (Psalm 2:7, NRSV).

Since this Scripture is applied to Jesus several times in the New Testament (Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5), God could have been announcing His fatherhood of the Messiah when He made this pronouncement for the king. This doesn't require that Jesus personally existed at that time as a distinct entity from the mind of God but it means that God could have decreed the Father-Son relationship from the beginning.

It's interesting that the New Testament writers don't apply Psalm 2:7 to the birth of Jesus. In Acts, Luke records Paul as applying the Psalm to Jesus' resurrection, while the writer of He-

brews applies it to Jesus being appointed the high priest. In a variant reading of Luke 3:22, it is applied to the baptism of Jesus. Therefore, being begotten doesn't involve an emphasis on the virgin birth but upon God's acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah.

I don't like the use of only, as in either "only begotten" or "only son," because neither is theologically true. The concept of begetting is much broader than the biological act of conception. It includes those who are adopted as children of God. Jesus isn't the only child of God — He is the unique or one of a kind Son.

This is brought out in John 1. In verse 12, those who believed in Jesus were given power to be children of God, and in verse 13 they are described as begotten by the will of God. Therefore, Jesus wouldn't be described as the only begotten in verse 14 when John has just said that believers are begotten.

The emphasis then of John 1:14 and 3:16 is the uniqueness of Jesus. He is one of a kind. There is no one else like Him.

It is the combination of the unique suitability of Jesus for the work God had given Him and then His willingness to complete that work which makes Him our Savior. In Hebrews 5:8, 9 we read, "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through the things he suffered: and having become perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him."

The apostle Paul notes this same truth in Philippians 2, concluding, "Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11, NRSV).

Our response to the unique person and work of Jesus is seen in our response to His Lordship in our lives. May that thought light our way in this Christmas season. □

The History of the Festival of Christmas*

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR begins with the birth of a baby. No one knows the exact day when Jesus was born. Perhaps God presented Him during the "lambing" season. He was born in a stable, the firstborn, an unblemished male. It was a perfect place for the Little Lamb to appear. He was gently laid in a manger where animals came to feed. Everyone loves to see a new baby. I'm sure this baby was no exception. Many from the village of Bethlehem would have gone to see Him. After all, there were lots of relatives in town for the registration. Only two groups of visitors were mentioned for a significant purpose. *Shepherds* gathered to love and adore Him: "The Lamb of God." *Kings* journeyed to honor and worship Him: "The King of Kings." The prophecies concerning Messiah focused on His *double* anointing. We are to know Him both as the Lamb of God, who was sacrificed to cover our sins, and as the King of Kings, who will return to reign in power and glory.

December 25, the date assigned to remember the birth of Jesus, is probably the best-known fact of the whole celebration. After that, everything gets a little fuzzy. The date for the celebration of Christmas was specifically chosen and introduced to Christian believers in order to counter the pagan feast of the "sun-god," which was a popular "winter solstice" festival held in Rome. This was a significant celebration in the cult of Mithras, and was referred to as the birthday of the "Invincible Sun."¹

In late December the sun was reaching its southernmost point in the sky. As the days grew shorter, it seemed to the people that the sun was "running

away." Out of fear, their celebrations were designed to "coax" the sun to return north again.

The Christian celebration was intended to be a "theological corrective." It was chosen deliberately to recognize and proclaim that Christ was born into a dark world and that He is the *true* source of *light*. Christians wanted to celebrate not the light coming back into the sky, but rather the birth of the Son of God, who is the Light of the World. The observance was intended to draw people away from superstition and myth in order to be better able to focus on the truth. Nothing has changed. The battle between truth and superstitious ritual continues.

Advent began just outside the gate of the Garden of Eden. From the very moment Adam and Eve stepped out of "perfection" and walked into the darkness of the world, they needed to be redeemed.

The people of Israel lived with God's Promise that He would send a Savior. The period of waiting must have seemed endless. Have you ever waited for someone, a friend you haven't seen for a long time? You weren't sure of the exact arrival time. When you heard the sound of a car, you rushed to the window only to be disappointed as it passed on down the street.

Add to those feelings years of exile and intermittent, prolonged oppression and persecution. Men of faith like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, the prophets, Isaiah, and Jeremiah continued to assure the people that one day *Messiah would come*. Certainly there was enough evidence that God always keeps a promise! I can't help but ask myself, if I didn't know the end of the story would I have been patient? Would

The observance was intended to draw people away from superstition and myth in order to be better able to focus on the truth.



BY MARTHA ZIMMERMAN

I have believed? Would I have watched and waited faithfully? This is the season to get in touch with those feelings.

For three hundred years after the ascension of Jesus to heaven, people remembered His death and resurrection. Nowhere is there a reference to the celebration of His birth. It wasn't until the first part of the fourth century that it was decided to honor the remembrance of His birth. In the Roman Empire it was traditional to celebrate the birthdays of important people. As an example, Matthew 14:6 says, "But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod" (NASB). In some cases the person's birthday was celebrated even after their death. It wasn't always held on the actual birth day, but a date was assigned for the remembrance, much like our Presidents' Day in February. Naturally, the early Christians wanted to honor the birth of the Savior. In keeping with Old Testament feasts and festivals, it was designated a Feast Day called the *Feast of the Nativity*. The celebration began with a special Mass in honor of the remembrance of His coming. It was first called "Christ's Mass." Later it became known simply as "Christmas." This in itself is significant to remember. It was *Christ* who was being celebrated, *not* Christmas.

Later, the four-week period before December 25 was declared a sacred and holy season. It was called "Advent." The word comes from the Greek through the Latin and means "to come." It was to be a special time, set apart, to spiritually prepare for the coming of Christ. The celebration began on the fourth Sunday prior to Christmas Day. This decision was also in keeping with the Old Testament festivals, which often included a number of days of preparation prior to the Holy Day. In the tenth century the beginning of the Christian year was advanced to the first Sunday in Advent.

During the Middle Ages three great missionaries, Patrick, Augustine, and Boniface, took the good news of the gospel to Europe and Britain. They introduced Christian celebrations,

including the remembrance of the Nativity.

By A.D. 1100 Christmas was celebrated throughout the Christian world with great joy.

From the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, Christian celebrations of the Nativity were at their peak. Inspiring church services spilled over into special celebrations in private homes.

The sixteenth-century Reformation naturally effected a change in the way Christmas was celebrated. Some customs were kept, but the deeper meaning began to disappear.

The Puritans were determined to abolish Christmas. They believed no occasion should be more important than the celebration of the Sunday Sabbath. Christmas was outlawed in Scotland in 1583. England imposed an ordinance forbidding church services on December 25 in the year 1642. Slowly the public observance of Christmas was extinguished. In spite of threats and punishment, many people continued family celebrations in the privacy of their own homes. By the time the English monarchy was restored in 1660, observances in the home focused on nonreligious activities. The popular celebration is best described in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. A spirit of general goodwill that expressed itself in caring for the poor was all that was left.

All of this history came to North America with the immigrants. People of different cultural backgrounds brought their unique customs and traditions to the New World. So much of what was intended by the early church leaders when they established days to remember the birth of the Savior was lost in history.

Our goal is to look for ways to truly honor and celebrate the birthday of the King!

The season of Advent was designed to *remember the waiting* and to provide a period of preparation that would allow time for reflection before the celebration. Beginning four Sundays before December 25, our actions and activities should remind us of our need to be prepared for the birth of Jesus.

Ironically, December is the busiest and most distracting season of the year. People are preoccupied with shopping, parties, and long lists of things to do. In all of the rush, how can we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ?

Getting ready for His coming has more than one meaning. Not only is this a celebration of a past event that took place two thousand years ago, it is also a celebration of His coming to us each day and this year during this Holy Season. There is still another thrust to His coming as we remember His promise to come again. True preparation of our hearts for the coming of Christmas should include all of these elements: past, present, and future.

Advent is a tradition that, when properly observed, permits us to affirm what is good and right. The principle of Advent is a "Spirit of prayerful meditation," which is utterly absent in modern commercial displays. Since it is not possible to prohibit the abuses, we must intentionally choose how things will be carried out in our homes, not giving in to the world's pressure. J. B. Phillips' paraphrase says, "Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold" (Romans 12:2).

A desert or wilderness area in the Bible generally means an uncultivated place, sometimes dry and barren. Remember, Jesus Himself cautioned us about this type of soil. You can read about it in Mark 4. Let's apply this description to our surroundings as we clear a path through the distractions, cultivating the soil for the Lord to visit us this year and reveal His glory. Let us guard against our celebration becoming dry, barren, or boring! Mindful of the significance of the season, let's anticipate Christ's coming just as we would anticipate the upcoming visit of our best friend. □

* From *Celebrating the Christian Year* by Martha Zimmerman, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, ©1993, pp. 22-26.

¹Mithras was the Persian god of light and guardian against evil, often identified with the sun.



*We christians are a strange lot
 Christ's birthday
 Is a great reason for a celebrating season
 We give gifts to each other
 Seemingly forgetting the one whose birth date
 We celebrate
 We hustle, bustle, hurry, scurry,
 This baby's birth is romanticized, commercialized,
 Perhaps over-emphasized.
 We almost lose sight of
 God's gift of —
 His only Son*



*We christians are a strange lot
 Christ's Resurrection
 Is a greater reason for a celebrating season
 We substitute bunnies, eggs and new creations
 Seemingly forgetting the one who was crucified
 Willingly died.
 We shop and hop, over-dress, over-eat
 The Savior's Resurrection is not emphasized, recognized
 Nor highly prized.
 We almost lose sight of
 God's gift of —
 His only Son.*



*We christians are strangers here
 Christ's Resurrection
 Is a greater reason for a celebrating season
 For because I live, ye, too, shall live
 Gloriously forgetting the things behind
 We look ahead
 To brighter, lighter, perfect and complete
 Kingdom of God
 The gift of life eternal, authorized, harmonized
 Will be realized.
 We won't lose sight of
 God's gift of —
 His only Son.*



— Muriel Haas

The Other Wise Man

*Should he risk the great
reward of his faith for the
sake of a single deed of
charity?*

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

IN ANCIENT PERSIA lived a man named Artaban. He was a tall, dark man with brilliant eyes. His robe was pure white wool over a tunic of white silk; and a pointed cap rested on his flowing black hair. It was the dress of the priesthood of the Magi.

One December night, he told his friends, "My three friends are watching at the ancient temple in Babylon. If the promised star appears, they will wait 10 days for me, and then we will set out together for Jerusalem, to see and worship the One who shall be born King of Israel. I have sold my possessions, and bought these three jewels — a sapphire, a ruby, and a pearl — to carry them as tribute to the King."

While he was speaking he thrust his hand into the inmost fold of his girdle and drew out three great gems — one blue as a fragment of the night sky, one redder than a ray of sunrise, and one as pure as the peak of a snow mountain at twilight.

As Artaban watched the eastern sky that night, a steel-blue spark was born out of the darkness. It pulsed in the enormous vault as if the three jewels had mingled and been transformed into a living heart of light.

"It is the sign," he said. "The King is coming, and I will go to meet him."

At nightfall on the 10th day, Artaban was only three hours away from the temple where he was to meet his friends. Suddenly, his horse stood stock-still before a dark object in the road. The dim starlight revealed the form of a man lying there, moaning.

Artaban's heart leaped to his throat. How could he stay here to care for a dying stranger? What claim had this unknown fragment of human life upon his compassion or his service? The three Wise Men would go on without him. Should he risk the great reward of his faith for the sake of a single deed of charity?

"God of truth and purity," he prayed, "direct me in the holy path, the way of wisdom which thou only knowest."

Then he dismounted and carried the man to a little mound at the foot of a palm tree. Hour after hour he labored to comfort and help the stranger. At last, the man's strength returned.

To Artaban he whispered, "I have nothing to give thee in return — only this: I am a Jew, and our prophets have said that the Messiah for whom you seek will be born not in Jerusalem, but in Bethlehem. May the Lord bring thee in safety to that place, because thou hast had pity upon the sick."

It was now past midnight. The three Wise Men had gone on without Artaban across the desert. Artaban covered his head in despair. "I must sell my sapphire, and buy a train of camels and provisions for the journey."

He arrived in Bethlehem three days after the three Wise Men had departed, after seeing the Christ child. He entered the open door of a cottage and found a young mother singing her baby to sleep.

In her gentle speech, she told him, "Joseph of Nazareth took the child Jesus

BY HENRY VAN DYKE

and his mother Mary and fled away secretly in the night."

Suddenly, there came the noise of a wild confusion in the streets of the village and a cry: "The soldiers! The soldiers of Herod! They are killing our children."

The young mother's face grew white with terror, and she clasped her child to her bosom, and crouched in the darkest corner of the room.

Artaban went quickly and stood in the doorway. The soldiers came hurrying down the street with bloody hands and dripping swords.

The captain of the guard approached, and Artaban said in a low voice, "I am all alone in this place, and I am waiting to give this jewel to the prudent captain who will leave me in peace."

The captain stretched out his hand and took the ruby. "March on!" he cried to his men; "There is no child here."

Artaban turned to the east and prayed, "God of truth, forgive me. Two of my gifts are gone. Shall I ever be worthy to see the face of the King?"

The woman, weeping for joy, said: "Because thou hast saved the life of my little one, may the Lord bless and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace."

Artaban, the other Wise Man, traveled from country to country, searching for the King. In all this world of anguish, though he found none to worship, he found many to help. He fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, he healed the sick, and comforted the captive.

Three-and-thirty years had passed. Worn and weary and ready to die, but still looking for the King, he came for the last time to Jerusalem. Excitement was flashing through the city's crowds.

"Have you not heard what has happened?" they asked Artaban. "Today

they are crucifying Jesus of Nazareth, who says he is the Son of God and the King of the Jews."

Artaban's heart beat unsteadily. "I have come in time to offer my pearl in ransom for the King's life," he thought.

A group of soldiers came down the street dragging a girl. She broke suddenly from her tormentors and threw herself at Artaban's feet.

"Save me," she cried. "I am to be sold as a slave. Save me!"

Was this his great opportunity or his last temptation? Twice, the gift he had for God had gone to serve man.

He took the pearl from his bosom. Never had it seemed so luminous, so radiant. He laid it in the hand of the girl. "This is thy ransom. It is the last of my treasures which I kept for the king."

While he spoke, a shuddering earthquake rocked the city, and the sky grew dark. A heavy tile fell and struck the old man on the temple. The girl bent over him. She heard a voice come through the twilight, like music from a distance. The girl turned to see if someone had spoken from the window above them, but she saw no one.

Then the old man's lips began to move, as if in answer: "Not so, my lord:

For when did I see thee hungry and feed thee? Or thirsty and give thee drink? When did I see thee a stranger, and take thee in? Or naked, and clothe thee? When did I see thee sick or in prison, and come unto thee? Three-and-thirty years have I looked for thee; but I have never seen thy face, nor ministered to thee, my King."

He ceased, and the sweet voice came again. And again the maid heard it, very faintly and far away. But now it seemed as though she understood the words:

"Verily I say unto thee, Inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, thou hast done it unto me."

A calm radiance of joy lighted the pale face of Artaban like the first ray of dawn on a snowy mountain peak. One long, last breath of relief exhaled gently from his lips.

His journey was ended. His treasures were accepted. Artaban had found the King. □

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Christmas in the Trenches

FREQUENTLY AT Christmas we get so caught up with love and sentiment that we forget that the coming of the Christ child caused deep tremors in the social landscape. He was not just a cute little baby, but the one "who put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree." For centuries people have confessed that once they meet the Son of God, nothing is ever the same.

On Christmas Eve in 1914, the first year of World War I, a strange quiet had settled on the western front. It was a welcome respite for a group of lonely English soldiers who had become all too familiar with the roar of the cannons and the whine of the rifles.

As they reclined in their trenches each man began to speculate about the activities of loved ones back home. "My parents are just finishing a toast to my health," a lad from Liverpool said slowly.

As they reclined in their trenches, each man began to speculate about the activities of loved ones at home.

BY WILLIAM WHITE

"I can almost hear the church bells," a stout man from Ely said wistfully. "My whole family will soon be walking out the door to hear the concert of the boys' choir at the cathedral."

The men sat silent for several minutes before a thin soldier from Kent looked up with tears in his eyes. "This is eerie," he stammered, "but I can almost hear the choir singing."

"So can I," shouted another puzzled voice. "I think there is music coming from the other side."

All the men scrambled to the edge of the trench and cocked their ears. What they heard was a few sturdy German voices singing Martin Luther's Christmas song, "From heav'n above to earth I come, to bear good news to every one. Glad tidings of great joy I bring to all the world, and gladly sing."

When the hymn was finished, the English soldiers sat frozen in silence. Then a large man with a powerful voice broke into the chorus of "God rest ye merry gentlemen." Before he had sung three bars a dozen voices joined with him. By the time he finished the entire regiment was singing.

Once again there was an interlude of silence until a German tenor began to sing "Stille Nacht." This time the song was sung in two languages, a chorus of nearly a hundred voices echoing back and forth between the trenches, "Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright . . ."

"Someone is approaching!" a sentry shouted, and attention was focused on a single German soldier who walked slowly, waving a white cloth with one hand and holding several bars of chocolate in the other. Slowly, men from

both sides eased out into the neutral zone and began to greet one another. In the next golden moments each soldier shared what he had with the others, candy, cigarettes and even a bit of Christmas brandy. Most important, the soldiers showed the battered, but treasured pictures they carried of loved ones.

No one knows whose idea it was to start the football match, but with the help of flares the field was lit and the British and German soldiers played until they and the lights were exhausted. Then, as quietly as they came together, the men returned to their own trenches.

On Christmas day, men from both sides again joined together, even visiting the other's trenches. The German soldiers, wishing to avenge the previous night's torch-lit football loss, organized another game of what Americans call soccer.

In a few days the cannons once again boomed across "no man's land" and the whine of rifles was again heard in the trenches. For some, however, it was never the same. The enemy was no longer faceless. Now he was an acquaintance who shared a candy bar or played soccer. When men looked down the barrels of their guns at the opposition they also saw the smiling faces of those whose pictures were shared on a silent, holy night when the birth of the Christ child drew hostile forces together and, for a few moments, gave weary soldiers a taste of peace and good will. □

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Christ Has Come!

"THE PEOPLE WALKING in darkness have seen a great light."

Christmas . . . For many of us it is a truly festive time of the year. Bright Christmas lights . . . colorfully wrapped presents . . . parties with friends, food and drink and good cheer for all. Christmas . . . A time to get together with family and friends and exchange gifts, and make memories. As the song says, "It's the most wonderful time of the year." . . . At least it's wonderful for *most* of us, but for others Christmas is not so wonderful. For some, Christmas serves only to amplify what is wrong with their lives. For many, Christmas is a time of loneliness . . . a time of increased stress . . . the images of gift giving and plenty serve to remind some of their poverty. For many, Christmas is a time of drowning their sorrows with the abuse of various substances . . . many become depressed, and some find comfort only in thoughts of suicide. These are the dark shadows of Christmas.

There are indeed many people who are walking in darkness . . . who know of no good reason to celebrate.

Many years ago a newlywed couple set out on a long, uncomfortable journey. She was nine months pregnant. They had to travel a great distance on foot and donkey . . . to a small town that was suddenly overcrowded with travellers — so much so that there were no rooms available in the local hotel. The woman, feeling the pain of the oncoming birth, had no bed on which to rest and labor. All they could find was straw, in the midst of the cows and horses. Yet . . . in the darkness of that evening long ago, there in the shadows

of a cave in Bethlehem — Mary gives birth . . . a child is born, a son is given. And not just an ordinary son, no, this son was a king.

Out in the nearby fields, there in the darkness of that evening, sat the shepherds, watching over their flocks in the quietness of the night.

SUDDENLY, the quietness and darkness is shattered by the glorious messenger of God declaring aloud the birth of a son . . .

Good news!

Great joy!

For *all* people!

A savior is born, the Messiah, a king. In the midst of the darkness, God has switched on the light. And not just for a small, select few.

In the past, God had shown Himself to the few, the select. Abraham . . . Jacob . . . Moses — they each saw brief glimpses of the glory of God.

But this time is different. This time, the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men . . . to all people.

A Savior . . . a King . . . Christ the Lord.

So to the lonely, the stressed, the poor, the depressed, those dominated by substance abuse, the suicidal . . . to all of us, in whatever condition we may find ourselves . . . the light has been switched on. There is finally hope for all — through Jesus Christ. We once walked in darkness, now we walk in Light.

Just as the shepherds of old spread the word when they saw Jesus . . . let us, you and I, do the same.

Jesus is the light for all men.

Jesus is coming.

Jesus has come!

Spread the Word . . . □

There are indeed many people who are walking in darkness . . . who know no good reason to celebrate.



BY THE EDITOR

He Put a New Song in My Mouth

God has used some very creative brush strokes as far as His musical gifts for worship are concerned.



IMAGINE VISITING AN ART gallery and viewing an oil painting by one of the masters. If you stand too close to the painting you see only one section of it — you have a limited vision. You need to step back to see the whole painting and have a broad perspective.

In the painting of church history God has worked with His people in different ways at different times. If we stand too close we only see what's right in front of us, and we miss seeing what God has done on other parts of the canvas. In the last half millennium God has used some very creative brush strokes as far as His musical gifts for worship are concerned.

The forms of congregational music which God has given to the Church to use in praising Him have been birthed in periods of renewal and revival. Historically each great period of revival comes with new music — a change in the divine brush stroke on the canvas of church history. As Julia Ward Howe wrote as part of her lyrics to "The Battle Hymn of the Republic": "Glory, glory, hallelujah, Our God is marching on." I find it exciting and energizing to look at the changes in musical form God has made in His gifts of worship music — to see how He has marched forward; to see how this relates to our future.

The psalmist said, "He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God" (40:3). Let's notice the new song forms of praise God has given in different periods of revival.



BY STEPHEN BOLHOUS

1. The Protestant Reformation

Martin Luther, a priest in the Catholic Church, began a movement in 1517 known as the Protestant Reformation. Prior to the Reformation period the congregation did not sing in worship; only the chapel choir sang, unaccompanied by instruments. God gave two forms of congregational music to the Church during the Reformation, each springing up in different locales. The **chorale** form developed in Germany; it was a devotional text set to a secular tune with an intricate harmony. Examples are Bach's "O Sacred Head," Luther's "A Mighty Fortress," and Rinkart's "Now Thank We All Our God." The second form was the **Psalter**, a rhymed paraphrase of psalms, which was prevalent in Switzerland and England. Examples of this are "The Lord's My Shepherd," and "All People That on Earth Do Dwell."

2. The Great Awakening

The Great Awakening was a time of revival in England and North America from 1700 to 1740. Great preachers of the time included George Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards, and John and Charles Wesley (founders of Methodism). The form of congregational music that God brought to the Church during this period was the **hymn**. A true hymn has a literary text that speaks to the intellect rather than a rough paraphrase of Scripture; the tune may be simple but usually has a challenging harmony. Isaac Watts is

regarded as the "Father of English Hymnody." Discontented with the crude paraphrases of the psalms, he wrote hymns which were intended to lift the mind and the spirit: "I Sing the Mighty Power of God," "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," "Joy to the World," "Jesus Shall Reign." Charles Wesley wrote 6,500 hymns including: "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today," "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing," "Love Divine," "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus," and "O for a Thousand Tongues." This last hymn originally had 19 stanzas. John Newton wrote the beloved hymn "Amazing Grace" as a testimony of his conversion from captain of a slave ship to minister of the gospel.

The language of the hymn is most frequently vertical in direction; the worshipper is speaking directly and personally to the Lord. For example: "Immortal, invisible, God only wise . . . Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise"; "O God, our help in ages past, Our hope for years to come, Be Thou our guide while life shall last"; "Love divine, all love excelling . . . Jesus, Thou art all compassion . . . Visit us with Thy salvation."



3. The Second Awakening

The next great period of revival was the Second Awakening which began around 1800. It led to revivals that continued through the 19th century. Great preachers of the time included Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, and Peter Cartwright. The Adventist movement of the 1840s was a part of this great revival period. It grew out of a rediscovery of the Bible truth that Jesus will literally return to earth to reign and rule. The musical form God gave to the Church in this era was the **gospel song**. The reign of the gospel song was from the end of the American Civil War to the beginning of World War I, 1865-1914. A gospel song has a simple melody and harmony (often only three primary chords) and a devotional text.

Great gospel song writers include Philip Bliss, who wrote "Wonderful Words of Life," "Jesus Loves Even Me," "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning," and "The Light of the World Is Jesus." Ira Sankey gave us "The Ninety and Nine," "Hiding in Thee," "Faith Is the Victory," and "A Shelter in the Time of Storm." Fanny Crosby, the blind queen of gospel song writers, produced for us

a legacy of 8,000 of them including: "Near the Cross," "Praise Him! Praise Him," "I Am Thine, O Lord," "Rescue the Perishing," "Redeemed," "He Hideth My Soul," "Blessed Assurance," "Changed in the Twinkling of an Eye," and "To God Be the Glory."

The language of the gospel song is most frequently horizontal in direction; its focus is tes-

timony to another person about the Lord; the Lord is mentioned in the third person rather than addressed directly. For example: "His child and forever I am"; "I am so glad that Jesus loves me"; "Jesus is a rock in a weary land." If these same statements were to have a vertical language direction in which the Lord is addressed directly and personally, they would read something like this: "I am your child forever"; "I am so glad that You love me, Jesus"; "Jesus, You are my rock in a weary land." Most of the music the Church of God uses is from this period.

4. Welsh Revival and Azusa Street Revival

The Welsh Revival of 1904 and the revival in 1906 at Azusa Street in Los Angeles saw the development from the Holy Spirit of a new musical form known as "singing in the Spirit." This is a free form produced by the worshiper as he vocalizes the overflowing praise of his heart. When a group of believers has gathered in intense worship the inner spirit desires to sing freely the praise of God, not using the text of a lyricist or the notes of a composer, but using the song and words the Holy Spirit gives to the individual. As everyone begins to sing their own songs the sound seems discordant and conflicting, but as the songs progress the Holy Spirit causes a beautiful harmony of sound and attitude. This form is almost unheard of in evangelical circles; unfortunately a great blessing in experiencing God's presence is missed. (The Welsh Revival is thoroughly documented in the book *The World Aflame* by Rick Joyner, Charlotte, NC: Morning Star Publications.)

5. End-Time Outpouring of Holy Spirit

"It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind

[NIV: people] . . . I will pour out My Spirit in those days . . . before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes . . . whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered [NIV: saved]" (Joel 2:28-32, NASV). Notice that Joel predicts a great dispensing of the Holy Spirit (which implies a time of renewal/revival) in the days before the return of Jesus Christ. Peter quotes the Joel passage on the Day of Pentecost and applies it to the outpouring of the Spirit. That was indeed one fulfillment of the passage, but not the fulfillment indicated by the context — that is an end-time dispensing of the Spirit. Just prior to the return of Jesus the Spirit will be widely imparted and a great harvest of souls will find salvation in Jesus.

There is currently a great revival sweeping the planet. Reports of revival and renewal are being received from Communist countries — Russia, China; from Commonwealth countries — Australia, New Zealand, Canada, United Kingdom; from Bible colleges across North America. We must not discard the prophetic legitimacy of this revival! As a Bible-believing adventist people we should be the first to embrace what God is doing. We should readily see the present great outpouring of the Holy Spirit as a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy and a major sign of the nearness of the "great and awesome day of the Lord." If we're not embracing God's present actions, are we truly Bible believing? If we're not recognizing that God is marching on, that God is painting on, we are denying the present outpouring of the Holy Spirit. To be out of step with God is one place I don't want to be! (See Acts 7:51.)

In this great end-time revival now occurring God has given the Church a new musical form to use in worshipping Him, the "worship chorus." This form began in the early 1980s and is just now coming into full bloom. The great increasing of the gift of inspiration to compose (documented in the

increased publishing of worship songs and their acceptance by and blessing to the Church) is an obvious evidence of the activity and dispensing of the Holy Spirit. This new form is God's current gift to the Church to be used for His praise. The worship chorus utilizes *vertical* language, often containing biblical quotations. Its lyrics express personal affection for the Lord; its harmonies utilize warm, modern-sounding chords (some of them minor).

What a privilege it is to be alive at this time to witness God sending revival and giving a new song to His people, a new musical form of praise and worship. Not everyone recognizes that God is now painting with new brush strokes; not everyone welcomes this change. Yet, if God is giving the song — and God only gives good gifts (James 1:17) — who are we to refuse it?? As God gives new musical forms to be used in His worship, it does not mean we have to neglect earlier forms. We also *do not neglect the new*; if we do we are throwing away God's gift. "Sing to the Lord a new song" (Psalm 96:1).

Three Worship Tools

Put these three suggestions into practice to help you get the most out of worship songs:

1. **Raised hands** — "Moses built an altar and called it The Lord is my Banner. He said, 'For hands were lifted up to the throne of the Lord'" (Ex. 17:15, 16, NIV). When we raise our hands in worship we are reaching out to God; we are "touching" His throne.

2. **Closed eyes** — As we worship we should be visualizing the Lord seated in majesty and strength. Closed eyes keep the temporal around us out of our consciousness so that we can more perfectly "see" the Lord.

3. **Repetition** — "The four living creatures . . . day and night they do not cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the

Lord, the Almighty'" (Rev. 4:8). This message is repeated 24 hours per day every day of the year, not because God hasn't heard it, not because the four creatures haven't learned it, but because GOD IS WORTHY! Don't be afraid to sing a song several times. God is worthy of our repeated praise. Repetition rids our minds of clutter and clarifies our focus on a particular aspect of God as expressed by the lyrics. It aids the heart in worshipping wholly.

Conclusion

I have presented this material in workshop settings which concluded with a time of praise using several new worship songs. One of the most exhilarating responses I received was from a woman who stated: "No one has ever taught me how to use worship choruses before. As I sang them to God like you taught us, I experienced a greater sense of His presence than I've ever known." On another occasion a pastor excitedly remarked, "My eyes have been opened!" Reactions such as these are occurring in all denominations; statistics show a present-day return to the zeal of New Testament experiential worship. As we seek God in vital worship He reveals Himself to us.

Prayer

Lord God, I thank You for Your Word of truth. I thank You for prophecies of end-time signs. I thank You for the promise of pouring out Your Holy Spirit. I thank You that You are beginning to fulfill Your Word in my lifetime. Thank You for the new song You are giving Your Church, a milestone on the road to Jesus' return. Open my heart; break down my walls that I may receive all You have to give me. In Jesus' name, Amen! □

Beyond Remembrance

"THIS DO IN remembrance of me." With these words ringing in our ears, we celebrate Communion all over the church of God. As we drink the cup and eat the bread, we reflect on Christ's sacrifice and look forward to His return to establish His kingdom.

Yet Communion is more than a memorial. Our continued participation in this powerfully symbolic ceremony molds our thinking and brings to life deeply spiritual truths in very concrete ways. It shapes our identity as a people of God and provides the truly blessed assurance that we have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. The "message" of Communion is important and deserves our full attention.

An Unworthy Manner?

From what has been said, it follows that believers should share Communion at every reasonable opportunity. Yet, often believers abstain from sharing in this rich experience. They allow the bread and the cup to pass them by as they sit in guilt and shame, wishing they were more worthy. There was a time when I myself would abstain if I were struggling with some sin.

What is it that drives believers from their Lord's table in these spiritually intimate moments? This practice stems from Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 11:27-32. There Paul tells us to examine ourselves before communing, for "whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the

body and blood of the Lord" (v. 27, NIV). Participating "in an unworthy manner" brings judgment (vv. 29-31), and none of us wishes to transgress this command. Therefore, we examine ourselves before participating, seeing how well we "measure up." If we feel spiritual enough, we may proceed; if we don't, better "safe than sorry."

But is this really Paul's meaning? Was this Jesus' meaning? Consider Jesus' words in John 6:

Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him" (vv. 53-56, NIV).

Consider further the fact that Jesus' blood cleanses us from sin. When we are guilty, that is when we need Jesus the most. When we are struggling, that is when we need the help and support of the body. We need to be reminded that we are in a fellowship of brothers and sisters who represent Jesus to us, and we need the strength and assurance provided by the Communion celebration. To shrink away from it is to retreat within ourselves and suffer silently.

What, then, did Paul mean in 1 Corinthians? Consider the context. The Corinthian believers were abusing the Lord's Supper:

The "message" of Communion is important and deserves our full attention.



BY MARK MATTISON

When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! (1 Cor. 11:20-22, NIV).

The Corinthians' behavior contradicted the whole point of the Communion experience. Rather than celebrating their unity, they were revealing their division. Hence Paul's question, "Do you despise the church of God?" They were eating and drinking "without recognizing the body of the Lord" (v. 29), that is, the body of Christ of which they were part. As such, they were eating and drinking "in an unworthy manner" and bringing judgment on themselves. The "unworthy manner" relates to the way they abused the Lord's Supper. This observation is confirmed by verses 33 and 34: "So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at

home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment" (vv. 33, 34, NIV).

When we struggle with sin and find ourselves in need of forgiveness, let us seek that forgiveness and eagerly reach for the cleansing blood of Christ. "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16a, NIV). Let us share the Communion experience and the reassurance that we are part of God's people. "Is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16b, NIV).

Participation in the Body

This message is one of hope and comfort, but it is also one of warning. Paul directs our attention to the body and asks us to examine ourselves. Are we communing as a body? Right relationships within the body are essential. Jesus taught that this aspect of church life is to take precedence over worship (cf. Matt. 5:23, 24).

Communion is not an individualistic matter; it is a body matter. We commune as a body; we come to the

Lord's table as a family. This truth is bound up in the biblical symbol of the one loaf and the one cup. "Because there is one loaf," Paul writes, "we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (1 Cor. 10:17, NIV).

The New Testament Christians celebrated Communion by sharing a single cup and a single loaf of bread as visible signs of their unity (1 Cor. 10:17). In this they followed the pattern of Jesus and His disciples at the first Lord's Supper (Mark 14:22, 23). Without this symbol, it is easy to forget the communal nature of this important ceremony.

The next time your church celebrates Communion, take a look around the room and consider the brothers and sisters with whom you are communing. Evaluate your relationships with them. Do you despise the church of God? Consider how to put an end to unresolved conflicts. Do you recognize the body of the Lord? If so, commune with thanksgiving. Are you struggling with sin? Drink deeply of the cup of forgiveness. □



The Prophetic Present

GOD IS THE PERPETUAL contemporary, the only uncaused cause. He sees all things from the beginning to the end at the same time. He "calls things that are not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17, NIV). God often speaks as if the future were already here. He stands in Genesis and sees His whole plan at the same time and speaks as if it were already completed. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). God sees the future as clearly as He sees the past.

Students sometimes refer to this concept as the "prophetic present." We must connect the present with the past and then point to the future. God's plan is moving on schedule to the time when He sums up all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10, NASB). We have to find our place in God's progressive plan. We live in the twentieth century, not the days of Moses or Isaiah or of Jesus' earthly ministry.

Many verses of Scripture are written in the "prophetic present." God said to Abraham: "I have made you a father of many nations" (Gen. 17:5, NIV). At that time Abraham was the father of no nation, and Isaac, the one through whom the Messiah would come, had not been born. Isaiah wrote: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given" (9:6). Notice the present tense, but Jesus was born in Bethlehem and given up to die on Calvary centuries later. Moreover, Scripture says that Jesus was "slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), but we all know that He died about 30 A.D. In

God's blueprint, Jesus died in the beginning, our redemption was planned then, but it becomes a reality when we accept Christ as our personal Savior. Jesus "has abolished death" (2 Tim. 1:10), but death is still very much a part of our world. Paul the apostle was speaking in the "prophetic present." Death, "the last enemy," is just as certain to be destroyed as if it had already been done. God "calls things that are not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17).

Eternal Life in the Present Tense

John, the beloved disciple, speaks of believers as having eternal life now. "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have [present tense] eternal life" (1 John 5:13, NIV). Obviously, we are all mortal and subject to death now, but believers are just as sure to get eternal life when Jesus comes as if they already had it. God "calls things that are not as though they were."

Isaiah 53 is a detailed account of the death of Christ in the past tense, although it was written about seven centuries before Christ was born. Jesus was born to die. He lived His whole life in the shadow of the cross. The shadow of the cross reached all the way back to the manger.

Isaiah was speaking proleptically, that is in an anticipative sense, as if Christ had already died when in reality He had not. My dictionary defines the word "proleptic" as follows: "The representation or assumption of a

We need to find our place in God's progressive plan.



BY HOLLIS PARTLOWE

future act or development as if presently existing or accomplished." Much of God's Word is written in that style. When I learned that, the whole argument for the preexistence of Christ disappeared as the mist before the rising sun. Remember that God sees the end from the beginning and speaks as if the future is present or past.

Two millennia before Jesus' birth, Job the old patriarch could say, "I know that my redeemer liveth" (Job 19:25). At that point in time, Jesus had not been born, much less resurrected. Job was speaking with the certainty of fulfillment. Likewise, John the revelator writes in the same style: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15, NASB).

Nothing in our present age corresponds to the biblical prediction of the kingdom. Christ is not now on His throne in Jerusalem ruling in truth and righteousness, although the Bible says He is. "But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain" (Psa. 2:6, NASB). Notice the past tense. Many verses fit into this category. Explain one and you explain them all. God is moving kings and kingdoms toward the glorious second coming of Christ and the establishment of His Messianic kingdom throughout the world.

All Jesus' Enemies Are Under His Feet

Scripture says as much, yet that is not a reality today, but it is just as good as done because God's promises are sure. See 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. God often speaks with the certainty of ful-

fillment. With Him it's a "DONE DEAL," although it may not become a reality for millennia down the road.

In prophecy future events are seen as near at hand or already present, though in fulfillment they may prove to be centuries removed from the prophet's day. The prophets often view things future as if they were present or had already occurred.

"Prophecies of things future may be expressed in present and perfect verb tenses as well as future tenses. Observe the mixture of present, past, and future tenses in Isa. 53. The use of 'proleptic past' and 'proleptic present' verbs as well as verbs in future tense is a common rhetorical device in Bible prophecy" (Robert Shank, *Until*, p. 364). The style of writing in the Bible is different from any other book. God sees His plan completed at one time and speaks accordingly. Imminent nearness and actual arrival sometimes overlap, it is difficult to speak of one without also speaking of the other, and practical distinctions sometimes break down.

"Translated into the Kingdom of His Dear Son" (Col. 1:13)

Paul assures believers that they have been translated into the coming kingdom. Perhaps the apostle is speaking proleptically. In light of what we have learned in this article, that is probably the best way to interpret the passage. Certainly the ones who accept God's rule in their hearts today are candidates for citizens in the coming kingdom. By faith they have assurance of a place in the rulership of the age to come. Christians are heirs of the kingdom of Christ. "Hearken, my beloved

brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (James 2:5). One can't be an heir and possessor of something at the same time.

The Greek preposition *eis*, translated "into" (Col. 1:13), can also be translated "in order to, for, with a view to, for the use of or service of, with reference to" (*Thayer's Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*). Perhaps Benjamin Wilson in his *Emphatic Diaglott* translated it best: "Who delivered us from the dominion of darkness and changed us for the kingdom of the Son of his love." The prophetic present is the writer's way of expressing the certainty of God's prophetic word being fulfilled. God sees the past, present, and future simultaneously and sometimes speaks from that perspective.

Believers, by faith, have indeed been judicially transferred into the kingdom of God's dear Son, speaking proleptically. Their names are written in the Lamb's book of life (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8). Jesus paid our debt in full on Calvary so we will be changed to immortality "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" when Jesus comes (1 Cor. 15:51-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Our judgment for sin is an accomplished fact.

Of course God is the Sovereign Ruler of the entire universe and the Church today comes under His domain. He rules over all.

The first advent brought the earnest, the down payment, of our redemption. The second will complete it in glory (Rom. 8:17-25). Keep looking up! Our redemption is drawing near (Luke 21:28). □

The Submissive Man

AS WE RETURN TO God's pattern for our families we repeatedly emphasize the leadership of the husband and the submission of the wife. And well we should. These roles in the home have commonly been abandoned in our day, even in the church. Men have ceased to lead, and women have asserted their independence. These deviations from God's design demand correction.

While working to restore biblical roles within the home, however, we must not forget to define these roles in a Christ-centered way. It is not enough to speak of "leadership" and "submission" as if these terms were self-explanatory. What is the nature of leadership? What are the characteristics of submission? If we do not consciously define these roles according to God's revelation in Christ and the Bible, we may find that we are merely borrowing distorted cultural concepts as our guide.

For the Christian every relationship in life is now mediated through the Lord Jesus Christ. The realities of His cross and lordship shape the nature of every encounter we have, whether with co-workers, our neighbors, civil rulers, fellow church members, or our spouses and children. As Paul wrote, "For to me, to live is Christ" (Phil 1:21). And again, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). To understand and live out our God-given roles in the home we

must consult the example of Jesus and His teaching in the Word. The husband should say: "For to me, to lead is Christ." The wife should say: "For to me, to submit is Christ." They both must find out how Christ wants to shape the practice of their respective callings.

Our primary concern here is with the man and so we shall consider further the nature of his leadership. While it is customary to emphasize submission in reference to the wife, this quality is even more important in the man. That's right — the submission of the husband is even more fundamental than that of his wife. This is because of the nature of leadership as modeled and taught by Jesus Himself. The most important ingredient of effective leadership is submission.

Before considering the biblical record of Jesus we might note that submission actually lies at the root of godliness, period. The most basic statement of faith is that there is one God. This one living and true God made us and He demands and deserves our worship and obedience. That is why the first of the Ten Commandments is that we must not have any other gods before the Lord (Exod. 20:3). That is why the greatest commandment, according to Jesus, is to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength (Matt. 22:37, 38). More fundamental than God's love or holiness or any other characteristic is that He is utterly unique; He alone is God. Therefore He is a "jealous" God who demands our absolute loyalty and

*If you are going to lead
you need to know how
to follow.*



BY PHILIP LANCASTER

submission (Deut. 5:8). The fact that we as Christians are "bought at a price" and therefore not our own (1 Cor. 6:19, 20) only accentuates the total demand God has upon us and the need for absolute submission to Him.

Leadership Comes from Service

Jesus taught a concept of leadership that emphasized this critical element of surrender to God. In response to His disciples' ambition to gain a position of prominence He had this to say (Matt. 20:25-28):

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Now no one can argue that Jesus Christ was an effective leader. People literally followed Him everywhere He went, and He established the most influential movement the world has ever seen. What was the key to His greatness? He first took upon Himself "the very nature of a servant" and then "God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name" (Phil. 2:7, 9). Jesus' greatness as a leader lay in the yielding of His will to God in the service of the people He led.

His disciples had to learn the secret of submission: the path to greatness in any calling, especially a leadership calling, is a yielding of the will, a humbling of oneself, a voluntary taking on of the role of a servant. This is so contrary to the way it works in the world where people in positions of authority "lord it over" those under them, asserting their will and demanding obedience.

The man who would follow Jesus "must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow" Him (Lk. 9:23). Self-denial, not self-will — that is the key. Taking up one's cross means a daily dying to self, yielding the will to God, and serving other people. Jesus expressed the attitude well in the garden of Gethsemane where He prayed to His Father, "Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39).

The danger we face in repeatedly stressing the husband as leader and the place of the wife to submit to her man is that we may inadvertently encourage men to take on a spirit of fleshly superiority. There is nothing worse than a self-willed husband and father. His whole family labors under the burden of this petit tyrant who confuses self-assertion with leadership. Jesus' teaching and example is the place to start in correcting this tendency.

The Leader Has to Know How to Follow

If a man is to lead his wife and children effectively he must first of all be a submissive man, one who is totally yielded to God. The father's authority in the home is a delegated authority; he is a steward, a household manager, acting on behalf of God who is the true Lord of the home. So to properly carry out his leadership function he must be in a proper relationship with his own superior. If he does not know how to follow his Master, he will not be very good at getting others to follow his leadership. Indeed, he will not be worthy of leading and will either fail to do so or will revert to lording it over his family.

In order to follow the Master a man must be daily receiving his orders from the Master. This means that a man must be in the habit of daily personal Bible reading and prayer, and he must

do so not just as a devotional exercise. The purpose for reading the Bible is not just to get some spiritual or sentimental lift for the day; it is to get concrete direction for living his life and leading his family. The purpose of prayer is not to fulfill some religious obligation; it is to pour out his heart and seek God's blessing upon those under his care. A time of personal worship is the vital foundation of family leadership.

King Saul is an example of a man who failed to keep under the authority of God. The Lord placed him in his position of authority over the nation of Israel. He began to enjoy the reins of leadership and soon forgot who had placed them in his hands. On two occasions he disobeyed the Lord (first, by offering a sacrifice that only the priest was authorized to offer; second, by not destroying all of the booty from a victorious battle as God had commanded — 1 Sam. 13:15). Each time he felt justified in stepping outside the bounds God had prescribed for him — after all, he was king! But the Lord removed him from his position of authority. Saul heard these words from Samuel the prophet: "To obey is better than sacrifice . . . rebellion is like the sin of divination . . . because you have rejected the voice of the Lord, he has rejected you as king" (1 Sam. 15:22, 23). God replaced self-willed Saul with David, "a man after God's own heart."

A man's home is not his kingdom to do with as he pleases. God will not use a self-willed man. He is looking for men whose hearts are fully committed to him (2 Chron. 16:9).

He Submits to Other Men, Too

A submissive man is one who willingly, joyfully submits to authority in his life. Besides the Lord Himself, this means he must submit to any others whom the Lord has placed over him.

He must submit to his employer and work for him as for the Lord (Eph. 6:5). He must submit to civil authorities, even when they are not exemplary men themselves, because God has placed them in authority (Rom. 13:1). He must submit to the leaders of his church and expect God to work through their authority over him (Heb. 13:17).

The man who dishonors his boss and cuts corners at work, the man who speaks disrespectfully of elected officials and cheats on his taxes, the man who sneers at church authority and leaves a church rather than yield to correction — such a man is living in a state of anarchy. He cannot expect to successfully hold the position of authority in his home. A man who lives in rebellion himself will tend to create a home characterized by either tyranny or anarchy. A man who submits to others where he ought has taken the most important step to being a leader himself.

The importance of church authority deserves special emphasis at this point. For the Christian man the church is his spiritual family. It is the primary arena in which he can practice the virtue of submission on the human level. As he is trying to learn how to lead his family it is essential that he be learning how to yield to his fathers and brothers in the Lord in the local assembly. Peter challenges us with these words: "Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble'" (1 Pet. 5:5).

He Even Submits to His Wife and Children

The submissive man, then, must submit directly to God on a daily basis, living a "crucified life" in which he

says "not my will, but yours be done." He must also submit to those in his life who have been given authority over him. But there is more: the submissive man must also submit to his wife and his children.

Obviously we are not saying that he ought to abandon his place of leadership. No, a good leader will exercise initiative, take responsibility, and give direction — but he must also submit himself to those he leads. What we mean is that while he sets the pace and directs the affairs of his household the godly father will do so in a way that places the family's welfare above his own comfort and convenience. He must often sacrifice for their benefit, saying no to his own desires. This is part of the dying to self we discussed above.

When Dad comes home tired after a long day he would naturally like to relax and do something he enjoys, like read the paper or take a nap. However, chances are good that his family has something else in mind. His wife may need to tell about her frustration with the kids. She may want him to tighten the railing on the basement steps before one of the kids takes a tumble. The children will, no doubt, want Dad to play or talk or help them with their projects. In other words, the man will have a choice: do what he wants or what they want. Since his role as family leader will be better achieved by serving the family, he must die to himself and say to his Master, "Not my will, but yours be done."

The essence of leadership is putting aside his own will in order to do what is best for the family. Sometimes that will mean being forceful and aggressive and leading where even his wife may not want to go and he may prefer not to go. More often, however, it will involve days filled with small decisions to yield his own will for the sake of the others in the home. Being a

leader is not being served, but serving, and giving one's life for others.

So the expression you may have heard, "servant leadership," is a good one and captures the nature of true leadership in any sphere, especially in the home. But it must become for us more than just a term; it must be a description of the way we actually live among our families. Because it is not just the wife who must submit. It is everyone, and especially the head of the home. □

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The Third Heaven

The Jews believed there were three layers of heavens.



PAUL SAID HE KNEW a man (himself) who was "caught up to the third heaven . . . caught up into paradise" (2 Cor. 12:2, 4). He was not sure if it really happened or if it was a dream or vision. He heard words that he could not utter, they were so glorious. "Of such a one will I glory," he says. First he had said, "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." He knew he should not be lifted up in pride because God chose to give him a vision. It was God who should be glorified.

The Jews believed there were three layers of heavens: the first where the birds fly, the second where the stars are, and the third where God is.

Peter also spoke of three heavens, but he had a different interpretation, one that was from God. He said there was a "heavens and earth" that ended with the flood, a second one in which

we now live, and a third heavens and earth to come, "wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:5-13). Peter was speaking of three different ages, ages following one another. One has passed; we live in one. There is another to come.

I believe Paul was caught forward in time (rather than up) to see visions of the Kingdom (paradise). Jesus told the thief they would be together in paradise. Jesus promised the overcomers the right to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Jesus' message was: the Kingdom of God is coming. Be ready for it. The prophets show that Kingdom of righteousness will cover the earth when Jesus returns. Our reward is not to spend eternity in heaven, but upon a renewed earth (Dan. 7:27; Acts 3:19-21). □

BY JIM MATTISON

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Preparing Ourselves Spiritually . . .

Volume 85, Number 3
February, March • 1996

A MESSAGE from the Editor . . .

*We need to collectively
say "Time out!" as we
rethink our priorities.*

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

Here we are, in February of 1996. It is both an election year and a leap year. It occurs to me that this will be the last election year of the millennium. We are now four short years away from the dawn of the third millennium since the birth of Jesus.

Will this be the year when Jesus returns to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth? Will God wait until the start of a new millennium to begin the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ? Or will human history continue for another 1,000 years? Has the Gospel of the Kingdom been preached to all nations yet?

These are questions for which we have no certain answers, only speculations. We are simply instructed to keep the faith by maintaining the unbroken testimony of Jesus Christ to each generation. This task seems to become more challenging as each year passes. Even as ever-increasing technology makes it easier for us to communicate the Gospel to all nations, at the same time the increasing demands on our time and attention keep us distracted from doing what we have been called by God to do.

There seems to be no end to the competition for the attention of men and women today: work, family, sports, television, computers — the Internet provides a new avenue for the curious to explore. There are so many ways to spend our time and energy. Does anyone have enough time left to devote to things like prayer, Bible study, church attendance and service to the people of the community?

We need to collectively say "Time out!" as we rethink our priorities. The Christian church has traditionally set aside the 40 days prior to Easter Sunday to be a period of repentance and reflection. It is a time to reprioritize and get ourselves spiritually centered. Lent is the term generally associated with this time. Now, many in the Church of God will have an instant negative reaction to that word, and perhaps justifiably so. But I encourage you to read the article by Martha



Zimmerman. She helps us to sort through the pagan origins of Lent/Easter and get to the true meaning of becoming spiritually prepared to meet Christ.

The article on "Fasting and the Last Days" builds on this theme and shows how this important spiritual discipline is linked to preparing the church for revival in anticipation of the Lord's return.

The "Church Grapevine" is a penetrating look at the damage that is often done in our churches due to the misuse of the tongue in passing on information. This is followed by articles to help combat discouragement and a reminder of our need to hunger for God's word.

Sid Hatch, who died last year, has an excellent article which reminds us that our reward comes at the end of the age, not instantly at death, while Anthony Buzzard helps us to focus on the future.

Since Valentine's Day is upon us we offer some little suggestions to help improve the quality of your marriage. In an age when nearly half of all marriages are second marriages, it's important for all of us, including Christians, not to take our spouses for granted, but to look for ways to keep the flames of love alive at home.

Finally, we offer some practical guidelines to help you better manage your time so that you have more time available to fulfill God's calling in your life.

I hope that you find much within these pages to help you be better prepared to serve God throughout 1996. As always, it is a pleasure to serve you.

God's Blessing be upon you.

Lift up your hearts,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Jeffrey Fletcher".

Jeffrey Fletcher

The Restitution Herald

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- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21);
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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What Is Lent?

The focus of Lent is spiritual renewal through the disciplines of fasting and prayer.

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

HOLD A TRUE LENT IN YOUR souls, while you sorrow over your hardness of heart. Do not stop at sorrow! Remember where you first received salvation. Go at once to the cross . . . this will bring back to us our first love; this will restore the simplicity of our faith, and the tenderness of our heart.

—Charles Haddon Spurgeon¹

Lent begins the fortieth day prior to the Resurrection, excluding Sundays. (To determine the beginning of Lent count back 46 days from Resurrection Day.) The focus of Lent is spiritual renewal through the disciplines of fasting and prayer. Early Christians never fasted on Sunday since each Sunday is a little celebration of the joy of resurrection. Thus, Sundays were excluded from Lent.

It is generally believed from ancient tradition that God began creating the world in the spring of the year. Since it was also in the spring that Redemption was accomplished, it seemed appropriate that this season be designated as the beginning place in the Christian yearly cycle.

The oldest known liturgical book of the church, which contains daily Scripture readings, begins and ends with the Resurrection. For more than three hundred years it was the only feast Christians celebrated.

Cyril of Alexandria wrote, "Easter is the beginning of a new era." But before going any further we should ask, "What is Easter?"

"Easter" is *not* a Christian name. Its origin is found in Chaldean paganism. Ishtar and Astarte² were Babylonian goddesses dedicated to a cult of fertility. The Babylonian Empire spread this cult

and its practices throughout their world. When the Babylonians conquered Judah, the prophet Jeremiah and a small group of Jewish leaders were forcibly taken into exile in Egypt. There Jewish exiles quickly adopted the practice of burning incense and making offerings to "the queen of heaven," Astarte and the other Egyptian gods. Jeremiah pronounced the Lord's judgment on their cult in Jeremiah 44.

The Babylonian cult also spread through Europe and was adopted by the Teutonic people, who worshipped Eostre, this same goddess of fertility. Her festival was celebrated on the spring equinox with rabbits and brightly colored eggs. It is fascinating that the most important day in the Christian year is named for a fertility goddess and celebrated with ancient fertility practices. Later, the German barbarians renamed "Eostre" as "Oster." The worship of this goddess was introduced into Britain centuries before the Christian era by the Druids or the Phoenicians. Pagan religions adored this consort of the god Baal, worshipping her with religious ceremonies in April, calling the period for worship "Easter month."

The original Christian celebration that we seek to recover was a completely different festival and *was not called "Easter."* It was called *Pasch*, a name borrowed from the Hebrew word for Passover, *Pesach*. Most of the Christian world does not share our confusion. Eastern Orthodox churches call it "Pesach" to this day. The Greeks call it *Pascha*, the Spaniards and Portuguese *Pasqua*, the French, *Pâque*, the Norwegians, *Paskir* and the Danes, *Paaske*. It was observed from the beginning of the church by professing Christians in the season of the Jewish Passover,

BY MARTHA ZIMMERMAN

which is when Christ was crucified and rose again. The remembrance grew out of genuine love and appreciation for God's redemption. For the first three centuries Christians reserved only one or two days for prayer in preparation for the celebration of Pasach. The festival was not idolatrous, and it was not preceded by a "Lent."

So, what is Lent? It comes from the word "Lencten," which means "spring" and marks the "lengthening" of days in the spring. Its centerpiece was a Chaldean festival, marked by forty days of abstinence, devoted to pagan worship of Astarte. "Easter month" was the dominant spring celebration

Christian leaders were alarmed. They tried to reinterpret the season by blending biblical meanings and pagan themes. By a skillful and rather complicated adjustment of the calendar, Rome managed to get paganism and corrupted idolatrous Christianity to link arms. A forty-day fast was established, recalling the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness in preparation for His earthly ministry (Matt. 4:1-11), and the forty days Moses spent on Mt. Sinai in preparation for the Ten Commandments (Ex. 24:18). The forty days of Lent were stretched to the forty-six days of the calendar to reserve Sundays as celebrations of joy. Looking back, it is easy to see that the forty days of abstinence in Lent were borrowed from the Astarte (Easter) festival.

Astarte worship could not be suppressed by the Christian Lent. Toward the end of the sixth century, church leaders attempted to compel the observance of Lent. The Astarte party put up a vigorous resistance, marked by bloodshed and violence. To secure the peace, a compromise transformed "Pasach" into "Easter" and gave to the Chaldean goddess her subtle place in our current practices. The consequences were momentous.

This is the history of Lent and Easter. It is so easy to be lulled into repetitious practices without stopping to check out the history of the tradition. Some of our more popular customs confirm the testimony of history as to their Babylonian origin. Hot-cross buns on Good Friday and the dyed eggs of Easter are rooted in Chaldean rituals. Special "buns" were used in the

worship of the queen of heaven, the "goddess Easter," as early as the founding of Athens, 1500 years before Christ. An ancient writer described them as "sacred cakes called 'Bon,' which were made of fine flour and honey." The prophet Jeremiah takes note that "The children gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough and make cakes of bread for the Queen of Heaven. They pour out drink offerings to other gods to provoke me to anger" (Jer. 7:18, NIV).

The Saxons marked the little breads with crosses to honor this queen of heaven, Easter. The Phoenicians imprinted the cakes with horns dedicated to Astarte, the goddess of fertility. In time these horns were modified into a form that we see as a cross. The Egyptians emphasized the goddess of the moon and marked their cakes to represent the four quarters of the moon. Since the festival was known as Easter, it was and still is celebrated on the Sunday immediately after the first full moon of the spring equinox.

The origin of the Easter egg is based on fertility myth and folklore. The story is told by Hyginus, an Egyptian who was a librarian in Rome during the time of Caesar Augustus: "An egg of wondrous size is said to have fallen from heaven into the river Euphrates. The fishes rolled it to the bank, where the doves having settled upon it, and hatched it; out came Venus, who afterwards was called Astarte." Hence the egg became one of the symbols of Astarte or Easter. Eggs were often used in religious rituals by Egyptians, Greeks, and many other ancient people and were hung in pagan temples for mystical purposes.

Christians assigned new significance to the egg. It reminded Augustine of the hope of eternal life, picturing something yet to come. For others the shell symbolized the tomb, which was empty when Christ came forth in new life.

You will remember from the celebration of Shrove Tuesday that eggs were not allowed during Lent. Prohibitions have a way of enhancing desirability, hence it became the custom to beautifully decorate eggs with Christian symbols and give them as gifts on Resurrection Day. With the gift came the greeting, "Christ is risen!" Usually

an egg was given in return with the response, "He is risen indeed!" These Christians put something where they could see it so their eyes would remind their hearts!

Few images, after Santa Claus, are as popular as the happy-go-lucky Easter Bunny hopping from house to house with baskets of goodies for anxiously waiting children. They have even hopped their way into shopping malls. Marketers have redecorated Santa's chair for the Easter Bunny in order to enhance spring sales. Children stand in line to sit on the Easter Bunny's lap, with pictures to prove it.

In ancient Egypt the rabbit was a popular fertility symbol because of its incredible breeding and reproduction record. The Easter Bunny was first mentioned in a German book published in 1572. In the seventeenth century, the story that the Easter Bunny lays eggs and then hides them in gardens was called, at that time, an "old fable," indicating it had been around for a long time. The bunny entered American folklore through the Pennsylvania Dutch. To this day across North America it is the Easter Bunny who brings colored eggs, candy, and gifts to children. It took over one hundred years for this custom of the Easter Bunny to be adopted into our traditions. I sincerely hope it will not take one hundred years to separate out this pagan ritual.

This bit of history explains why the Reformers abolished and prohibited these celebrations.

So what are we to do now?

This is an ideal time to pause and think through your celebrations. As you look back and see who it is who has come to be your Redeemer, also look ahead to see what you want to do to follow Christ.

Lamentations 3:40 says "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord" (NIV). Reminded of the warnings from the past, let us seek honest answers to these questions:

Are your celebrations in keeping with the good news of Jesus Christ?

Do they provide a way to deepen your understanding and strengthen your commitment to the Savior?

(Please turn to Page 7)

Fasting and the Last Days

I will pour out of My Spirit.
— Joel 2:28

I will build my church.
— Matthew 16:18

I will come again.
— John 14:3



TO COOPERATE WITH GOD in the outworking of His plan demands an understanding of that plan. There are three realms of truth which, perhaps more than any others, have been storm centers of controversy among earnest Christians — the doctrine of the Spirit, the doctrine of the church, and the doctrine of Christ's second advent (with associated events). This is not surprising if, as we believe, these doctrines hold the vital keys to God's world program. The Adversary cannot afford to see these keys drop into the hands of the church without a fight, for they spell destruction to the kingdom of darkness. The divisive tactics of the Adversary, however, cannot thwart the purpose of God.

It is deeply significant that in recent years there has been a worldwide resurgence of interest in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and especially the pouring out of the Spirit in revival power. But this has forced many thinking people to make a fresh appraisal of their doctrine of the church. If we are to have the new wine of the Spirit, what about the new wineskin? In addition, the swiftly moving ecclesiastical situation, dominated by ecumenism, is sending many back to the New Testament to reexamine God's original plan for His church.

What about unfulfilled prophecy and the return of Christ? Widespread interest in this aspect of truth is yet to come. Let us now see how these three vital keys to God's plan are also closely associated with the subject of fasting.

The Outpouring of the Spirit

Many believers in these days are coming into a transforming experience of the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Many others, convinced that a widespread visitation of the Spirit in revival power is the only answer to the spiritual need of this hour, are pleading the promise of Joel which Peter quoted on the day of Pentecost: "And in the last

days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh."

What shall we say about this? Did the events at Pentecost exhaust the Joel prophecy? Obviously not, or there would have been no further outpourings. Is, then, the final fulfillment in some future day when the church is no longer here? Peter said it would happen "in the last days." Are we not now in what Scripture calls "the last days"?

Some would say that the final fulfillment will be upon Jews only. But the promise says "upon all flesh," and Peter surely confirmed this by saying, "The promise is to you and to your children [Jews] and to all that are far off [Gentiles]." Did he not later witness the outpouring upon the Gentiles, and declare, "The Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning"? If, then, the former rain included Gentiles, why not the latter rain?

Almost all are agreed that a visitation of the Spirit upon the church is desperately needed. Are we to believe that the promise to Joel has nothing to say to this situation? Are these apparently spontaneous pleadings for the outpouring of the Spirit from all over the world entirely misguided and out of the will of God? What, then, is the answer to the barrenness and impotence of the church if it is not a visitation from on high?

If, however, we believe that this wonderful promise is for us — is in fact God's answer to the present need — it is vital that we fulfill the conditions as well as plead the promise. Three times Joel sounds a clarion call, in view of the imminence of the Day of the Lord, to return to God *with fasting* (Joel 1:14; 2:12,15). Then he seems to see in vision God's response: "Then the Lord became jealous for his land, and had pity on his people" (v. 18), granting deliverance and prosperity, followed by the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh. Have we any right to expect the fulfillment of this wonderful promise without obedience to the conditions?

BY ARTHUR WALLIS

Have we yet prayed "with all our hearts, even with fasting"? Have tears ever been mingled with our prayers? Have the priests, the ministers of the Lord, ever wept between the porch and the altar? The promised outpouring calls for fasting as well as prayer.

The Restoration of the Church

Some 500 years before Christ, the exiled prophet Daniel observed from the study of Jeremiah's prophecy that the time was at hand when God would bring His people back to Jerusalem (Dan. 9:2; Jer. 29:10). He therefore sought God in prayer with fasting and sackcloth and ashes, that He would fulfill the promise. Confession mingled with his supplication as he prayed that God would cause His face to shine upon His sanctuary which was desolate.

This fasting prayer of Daniel set the wheels in motion that led to one of the most remarkable decrees that a heathen king ever issued. Cyrus made a proclamation to the effect that God had charged him to build

Him a house in Jerusalem, and that those Jews who were so disposed were to go up to Jerusalem to rebuild the house of the Lord (Ezra 1:1-4). So there came about the first return of the exiles under Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple. Again, prayer and fasting under the good hand of God had changed the course of history. In the later expedition under Ezra fasting again played its part in the safe arrival of the exiles with their precious consignment for the house of God (Ezra 8:21-23).

Under the old covenant God had a temple for His people; under the new God has His people for a temple. As we look out today on the church, God's spiritual habitation, what a need for spiritual renewal! If the early Christians were still with us God might well ask, "Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not in your sight as nothing?" (Hag. 2:3). The restoration of the church to its former power and glory would involve a transformation no less radical than that which

took place in the temple long ago under Zerubbabel and Ezra. Did not God encourage His people with the promise, "The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former" (Hag. 2:9).

The outpouring of the Spirit is not enough. The new wine must have now, as it had when poured out on the day of Pentecost, a new wine-skin. The renewing of the house of God is indispensable. It cost these men of the Old Testament deep intercession with fastings and tears. Would we think to obtain it more cheaply—by consultations and conversations and committees?

The Return of Christ

Neither the outpouring of the Spirit nor the reformation of the church is our goal. It is nothing less than "the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." The supreme hope of the church lies in the promise of the reappearance of the Lord from heaven. He told His disciples, "I will come again." Clearly this coming was not spiritual but visible

and literal, for as the angels informed the apostles, "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Here is the grand and glorious consummation of the age, for which all that proceeded it was a necessary preparation. Do we long for His return? Do we share what must be the yearning of His heart for that coming day of vindication and coronation? When He summons us in that day to account for our talents, will we have to confess that the fasting talent was never used, that we hid this precious entrustment in the ground?

Fasting, then, opens the way for the outpouring of the Spirit and the restoration of God's house. Fasting in this age of the absent Bridegroom is in expectation of His return. Soon there will be the midnight cry, "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." It will be too late then to fast and to pray. The time is *now*. □

— *God's Chosen Fast*, Sussex, England: Victory Press, 1968, pp. 130-135.

What Is Lent?

(Continued from Page 5)

Resources for Celebrating Lent

Here are some simple, practical suggestions to aid your family in celebrating the truth during the rest of the days leading up to the Resurrection. The genius of Lent is that it provides a fresh opportunity for personal renewal.

- Begin each day with a time of reflection.
- Identify sins or an area needing renewal.
- Confess a problem that needs God's mercy.
- Make an effort to set apart time to read and pray every day.

- Plan time to "be still and know God" (probably the most difficult discipline).

Psalm 50:13-15, 23 (TLB) says, "No, I don't need your sacrifices of flesh and blood. What I want from you is your true thanks; I want your promises fulfilled. I want you to trust me in your times of trouble, so I can rescue you, and you can give me glory. . . . True praise is a worthy sacrifice; this really honors me."

Think of ways you can honor the Lord with your praise during Lent.

- Truly recognize and thank God.
- Keep your promises.
- Trust God in time of trouble.
- Give Him the glory! □

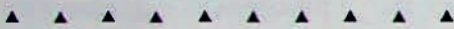
Celebrating the Christian Year, Bethany House Publishers, 1993, pp. 107-112. Used with permission.

¹Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House

²The Chaldean goddesses Ishtar and Astarte were adopted by the Babylonians, the Egyptians, and most other people of the ancient Middle East.

Church Grapevines Usually Bear Bad Fruit

All we need to do when confronted with gossip is to make it clear that we don't want to hear it — period!



A CHURCH GRAPEVINE, to put it bluntly, is the network of gossip that seems to exist in every church. In all my years of ministry I have never seen anything good come from a church grapevine. On the contrary, it has always been a destructive and sinful force in the life of a church.

I believe there is no worse sin than gossip. Its effect is always — without exception — negative and disruptive to individuals and the congregation as a whole. It expresses the worst of us as human beings — our insensitivity to others, our tendency to prejudge situations and people or to judge without cause, the arrogance of seeing the speck in another's eye without seeing the planks in our own, and the inability to control our tongues, all the while pretending ignorance of its damage. Nothing is worse than the sin of gossip, especially in the church where people are called to share life in Christ.

Church grapevines almost always thrive on gossip. People love to talk, and many church members do so without concerning themselves with the accuracy, or even the truthfulness, of their information. Moreover, the embellishing of stories that contain a kernel of truth is appalling. Even spreading stories that are true can be destructive. The telling lacks compassion and concern because the telling is the focus of the teller's attention. Whenever the person(s) who is (are) the subject of the story is (are) not the primary focus of concern, what is being told — true or false — is gossip.

BY JAN G. LINN

The letter of James talks about the evil and damage of the church grapevine this way:

The tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity, strains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. . . . With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. . . . This ought not to be so. (James 3:6-10)

Most church members will readily agree that gossip is a terrible thing, while at the same time engaging in it or at least tolerating it in the life of their church. It is as if they do not believe it actually destroys the way it does. Perhaps the reason church grapevines are tolerated is because the messages they carry are not recognized as gossip. After all, the talk is not usually about some moral indiscretion of another church member, although whenever such indiscretions do occur they certainly make the circuit. Most often, though, the



grapevine in the church carries inaccurate and distorted information about what happened in the board meeting or some committee of the church. It is quite common for it to be a carrier for the opinions of a disgruntled church member who wants everyone to know her dissatisfaction with the minister.

In one church I served there was one particular Sunday school class that made sure the church grapevine was kept busy. The members were an aging group who truly loved the church, but their understanding of church life was skewed in significant ways. There was very little we did in ministry that they supported. Every week the church staff could count on someone in the class passing along information about something we had said or done that was inaccurate or completely untrue. Yet not once did any of them ever come to us and ask whether or not what they had heard was true. It was as if the talking itself were more important than truth.

It may be obvious by now that I have no patience with church grapevines, nor any respect for them. They hurt people and they damage churches. What is worse, there is simply too much tolerance for them. In the name of not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings, churches will let people gossip without challenging the act itself. Members may take issue with a statement that has been made, but they seldom ask the person talking why they are gossiping. This is what needs to be done. There is no place in the church for loose tongues. I think James puts the matter of a loose tongue in the church rather bluntly: "This ought not to be so."

It really is not all that difficult to stop a church grapevine. All we need to do when confronted with gossip is to make it perfectly clear that we don't want to hear it — period! This needs to be our response especially when there is trouble in a church. That is when the grapevine is most alive, and most inaccurate. At such times even the

smallest problems grow into big ones, adding to the tension that already exists.

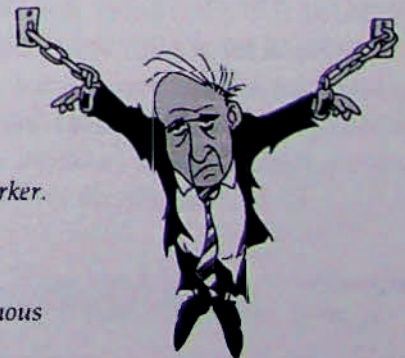
Nothing good ever comes from a church grapevine, which is why church members concerned about the health and well-being of their church should never let it go unchallenged. No one can stop people from gossiping. We can, on the other hand, refuse to listen. At the very least, that will make the gossiper feel uncomfortable, and when enough people refuse to listen, I have no doubt that it will have a chilling effect on the vine itself. Who was it who said, "All that is needed for evil to triumph is for good [people] to do nothing"? That is never more true in the church than when it comes to grapevines. □

— *What Ministers Wish Church Members Knew*,
Chalice Press, 1993, pp. 63-66. Used with permission.

Sometimes You Just Can't Win

*If the pastor is young, they say he lacks experience; if he's old, he's "over the hill."
If he has five or six children, he has too many; if he has none, he's selfish.
If he preaches from notes, he's boring; if he's extemporaneous, he's shallow.
If he caters to the poor, he's wasting valuable effort; if he caters to the rich, he's playing politics.
If he uses anecdotes, he's neglecting the Scripture; if he doesn't, he isn't interesting.
If he preaches guilt, he's harmful; if he doesn't, he's compromising.
If he sticks to the Bible, he's too narrow; if he interprets, he's too liberal.
If he doesn't please everybody, he should leave; if he does, he's wishy-washy.
If he drives an old car, it's disgraceful; if he drives a new one, it's ostentatious.
If he preaches all the time, he's pulpit possessive; if he invites guest preachers, he's a shirker.
If he gets a large salary, he's mercenary; if a small one, he isn't worth even that.*

— anonymous



Discouraged?

*A discouraged
Christian has
limited potential.*

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

THE WORLD'S DEADLIEST disease — what would you say that might be? No — it is not cancer, polio, even AIDS. It is DISCOURAGEMENT.

Why is it so dreaded? Because it is so universal. Everyone gets discouraged sometimes. It is a very common disease. Even Christians get discouraged. And, it is a recurring problem — not just a one-time thing. Also, it is very contagious. We can catch it from each other easily.

The good news is that it is treatable. Nehemiah faced a huge task and in chapter 4 of his story is a listing of four causes and three cures for discouragement. You may remember that Nehemiah was a Jew who returned to Israel from Babylon to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. There was a lot of zeal, excitement, and enthusiasm when they first started the wall — a very common attitude at the beginning of our plans. But, after getting down and dirty, the big "D" hit them.

They were ready to give up. Verse 6: "So we rebuilt the wall until it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart." Verses 10-12:

Meanwhile the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall." Also, our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them

and put an end to the work." Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us."

Sometimes the enemy is among us, not far away.

Why do we get discouraged? The first reason is *fatigue*. We get just plain worn-out, physically exhausted, emotionally drained, dead tired. Sometimes in our weariness we may feel that it is a spiritual problem. We may fall back on the old cliché that is popular again: "burnout." We must



BY DON OVERMYER

remember that you cannot "burn out" if you have never been "on fire." But, sometimes we exceed our physical capabilities in our plans. The Lord recognized this and set aside 14% of our life for rest. His plan included keeping a day for rest each week. We disregard His plan sometimes and try to run 100%. Of course, some only work 14% of the time and rest (loaf) 86% of the time!

Notice they built the wall to half its height and then gave up. That's usually when a project bogs down — halfway through. That is when the scaffolding had to be built and the stone hauled up high and the mortar lifted up higher. And, the garbage was piling up to add to their problems. The newness, the zeal was wearing off. We are the same — wading around in the garbage (the sin that so easily besets us).

This second reason for discouragement then is called *frustration*. We lose sight of the goal because of all the garbage and rubbish we allow to accumulate in our lives. It is the trivial things that waste our time and consume our energy, frustrating us and preventing us from the really important things in life. They are interruptions in the work. So, just as at a job site, we need to keep cleaning out the rubbish. We built several buildings at the plant where I worked. We found that if we provided dumpsters on the site and required all workmen to keep the site cleaned of rubbish we got a much better building.

The third reason for discouragement is in verse 10: "We just cannot rebuild the wall." We can't do it, it's impossible, we were foolish, let's give up! The third reason for discouragement is *failure*. A little failure kills confidence. We get up a "pity party" and complain and look for someone else to blame or share our viewpoint. The differ-

ence between a winner and a loser is that a winner sees failure as only a temporary setback. Failure spurs him to a winning comeback.

In verse 11 the fourth reason for discouragement is described: "Our enemies will kill us and put an end to the work." We will be disgraced. This is *fear*. Not everyone will agree with our plan. Enemies will not want to see our effort succeed. It is a threat to them. So they will criticize, ridicule, and finally threaten to undermine our enthusiasm. So the wall builders were discouraged



*When we associate with
negative people long
enough, it starts to
affect us.*



by fear. When we associate with negative people long enough, it starts to affect us. We start believing "It can't be done." Fear always discourages us. We then want to get away from the project — escape. There are only three reactions to fear: *against* it in anger, *away* from it in fear, or *with* it in love.

What did Nehemiah do as a wise leader? He took three appropriate actions: *reorganized*, *remembered*, and *resisted*.

Verse 13: "I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the walls at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their weapons." His first principle was to *reorganize* the work, not give up. He used a new approach. When things go wrong, it

doesn't necessarily mean you are doing the wrong thing; it may be the wrong way. Was it wrong for them to build the wall? NO. But, some adjustments were needed. If you are having some problems in your project, don't give up. Try a new approach. If we have a health problem that we can't overcome, we don't give up. We try a new doctor. Don't give up. Keep on keeping on.

Nehemiah focused on priorities. Notice he posted "families." He knew they would support one another if attacked. See wise old Solomon in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12: "Two are better than one . . . A cord with three strands is not easily broken."

Another principle was *remember*. In 4:14, "Don't be afraid. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome." When we "remember the Lord" we recommit, rededicate ourselves to Him and His work. We draw on His awesome power. We remember His goodness to us. When we are at our lowest ebb, we can remember "I will never leave you, nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). "Nothing can separate me from the love of God" (Rom. 8:39). These promises take our minds off the depression, the circumstances, the discouragement, and lift us back on our feet again to build our "wall."

Nehemiah's third principle was *resisting*. Note in verse 14 Nehemiah says, in effect, "Don't yield to discouragement without a fight. RESIST DISCOURAGEMENT. Fight it! Don't give in, but RESIST."

A discouraged Christian has limited potential, but a faithful, working Christian has the unlimited, available, mighty, awesome power of the Almighty God. □

Adapted from *Answers to Life's Difficult Questions* by Richard Warren, Victor Books.

A Man's Love for God's Word

*It is the precious
Word of our
heavenly Father that
will change
people's lives.*

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

THERE ARE SO MANY reasons why people love their God that we cannot even think of them all. One reason is because God loved us first, and we love people who love us (1 John 4:19). An article like this cannot begin to list all the reasons why people love God.

His Goodness to Us

One of the greatest reasons we love Him is because He is so good to us. David exclaimed in Psalm 36:7, "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."

It is because of God's goodness to us that we are led to repent. Speaking to persons who judge others, Paul cried out, "Despise thou the riches of his [God's] goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom. 2:4).

Every good and perfect gift has come to us from God (James 1:17). That includes our partner, our children, everything we have, and also the precious promises of God for this life and the one to come.

God is good to us! And this goodness is far more than we deserve. He sends the sunshine and rain on all, but He has a special love for those who love Him.

He Is a Comfort and Help in Time of Need

A favorite passage of those who sorrow is Psalm 46:1 and 2. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. There-

fore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

Another favorite passage is, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

These words from our Lord have been a tremendous blessing to this writer: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28-30).

God Has Sent Jesus to Save Us

Because of God's love and compassion and mercy and grace He sent Jesus to be our Savior (John 3:16). *For this we really love God.* We were condemned in sin to death, but Jesus brought us the hope of Eternal Life and a place in God's wonderful coming Kingdom. Jesus died in our place. We owed a debt we could not pay. He paid a debt He did not owe.

Jesus intercedes for us today. How great a blessing that is. He is coming again to save us and He offers us kingship and priesthood in His coming Kingdom.

What more could God promise His people than that He has promised?

God Guides Us as We Ask Him

To me, this is one of the greatest blessings of today. What man is there who doesn't need guidance? Psalm 25:9: "The meek will He guide in judgment." Psalm 48:14: "He will be our guide even unto death." Psalm 73:24:

BY JAMES MATTISON

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel." Jeremiah 3:4: "Thou art the guide of my youth."

How would we know how to go unless someone guides us? Some have the spiritual gift of wisdom. We listen to their counsel. But the greatest guide of all is GOD, whose wisdom is as far above ours as the heavens are above the earth.

I really appreciate God's guidance and I seek it in every area of life. I earnestly ask for this guidance every day. He has guided me in Bible studies, sermon preparation, lesson preparation, and various circumstances of life, and He even brings into my mind things I should do as I ask Him to do that. Hundreds and hundreds of times has He guided me. I am deeply grateful.

God Answers Prayer

That is probably the greatest thing that built my faith: God answering certain special prayers. I cried to a God who was invisible, one I could not see, and *answers came!* My only conclusion could be that the God in heaven, the Great Creator, heard me and loved me enough to answer my cry. This is what *really* convinced me that God loved *me*. See Psalm 116:1, 2.

Another verse that has been a great comfort is 1 Peter 3:12: "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers."

The prayer promises are so strong and powerful. Notice: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:19).

"This is the confidence that we have in him [God], that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14, 15).

John 14:13,14: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."

And I can never forget the promise in James 5:13-16 and how we called the elders and anyone who had faith to pray for Mary Helen when she was dying. God heard and she lived. This happened twice, in 1960 and 1964. I had her another 18 years.

The stronger one is in prayer, the greater will be the answers.

God Has Given Us the Knowledge of His Plan and Will

We know God created all things for His glory and pleasure (Rev. 4:11). We have been created in *His* image, and He put a thinking brain in our heads. He created man innocent and sinless, yet mortal. God had in mind sending Christ to save fallen men even before Adam and Eve sinned (Rev. 13:8). He knew before creation that He would establish a Kingdom of righteousness and peace upon this earth (Matt. 25:34). God planned for the sacrificial death of His own Son to take away the sins of those who would believe. He told us that all who loved Him would receive His

blessing while those who ignored Him would be cursed (Psa. 1). We know that only a few will be saved, and many will be thrown in the lake of fire at the judgment.

God has given us the whole plan of salvation. How thankful we are that He has! He has concealed nothing. Jesus even calls us *His friends!* We can have a very close, intimate relationship with our God and our Lord. This is the ultimate blessing.

God has *adesire* for the work of His hands (us). He wants *us* to spend the rest of His Eternity with Him. What kindness! What grace! What love! Wanting *us* to be with *Him* for all eternity. This is what we desire and long for for our own children.

I ask you, what more could God do for us and promise us than those things He does do for us and has promised us? Why shouldn't we love Him? He has done everything for us.

God Gives Us His Own Spirit (Influence, Power)

There is a spirit in man (Job 32:8) but it is carnal and mortal (Jer. 17:9).

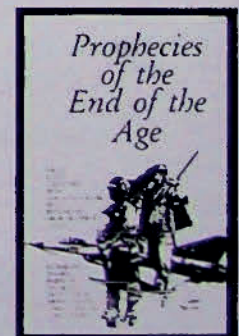
When we are baptized into Christ for the remission of our sins, we then have access to

(Please turn to back cover)

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By James Mattison

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Do We Go to Heaven at Death?

*"Absent from the body
... present with the
Lord."
— 2 Corinthians 5:8*



IT IS A COMMON ASSUMPTION with many Christians that when they die, they will go to heaven.

At the moment of death, they will find themselves in the presence of the Lord.

Three passages in particular supposedly teach this doctrine. They are 2 Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:23, and Luke 23:43, the latter being Jesus' promise to the thief on the cross.

First, let us consider the Corinthian passage. Paul says: "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

Two experiences are obvious in this verse. They are, first, "absent from the body," and second, "present with the Lord."

If Jesus comes in our lifetime, these two experiences will be simultaneous. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall no longer be in this body, and we shall be in a glorified body with the Lord.

What if Jesus does not return while we are alive? What if we should die before that time? Then there will be an interval between "absent from the body" and "present with the Lord." We shall be "absent from the body," but we shall *not* be "present with the Lord."

In this context of 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, Paul speaks of our "mortality," and he uses such terms as "dissolved," "naked," and "unclothed." These are references to the death state. They refer to the interval between "absent from the body" and "present

with the Lord." Elsewhere in Scripture, this interval is plainly called "sleep" or "asleep in Christ."¹

Now to Philippians 1:23: "For I [Paul] am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." The situation here is the same as in 2 Corinthians 5:8. If Christ comes while we are alive, "departing" and "being with Christ" will be simultaneous. But if we die before He comes, there will be an interval between. First we "depart." Then someday, when He returns to earth, we are "with Him."

In Philippians 1:23, "departing" and "being with Christ" are placed in close proximity, because the interval between, should Jesus tarry, would again be a timeless sleep.



BY SIDNEY HATCH, Th.M.

In Philippians 1:21, Paul has said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." But the preceding verse, where he asks that Christ be magnified, whether by his life or by his death, indicated that Paul is speaking of "gain" for Christ, not gain for himself.

To Paul, living was Christ. And "to die" (martyrdom) would be a testimony for Christ.

Now we come to Luke 23:43, our Lord's promise to the thief on the cross: "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

The Greek word for "today" is *semeron* which means "today" or "this day." Since the word "that" is not in the text, *semeron* goes with the verb preceding it. Hence Jesus actually said, "Verily I say unto thee *this day*, thou shalt be with me in paradise."

Semeron, "this day," is used in Matthew 6:11 where it goes with the verb preceding it: "Give us *this day* our daily bread." And it is used in a similar way in Luke 2:11: "Unto you is born *this day* . . . a Savior."

If Jesus had said, "I say *that* today you will be with me in paradise," He would have meant that very day He and the thief would go to paradise. However, as indicated already, the little word "that" is not in the text. Hence Jesus said, "I say today, you will be with me in paradise."

Paradise, of course, is upon the earth. It existed in the Garden of Eden,² and it will be restored in the ages to come.³ Jesus assured the thief that he would be with Him in that future kingdom on the earth. In the meantime, the thief would sleep the sleep of death, until the resurrection. Our Lord, however, has become "the firstfruits of them that slept."⁴

None of the passages above teach that we go to heaven at death. Such an idea is based on the Greek philosophical theory that men

possess immortal souls. But the Scriptures indicate there is no such thing as an immortal soul. Our hope is the return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. The interval between death and resurrection is sleep.

Telling Christians they do not go to heaven at death is not always easy, nor is it a message designed to contribute to a pastor's popularity. It is disconcerting to some people, and especially to those who would exercise thought control over the religious views of the populace.

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*Paradise, of course, is
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I am reminded of an experience I had when seven years old and in the second grade. A companion on the school ground told me what he wanted Santa Claus to bring him for Christmas. I informed him there was no Santa Claus; the gifts he received would be from his parents, his family, and his friends.

An astute third-grader standing nearby was outraged and chastised me severely. I had spoiled this boy's Christmas! The facts of the matter, of course, were not relevant.

And so it was when I first denied the immortality of the soul and the doctrine of going to heaven at death. Many of my evangelical colleagues were enraged and again I was chastised severely. Very few, it seemed, were interested in searching the Scriptures

to see what the truth really was. It was just that I was teaching doctrine, so they argued, unacceptable to my ecclesiastical environment.

If people want to play Santa Claus games with their children I suppose that is their business, but our Christian faith should rise above a flat-earth mentality. Eternal verities are at stake. Some things really are life and death issues.

No, dear reader, there isn't any Santa Claus — and we don't go to heaven when we die. But God has something better to offer, and that is His truth.

I have learned that unfortunately, not every Christian is concerned about the truth. Some are just too attached to their placebos. But for those who are concerned, we have the promise of Jesus, "The truth shall make you free."⁵

The truth is, as Christians, we are confronted by two possibilities — living until Jesus comes, or dying first. If He returns while we are alive, then "absent from the body" and "present with the Lord," to all practical purposes, will be one and the same thing. They will be simultaneous. But if Jesus tarries, and we die first, there will be an interval between. This interval, the Scriptures tell us, is the sleep of death. □

— From *Daring to Differ: Adventures in Conditional Immortality*, Sherwood, OR: Brief Bible Studies, 1991, pp. 36-39.

¹ 1Thess. 4:14; 1 Cor. 15:18.

² Gen. 2:8-3:24.

³ Rev. 21:1-22:5.

⁴ 1 Cor. 15:20.

⁵ John 8:32.

Sharpening Our Focus on the Future

Prophecy is a great treasure for the church.



WITH REGARD TO prophecy as foretelling, the church has lost its nerve. An earthbound, rationalistic humanism has so invaded Christian thinking as to tinge with faint ridicule all claims to see in the Bible anything more than the vaguest reference to future events.

These are the words of Joyce Baldwin in her interesting commentary on Daniel (*Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, p. 185). Her point is that numerous important sections of Scripture which claim to predict future events leading up to the establishment of the Messiah's Kingdom on earth are ignored by Bible-readers. Why should it be so hard for many to believe that God can "announce from of old things to come"? (Isa. 44:7.)

The eleventh chapter of Daniel is unique in its extensive prediction of events leading to the arrival of Jesus to inaugurate His Kingdom of peace on earth. There is no need for any of us to remain in the dark about the intense period of suffering which all the prophets see as the prelude to the future coming of Jesus, the Messiah. Our Christian documents preserve the fascinating words of Jesus in which he makes a direct reference to Daniel 11:31. This text speaks of an "Appalling Horror" (the Abomination of Desolation) destined to appear in the Holy Place in Jerusalem, shortly before the end of the age. In Matthew 24:15,16 Jesus warned Christians

living in Judea to flee to the mountains when they saw "the Abomination of Desolation standing in the Holy Place." The Lord went on to explain (v. 21) that the presence of the Abomination in Jerusalem would be the trigger for the most awful time of tribulation ever, and that *immediately following* that tribulation (Matt. 24:29) He would appear and gather the elect Christians into the Kingdom of God (v. 31).

The proper way to understand this material is to follow Jesus' own instructions carefully. In Matthew 24:15 He tells us to understand that the Abomination of which He speaks is the well-known Abomination predicted some six hundred years earlier by Daniel. When we turn back to Daniel's prophecies we find a full account of the Abomination and subsequent events in Daniel 11:31-12:3. (Notice that the chapter break should be disregarded since the whole account is one vision of the end time.) Not only are the events of the time of the end laid out for us in Daniel 11; we are also given a precise time frame in which to set these events. This precious information is given by an angel who in Daniel 12:7 announced that "it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people all these events will be completed." A few verses later we have a confirmation of this invaluable time frame for the events of the end of the age: "And from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished



BY ANTHONY BUZZARD

and the Abomination of Desolation is set up [11:31] there will be 1290 days" (Dan. 12:11).

We learn from these verses that about 3½ years of tribulation will precede the completion of "all these events" (12:7). Let us look back through the vision of chapter 11 to follow the story step by step. Jesus introduces us to the Abomination of Desolation of Daniel 11:31 (Mat. 24:15). When it appears, Christians in Judea are to leave Jerusalem at once. This is the signal for the onset of the unparalleled tribulation: "For then there will be a great tribulation, such has not occurred since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall" (Mat. 24:21).

Jesus is here quoting a verse from the same vision (Dan. 12:1) describing the awful time of trouble just before the resurrection of the dead which follows in Daniel 12:2. We note that the resurrection of this verse is one of "all these events" (12:7) which will come to an end at the close of the 3½ years. But when does the 3½ years begin?

The answer is given us in Daniel 12:11: "From the time that the regular sacrifice is taken away and the Abomination of Desolation is set up there will be 1290 days." We have here a clear statement about the final time of trouble. It will begin with the placing of the Abomination of Desolation in the Holy Place (Mat. 24:15 = Dan. 11:31 and 9:27) and end with the resurrection. At that point "all these events," detailed in Daniel 11:31-12:3, will be complete.

In Daniel 11:31ff. there is a description of the exact nature of the trouble predicted to take place in Israel. We see a wicked King of the North (i.e., probably originating in modern Syria or Iraq) "turning to godlessness those who act wickedly towards the covenant" (Dan. 11:32). Meanwhile "those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many" (v. 33). Some

believers will die for their faith (v. 35). Then the King of the North — the subject of the whole prophecy from Daniel 11:21 onwards — "will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods, and will prosper until the indignation is finished, for what is decreed will be done" (Dan. 11:36). Interestingly, Paul quotes this verse when he is describing the activity of the final Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2:4. So we see that both Jesus and Paul found in Daniel 11 the basis for their view of the end of the age. (Strangely, many commentators have been slow to admit that Jesus treats Daniel 11:31 as an event falling within the last 3½ years of this age. It has been more "comfortable" for them to dispose of the prophecy by claiming that it has already been fulfilled!)

During the time of the great tribulation, the King of the North will come into conflict with the King of the South (probably Egypt, or Lybia?). But the powerful King of the North will proceed southwards and "gain control of the hidden treasure of gold and silver" (v. 43), yet come to a disastrous end in the area of the Holy Mountain (11:45). This event is described by Paul as the destruction of the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:8): The Lord Jesus Christ "will destroy him with the breath of His mouth and bring [him] to an end by the appearance of His coming." Then, as we have seen, the dead are raised (Dan. 12:2) following the end of the tribulation (Dan. 12:1). Most important of all, the whole complex of events from Daniel 11:31 onwards spans a period of 1290 days (Dan. 12:11). (Readers should question schemes of prophecy which attempt to stretch this material over hundreds of years!)

Nothing could be more important for students of prophecy than to grasp this simple account, particularly the chronological data

given under oath by the revealing angel in Daniel 12:7, 11. We should note in passing that a "time" in Daniel's vocabulary appears to equal one year, as we see from the use of the same expression in Daniel 4:25, 32 where a period of seven "times," i.e., years, of insanity struck Nebuchadnezzar. So important is this 3½ years that it occurs again in Revelation 11:2 ("forty-two months") and Revelation 12:6, 14 (1260 days, equal to "a time, times, and half a time"). The same period appears once again as 42 months during which the beast is to exercise his tyrannical authority (Rev. 13:5). The whole picture becomes quite clear once we take our cue from Jesus' reference in Matthew 24:15 to Daniel's Abomination of Desolation in Daniel (11:31).

There is no need for the church to lose its nerve over prophecy. If we acknowledge Jesus' (and Paul's) own reliance on Daniel 11 as a safe guide to the future, we shall gain a clear view of the final events of this age in the Middle East. It is only when the connections between Jesus' prophetic discourse and Daniel's full account are broken that we lose sight of the clear predictive narrative in Daniel 11:31ff. How grateful we should be for these wonderful predictions, graciously given us by the revealing angel, recorded for us by Daniel and developed and amplified by Jesus in Matthew 24:15, by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:4ff. and again by Jesus through John in the book of Revelation.

Prophecy is a great treasure for the church. By no means should it be ignored as a means of strengthening every Christian and developing the love for the truth which leads to salvation (2 Thess. 2:10, 12, 13). Jesus obviously loved the book of Daniel with its great vision of the time of the end and the triumph

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Ways to Your Wife's Heart

Valentine's day is a time when we traditionally think of love and romance. But wives like to be treated in a special way all year around. Here is a menu of suggestions to get you started:

1. Make up some coupons that are good for your help with three unpleasant household chores. Attach them to the broom or inside the door of the cleaning supplies cabinet.
2. If she normally has to get up early every morning (like to take care of the children) give her a great treat by placing a note sealed in an envelope on her pillow. The note should read, "You are invited

to sleep in as long as you wish tomorrow morning. This gift compliments of your handsome husband!"

3. Shock her with this one! Some morning at the breakfast table say, "Honey, I don't want to read this boring newspaper this morning. Let's talk instead."
4. Send her flowers to celebrate a "non-occasion" occasion such as taking the snow tires off the car, the neighbors finally cutting their lawn, the great lasagna she made last weekend, or sending in the income tax.
5. On at least some of your business trips, plan ahead so that a letter, card, or note

will be waiting in the mailbox every day you're away.

6. If she's had a rough week and the laundry pile looks like Mount Everest, tell her you'll "tackle the mountain" and load the washer while she does something else.
7. Walk, jog, bicycle, shoot baskets, swim, play golf or tennis — do something to keep your body healthy and trim. A woman like her deserves a man who looks great!
8. In springtime take her for a walk in the woods. Pick her a bouquet of wild flowers.
9. Tear the movie ads out of the newspaper and attach a note asking her to pick out a movie the two of you can go to. Leave the ad and a note on the kitchen table.
10. Once a month (at least) rescue her from the kitchen. Take her and the kids out for a meal on the weekend. □



Ways to Your Husband's Heart

Ladies . . . your husbands also like a little extra attention every once in a while. Here are some ideas for you to let him know how much you love him:

1. At dinner tonight, reach under the table and hold his hand.
2. If you don't care much for sports, really shock him by buying two tickets — one for him and one for you — to a sporting event.
3. Once or twice a week, watch one of the TV shows he likes with him. Sit next to him — close. Forget about reading, knitting, cracking your knuckles, or chewing gum during the program. Instead, hold his hand and participate in the viewing.
4. Don't be hesitant to change your appearance: try a new hairstyle, different shades of makeup, a switch in perfume, an unusual nightgown. Keep him guessing and interested.
5. Buy him a pack of new baseball cards (keep your hands off the bubble gum!) at the grocery store. Give the cards to him some afternoon when he's watching a baseball game on TV.
6. Find at least one thing a day — some newspaper story, some idea, some something — that is of interest to both of you and talk about it together.
7. Once a month, go to some quiet café late at night. Order steaming mugs of coffee. Look into each other's eyes and talk the way you did when you first met.
8. Buy some chocolate candy bars and hide them in the freezer. The next time he grumbles that there's "nothing sweet in the house," casually say, "Why don't you have one of those candy bars in the freezer?"
9. The night before you celebrate your wedding anniversary, haul out the wedding photographs and reminisce together.
10. Stop by a hardware store with him and insist that he buy one tool that he really needs and does not have for jobs around the house.

If you need more ideas, check out *101 Ways to Your Husband's/Wife's Heart* by Nick and Rosie Allan, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983.

Beatitudes for Married Couples

Blessed are the husband and wife who continue to be affectionate, considerate, and loving after the wedding bells have ceased ringing.

Blessed are the husband and wife who are as polite and courteous to one another as they are to their friends.

Blessed are they who have a sense of humor, for this attitude will be a handy shock absorber.

Blessed are they who love their mates more than any other person in the world, and who joyfully fulfill their marriage vow of a lifetime of fidelity and mutual helpfulness.

Blessed are they who remember to thank God for their food before they partake of it, and who

set aside some time each day for the reading of the Bible and prayer.

Blessed are they who attain parenthood, for children are a heritage of the Lord.

Blessed are those mates who never speak loudly to each other and who make their home a place "where seldom is heard a discouraging word."

Blessed are the husband and wife who faithfully attend the worship service of the church for the advancement of Christ's kingdom.

Blessed are the husband and wife who can work out their problems of adjustment without interference from relatives.

Blessed is the couple who have a complete understanding about financial matters and who have worked out perfect partnership with all the money under control of both.

Blessed are the husband and wife who humbly dedicate their lives and their home to Christ and practice the teachings of Christ in their home by being unselfish, loyal, and loving.

— Author Unknown

(Read the fifth chapter of Ephesians, Colossians 3:12-19, and 1 Peter 3:1-9.)

Making Time Your Friend

(Continued from Page 23)

nature with a child. Step lively as you mow the lawn so that you have more time for Scripture. Rush newspaper reading so that you can take a drive to see a sunset.

Hurry routine responsibilities so that you can develop godliness in a more methodical manner. Pace yourself. What can be speeded up? What can be eliminated? What needs more attention? Effective spiritual growth usually requires a reappropriation of time.

9. Measure Life by Quality. Stop judging life by accumulations, like how many customers, clients, accounts, number of committees on which you serve, number of jobs you fill in the church, or how hard you work. Consider the comment attributed to Will Rogers, "It's not so much what you do each day — it is what you get done that counts." Since there is much to enjoy on occasions when you are not ruled by the clock, why not take off your watch on a weekend and allow yourself to be directed by your natural sense of timing? John Gardner suggests favored environments for quality life development,

like a walk at the beach or a special fishing stream, and a nonverbal pastime such as music, gardening, sports, light reading, or work with one's hands.

Begin thinking of satisfying relationships and quality achievement; then rid your schedule of the commitments that only feed your vanity. Take time to get better acquainted with your family. Set aside time to cultivate your inner world. Try something new to develop a growing edge to free you from the repetition of daily events; try a new sport, take a class, or begin a new hobby. Ask God to cure your hurry so that you can enjoy life more.

10. Use Jesus as a Model for Time Evaluation. Jesus taught that the road to spirituality is always under construction, and He provides us with a magnificent example for building a fulfilled life. Remember the renewal He received from withdrawal from His regular routines.

Compare the way you use your time with the way Jesus used His time during His

earthly ministry. At the beginning of your day, ask yourself how many hours you are willing to place in His hands. Adjust your commitments to what He wants done. How does God judge the way you used yesterday? How does He evaluate your plans for tomorrow? Be as specific as possible because vagueness can be confusing and deadly.

As you consider the details of your living, use the petition Jesus prayed as your own, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Ask God to provide insight for developing friendship with time so that you may experience strength for weakness, peace for frustration, and confidence in place of tension. Flavia, the greeting card designer, says it so well: "Do something wonderful with this day — for it will never come again." □

Spirituality: God's Rx for Stress, Beacon Hill Press, 1992, pp. 132-137. Used with permission.

Sharpening Our Focus on the Future

(Continued from Page 17)

of the Kingdom of God over a godless world. With all the prophets, Jesus looked forward to a great era of peace on earth — the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God was the center of His Gospel Message for salvation (Mark 1:14, 15; Luke 4:43; Mat. 24:14, etc.) Let us keep the torch of these astonishing

predictions about the time of trouble leading to the Kingdom burning in a dark world. Above all let us not throw away the key to the right reading of Matthew 24, namely, the essential pieces of the puzzle supplied by Daniel and specifically called to our attention by Jesus in Matthew 24:15 — Daniel 9:27;

8:13; 11:31; 12:11. The Abomination of Desolation is a feature of the last few years of this age and its perpetrator is the King of the North (Dan. 11:21ff.), a figure from the Middle East. □

And Violence Filled the Land

SOME 65 YEARS AGO ON ST. Valentine's Day in Chicago, seven mobsters were brutally gunned down by four from another gang. The world recoiled in horror from such brutality.

Today it's difficult for us to recapture such horror. An event like that would hardly shock us anymore as it has become so commonplace. Possibly seven slain at one time might cause a "tsk, tsk" but no outcry. We've seen it before and we're convinced we'll see it again.

Polly Klass was kidnapped from her own home during a sleep-over and murdered. A youngster in California was pulled screaming from her bicycle two blocks from home and murdered. And this family had already had another youngster previously kidnapped.

At first violence seemed to be located in the central cities, but just recently a home not far from mine had the front door violently kicked in and three hoodlums invaded that home and brutalized the family. Not in the inner city, but out here in the suburbs. "What is this world coming to?" we ask, and shake our heads.

Actually we know what it is coming to, but we wish it weren't so. We almost deny the reality of the evidence as if by denial we might make it go away. Even the powerful are not immune. Witness the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin: a young Israeli, disagreeing with Rabin's overtures of peace to the Palestinians, takes the matter into his own hands and shoots to death this world leader.

Many years ago, God looked upon this world and "the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, 'I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them'" (Gen. 6:11-13a).

Even those of us who profess Jesus Christ are not immune to this brutality of mind and spirit. Essentially it all stems from an insistence on having our own way. James writes:

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures (James 4:1-3).

Only one thing will end this escalating spiral of violence, and that will be the return of Jesus. As I look out my window I see a beautiful world, even in the starkness of winter, but it is a world inhabited by people whose hearts are far from God. Even in churches, God's own people quarrel when things don't go their way. Churches split, ministers are fired, people leave a church and go to another, never being reconciled.

We cannot change the world — that is the responsibility of the Lord. But we can do our best not to be a part of that sort of behavior. Paul writes, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men."

No, we cannot bring the Kingdom to pass, but we can be pockets of Kingdom people living in a different way from the world around us. Violence may intrude into our midst, but it ought never to come from one of us. Read Paul's words of encouragement to the church in Thessalonica and let them encourage you and strengthen you. They're found in 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12. □

Only one thing will end this escalating spiral of violence, and that will be the return of Jesus.



BY KENT ROSS

Making Time Your Friend

God never overloads anyone, even though others may make too many demands on us.

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

“HURRY SICKNESS” can be healed, the chains of our frenzied deadlines broken, and a wonderful friendship with time can be built. One starts by mobilizing his own will. But how? How can we, with the same number of hours as everyone else, make our lives less hectic and more fulfilled? What constructive strategies can be used? About yourself, believe what John W. Gardner says about others, “Even in the most apathetic, the most materialistic, or even the most unimaginative member of a group there is something waiting to be awakened, wanting to be awakened.”

1. Let Done Be Done. Additional work on a complete project increases frustration and wastes time. Leave a finished assignment. Charlie Shedd reports a young career woman's self-discovery, “No wonder I'm worn out! I do everything I do so many times. First I worry about doing it — then when I have done it, I do it over, worrying whether I did it right.” She has something important to teach us: give your best to a task and trust the results to God. Only the Father knows the long-term results of a deed, but He knows.

2. Boss Your Time. Scrutinize your schedule to see what your calendar says about your priorities and your performance. Does your datebook support your intended values? A dedicated cardiac surgeon places patient care ahead of golf. A serious law student considers preparation for her bar

exam more important than shopping. A committed emergency room nurse is more eager to ease suffering than to complete insurance forms. An effective teacher prefers to sharpen a student's mind over leaving school early each afternoon. And some executives are downshifting voluntarily in corporate life to have more time for family and themselves. Try to be both efficient and effective.

Greater time control can be achieved by a more flexible approach to scheduling. One expert recommends allowing 25 percent more time for each task than you might expect to take; the cushion allows expanded time for each task or provides free time if the extra time is not needed. Another specialist suggests that no more than one-half of our time should be scheduled so that we allow for interruptions, unplanned demands, or



BY NEIL B. WISEMAN

creative thought — or all of them. Sadly, but not surprisingly, schedules often reveal something significantly different from the way their owner planned to use his life.

Critically analyze your calendar. Quiz your datebook to see if your priorities control your actions. Accept the fact that busyness can be used to keep you from finishing difficult assignments or facing hard decisions. Just as a checkbook assigns values to spending, a datebook assigns values to conduct.

Why not refocus your activities on essentials? Don't rush your life away.

3. Shun the Success Trap. The road to the top in any field could make you miserable. Success seldom satisfies for long; the thing we want the most often brings undesirable burdens. Fast-lane living often traps people in unsatisfying success and leaves little time for inner growth.

Many individuals, by the time they reach middle age, feel locked into a professional or corporate wilderness. Regrettably, the same possibility of overreaching ambitions exists for blue-collar workers and business owners. To avoid this trap, try evaluating your intentions against every unrelenting deadline, every struggle for prominence, and every desire for instant gratification.

A Fulfilled Life Demands a Balance Between Reflection and Activity

Why not try to fire as much enthusiasm for interior development like prayer, meditation, and encounter with Scripture as you already feel for security, work, and hobbies. Then at the end of the day, quiet your body, center your mind, and talk with God. Surprisingly, the day's stress will ease as adventures in prayer, Scripture reading, and meditation increase.

4. Apply Discipline to the Demands of Your Life. Like short sips of refreshing cool

water, the spiritual disciplines can be used even when you are experiencing pressing time constraint. When necessary, Christ makes encouragement and enablement available to us in one-minute segments.

Even though the spiritual disciplines are as old as Christianity, these common practices such as fasting, sharing, prayer, and serious study of Scripture are useful ways to deal with the stressful frustrations of modern life. But if these traditional disciplines are to make a difference to the individual quester, they must be infused with meaning to avoid the cartoon character Ziggy's testimony, "Lately I've gotten into transcendental vegetation."

Ask yourself several key questions: What insights about the use of time do I receive from Scripture? What options for uncluttering life come to mind as I pray? How can intercession, service, and centering on Christ lessen my time stressors? What can I do to make tomorrow spiritually significant?

5. Develop a Time Log. A time log helps a person keep track of time and audit the results; it also helps an individual acknowledge ownership of time and helps him control its use. As an effective way to evaluate priorities, try keeping an activity log in 15-minute segments for a week or month, using only categories that make sense to you, like family, job, leisure, television viewing, devotional development, and worship.

Try holding yourself seriously accountable for what truly matters. Admit to yourself that your use of time ultimately determines the kind of life you live; schedule extended periods of time when you can withdraw for a change of activity, geography, and people.

6. Learn to Say No. Say no for the right reasons. Sometimes it is difficult to resist accepting too many commitments because requests flatter us. But no one can do everything. There will be times, as you culti-

vate your inner life, when worthy tasks must wait for another day or somebody else. Sometimes saying no makes room in the schedule to prepare for future tasks.

Then, too, overcommitments often produce inferior work. Elton Trueblood is right, "Holy shoddy is still shoddy." When we overschedule ourselves, the quality of our service suffers, the Kingdom is weakened, and we no longer strive for excellence. "No," rightly used, helps us pay closer attention to the meaning and quality of all our activities.

7. Drop "Too Busy" from Your Conversation. God never overloads anyone, even though others may make too many demands on us. When tempted to use that phrase, "too busy," ask yourself if God has given you too much to do or if you have less time than others. The Father's pace provides both fulfilling satisfaction and worthy accomplishments. And He is never impressed with a frenzied lifestyle even in His most pious children. Low motivation, overcommitment, poor organization, or inappropriate priorities may be the real culprits.

Try listening to the absurd things others say about time. Notice how some people talk about being busy but in the next sentence discuss watching long hours of television. Or, they may discuss the crushing demands of their job but brag the next moment about long coffee breaks.

Your conversation may sound just as amusing to others. Try to drop "too busy" from your vocabulary and harmonize your day and week around the way God directs you to use your time.

8. Hurry Up to Slow Down. Accelerate routine activities to accomplish necessary tasks more quickly. Iron faster so that you can read slower. Hurry grocery shopping so that you can pray at a leisurely pace. Wash your car quickly so that you can explore

(Please turn to Page 20)

A Man's Love for God's Word

(Continued from Page 13)

God's spirit (Acts 2:38). We are to allow God's spirit to grow in us, until we are completely led by that holy spirit (Gal. 5:16-25; Rom. 8).

Paul advised us to be *filled* with that spirit (Eph. 5:18). We are not to quench it (1 Th. 5:19), nor grieve it (Eph. 4:30), because by it we are sealed to the day of redemption. It is by God's spirit that we are strengthened with might in the inner man (Eph. 3:16).

God has sent forth the spirit of His Son into our hearts (Gal. 4:6). If we don't have *that* spirit from God we are not Christians (Rom. 8:9).

It is absolutely necessary for us to have God's spirit, and to be led by it. He has kindly offered it to us for our good. We are grateful, very grateful. Life without that spiritual element, "the things which are above," is not

real life. But people filled with the spirit of God go from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

Because of These Things, We Want to See God's Saving Word Go forth Everywhere

Matthew 24:14 says, "This gospel of the Kingdom of God shall be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations." Jesus told us to preach the gospel in all the world, so that the one who believes and is baptized will be saved, but the one who doesn't believe will perish.

Paul said, "Preach the *word*." Jesus said the words *He* spoke were words of life. The Word of God is a light for men's path. It is a well of water springing up in us to eternal life!

If we have any compassion at all for the dying world of men, we will be charged with

zeal to preach that word. Why? So men can be saved! It will pull them out of the fire. It will give them Hope. My passion for God's Saving Word to be in the hearts of the Africans makes me work so feverishly to send them important Bible studies to translate into their own language, so they can be saved! All of us have that love for God's Word. It is His invitation for not only *our* salvation, but salvation *for all* men. We have to be about our Father's business while we have life in order for *ourselves* to have salvation, and so that *others* may have the opportunity for life. How selfish it would be to think only of me and my wife and my son John. Such an attitude is a sure way of being cast out.

It is the *precious* Word of our heavenly Father that will change people's lives. May that wonderful Word be taken into all corners of the world, and may we have a part in it. □

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The Restitution Herald

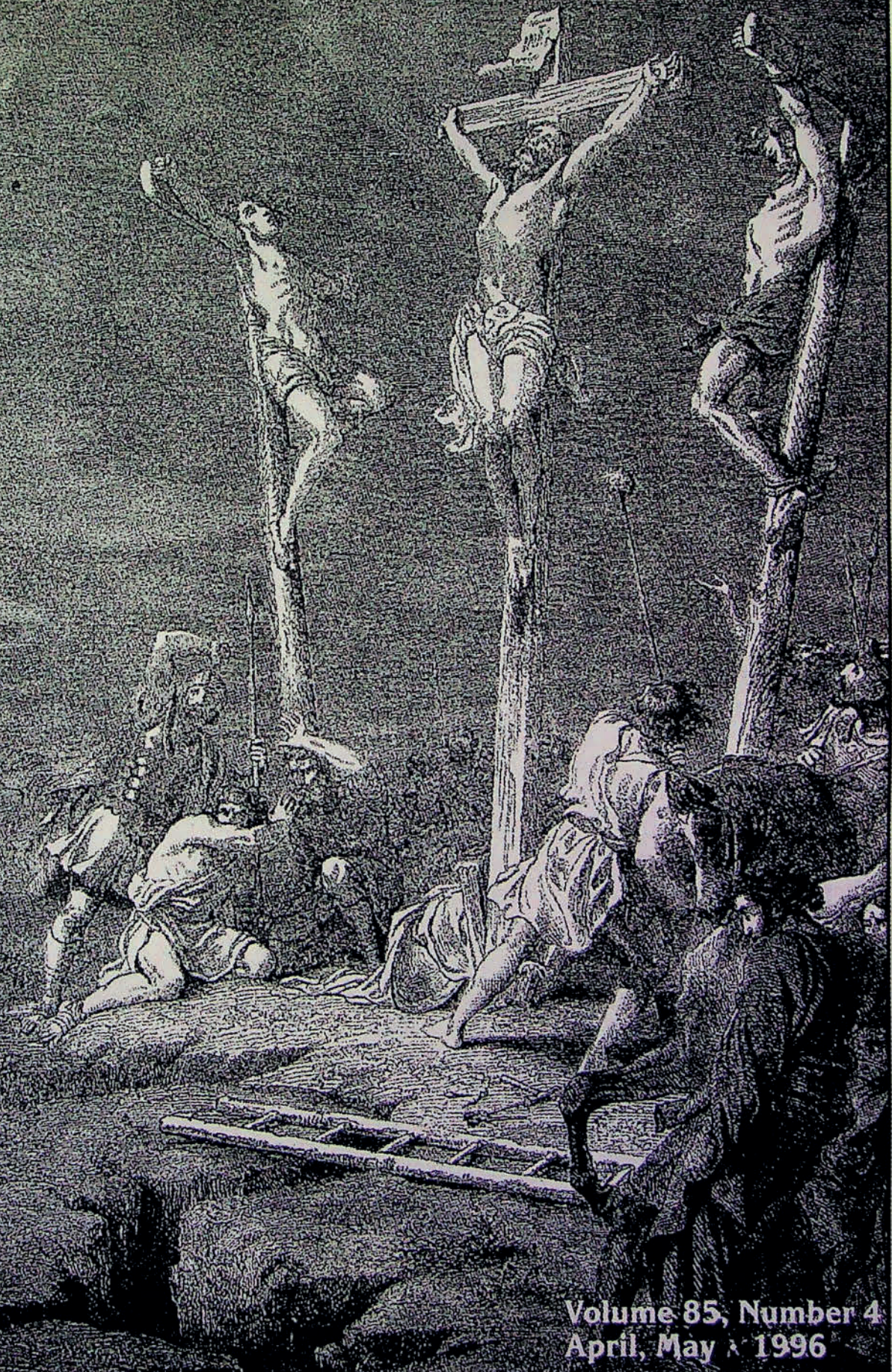
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The Restitution Herald



Volume 85, Number 4
April, May, 1996

A MESSAGE
from the Editor . . .

*Our world is
becoming progressively
more and more violent.*

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MY EYES ARE MOIST AND MY heart is heavy as I look at the photograph of a class of five- and six-year-old children standing beside their teacher. The photograph shows a group of happy, smiling faces — sweet and precocious little ones just beginning school and just beginning to live. Some of the boys have those exaggerated smiles that are typical of five-year-olds (I have one five-year-old boy myself). Seeing those beautiful little children is painful for me because I know that the day after the photo was taken at school, a man wielding two revolvers and two semiautomatic pistols walked into their gym and started shooting. By the time he turned the gun on himself he had killed 16 children along with their teacher, injured 12 others, and ripped the heart out of the Scottish village of Dunblane.

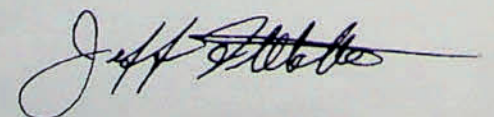
In America, we've become almost desensitized to this kind of violence. We see so much in our news. Mass killings, while still not commonplace, happen with enough frequency here to warrant in some cases only a shrugging of the shoulders and a shaking of the head . . . and then we move on. The United Kingdom is a nation that is no stranger to violence, but it is a targeted violence. The IRA carefully selects its terrorist attacks. They are politically motivated — and while we must certainly condemn that kind of violence, we can at least understand that it is meant to serve some purpose. But mass murder at the hands of a crazed lone gunman is still a relatively new phenomenon — so much so that the events in Dunblane drew a significant amount of attention from members of the British Parliament and even warranted a visit from the Queen herself.

Our world is becoming progressively more and more violent. The quality of our enter-

tainment has gotten so violent that soon the industry will provide parents with a "V-Chip" to help them filter the violence away from young eyes. I think the day is coming, or may even be here already, when the better option is to get rid of the TV altogether, or at least keep it unplugged, locked away, or reserved for previously approved programming.

In this issue, in addition to some very fine theological articles by Anthony Buzzard, Jeremy Smith and Hollis Partlowe and thoughts about personal devotion and ministry by Stephen Bolhous and Melissa Lee, we explore the issue of violence in society. Mark Mattison's article about capital punishment is a thoughtful critique on the effectiveness of execution as a form of deterrence as it relates to violence. You may not agree with his conclusions (then again, you may) but he will undoubtedly cause you to think through this timely issue deeply. We've reprinted an article by Dr. C. Truman Davis giving a physician's view of what happened to Jesus. This is an in-depth look at one form of capital punishment, namely crucifixion. Ed Hayes is "On Target" when he writes about one of the root causes of violence — uncontrolled anger. Some of this will not be easy reading for you . . . it will cause you to wrestle with some unpleasant issues . . . but it causes us to bring our faith to bear on some very challenging concerns of our day.

I appreciate the opportunity to serve you and value your feedback as we strive together to educate and challenge one another as disciples of Jesus Christ. Please keep in touch. □



Jeff Fletcher



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 - THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
 - THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
 - THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
 - THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
 - THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
 - THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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Christ and Capital Punishment

*How should we as
Christians view
capital punishment?*

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ACCORDING TO A RECENT *Time/CNN* poll, 77% of Americans presently support the death penalty as a way to fight crime. But does the death penalty actually reduce crime? More importantly, how should we as Christians view capital punishment?

The Question of Deterrence

Proponents frequently cite common sense as obvious testimony that capital punishment is an effective deterrent against violent crime. Indeed, capital punishment is appealing as a simple answer to a complex problem. However, most studies clearly indicate that *it simply doesn't work*. On the contrary, some studies suggest that capital punishment actually *reinforces* and *validates* violence.

Larry Mattera, a seminarian from Chicago, writes:

If violence is objectivated institutionally as an expression of a society's collective political will to justice, institutions of violence will necessarily become formative of society. The more profoundly a society comes to rely on institutionalized violence as an instrument of its political purpose, the more tightly will institutionalized violence entangle society and the more formative of societal identity violence will become.¹

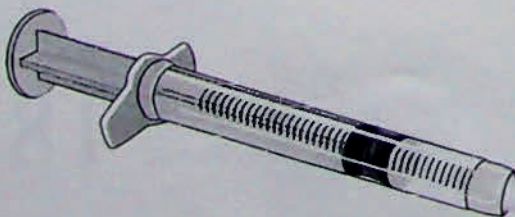
This point is substantiated by Hollywood writer Joseph Kiereck. He cites an FBI statistic that the murder rate in the 12 states which routinely carry out executions is exactly double the rate of the 13 states with no death penalty.² Is capital punishment really a deterrent?

Well, if capital punishment is not a *general* deterrent, some argue, at *least* it is a *special* deterrent. That is, the death penalty may not discourage violent crime in society, but at least the executed offender will not be able to kill again. A study by economist Isaac Ehrlich suggests that for every violent offender put to death, eight hypothetical murders will be prevented. Ehrlich's calculation, however, omits several important variables and suffers from several other faults. Besides, a violent criminal isolated from society for life can no more kill an innocent person than a dead man.

The Question of Racism

We must also consider the element of discrimination. John Dear coordinates a church shelter for the homeless in Washington, D.C. He writes that, according to a study by the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, in a six-year period in Georgia:

Black defendants charged with killing white victims were 11 times more likely to be sentenced to death. Such discrimination exists not only in Geor-



BY MARK MATTISON

gia but everywhere the death penalty is used. Ninety percent of those on death row are there for killing white people, although each year almost half of homicide victims are black.³

We must also remember the retarded and the poor who do not stand an equitable chance in the courtroom. Not every accused person can afford the type of defense that O.J. Simpson hired. "Capital punishment," it has been said, "means that those without the capital suffer the punishment."

The Question of Resources

As long as we're on the subject of money, capital punishment is sometimes defended on economic grounds. Common sense would seem to dictate that putting criminals to death is cheaper than feeding, clothing, and housing them for the rest of their lives. Upon further scrutiny, however, this argument too fails. Once one calculates the cost of the trial, sentencing, mandatory state review, additional appeals, jail costs, and actual execution, the cost of capital punishment far outweighs the cost of life imprisonment. In Florida it is six times more expensive to put a man to death. In Ohio and New York it costs a million dollars to execute a single criminal. In California it can cost up to four million dollars. Which is cheaper?

Perhaps limiting appeals and streamlining the judicial system can eliminate that inefficiency, some argue. Saudi Arabia, for example, has a lower murder rate and a higher execution rate; they executed 140 people in the two and a half year period between 1985 and mid-1988.⁴ But if we appreciate freedom, justice, and liberty, we will not be tempted to follow the fundamentalist religious trail of the Islamic nations. Police states do effectively curb the cancer; but our common sense, I hope, will dissuade us from that course.

The Question of Forgiveness

Capital punishment is not a deterrent; it is not applied fairly; and it is not economically feasible. There remains, then, a single argument for its use: The *emotional* argument. We feel good, we feel safe, when we think that justice is being done, that criminals are getting their "just desserts." But the thirst of revenge is unquenchable; experience teaches us that "getting even" is never enough. Death-row chaplains who minister both to the criminals and to the victims' families testify to that. Killing a hundred criminals will never bring back a single victim. The indescrib-



"Capital punishment is society's final statement that we will not forgive."

— Martin Luther King, Jr.



able struggles of the victims' families cannot be sufficiently resolved in the courtroom; they must ultimately be resolved on the psychological and religious level.

Here we must ask, "What saith the Lord?" Let's consider the words of the apostle Paul:

Do not repay anyone evil for evil . . . If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord . . . Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:17-19, 21, NIV).

Paul was himself a murderer before he became a Christian. Look at all the good *he* did *after his conversion*.

Consider also Jesus' reaction to capital punishment when the adulterous woman was brought before Him. The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees said, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" (John 8:4, NIV). Jesus responded by drawing attention away from the sin of the guilty woman and revealing the sin of the Pharisees. *Then He forgave the woman*. Martin Luther King, Jr. said: "Capital punishment is society's final statement that we will not forgive." But the God who forgives us asks us to forgive others. Remember the parable of the sheep and the goats: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me . . ." *not* "I was in prison and you electrocuted me."

In the final analysis, then, our question is not only, "Does capital punishment work?" Our question must also be, "Is capital punishment moral?" □

¹ Larry Mattera, "Evangelical Approaches to Christian Participation in War: An Inquiry and a Proposal. Part Two." *A Journal from the Radical Reformation*, Summer 1994, Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 25.

² Joseph Kent Kiereck, "Crossing Capital Punishment," unpublished paper, n.d., p. 6.

³ John Dear, "Christians Cannot Morally Support the Death Penalty," *The Death Penalty: Opposing Viewpoints*, San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 1986, rev. 1991, pp. 78, 79.

⁴ Kiereck, p. 6.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

The Passion of Christ from a Medical Point of View

I suddenly realized that I had taken the Crucifixion more or less for granted all these years — that I had grown callous to its horror by a too easy familiarity with the grim details — and a too distant friendship with Him.

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IN THIS ARTICLE, I SHALL discuss some of the physical aspects of the passion, or suffering, of Jesus Christ. We shall follow Him from Gethsemane, through His trial, His scourging, His path along the Via Dolorosa, to His last dying hours on the cross.

I became interested in this when I read an account of the Crucifixion in Jim Bishop's book, *The Day Christ Died*. I suddenly realized that I had taken the Crucifixion more or less for granted all these years — that I had grown callous to its horror by a too easy familiarity with the grim details — and a too distant friendship with Him. It finally occurred to me that as a physician I didn't even know the actual immediate cause of death. The Gospel writers don't help us very much on this point, because crucifixion and scourging were so common during their lifetime that they undoubtedly considered a detailed description totally superfluous — so we have the concise words of the Evangelists: "Pilate, having scourged Jesus, delivered Him to them to be crucified — and they crucified Him."

I am indebted to many who have studied this subject in the past, and especially to a contemporary colleague, Dr. Pierre Barbet, a French surgeon who has done exhaustive historical and experimental research and has written extensively on the subject.



The psychic and spiritual suffering of the Son of God in atonement for the sins of fallen man I have no competence to discuss; however, the physiological and anatomical aspects of our Lord's passion we can examine in some detail . . . what did the body of Jesus of Nazareth actually endure during those hours of torture?

This led me first to a study of the practice of crucifixion itself; that is, the torture and execution of a person by fixation to a cross. Apparently, the first known practice of crucifixion was by the Persians. Alexander and his generals brought it back to the Mediterranean world — to Egypt and to Carthage. The Romans apparently learned the practice from the Carthaginians and (as with almost everything the Romans did) rapidly developed a very high degree of efficiency and

BY DR. C. TRUMAN DAVIS

skill in carrying it out. A number of Roman authors (Livy, Cicero, Tacitus) comment on it. Several innovations and modifications are described in the ancient literature; I'll mention only a few which may have some bearing here. The upright portion of the cross (or stipes) could have the cross-arm (or patibulum) attached two or three feet below its top — this is what we commonly think of today as the classical form of the cross (the one which was later named the Latin cross); however, the common form used in our Lord's day was the Tau cross (shaped like the Greek letter Tau or like our T). In this cross the patibulum was placed in a notch at the top of the stipes. There is fairly overwhelming archaeological evidence that it was on this type of cross that Jesus was crucified.

The upright post, or stipes, was generally permanently fixed in the ground at the site of execution and the condemned man was forced to carry the patibulum, apparently weighing about 110 pounds, from the prison to the place of execution. Without any historical or biblical proof, medieval and Renaissance painters have given us our picture of Christ carrying the entire cross. Many of these painters and most of the sculptors of crucifixes today show the nails through the palms. Roman historical accounts and experimental work have shown that the nails were driven between the small bones of the wrists and not through the palms. Nails driven through the palms will strip out between the fingers when they support the weight of a human body. The misconception may have come about through a misunderstanding of Jesus' words to Thomas, "Observe My hands." Anatomists, both modern and ancient, have always considered the wrist as part of the hand.

A titulus, or small sign, stating the victim's crime was usually carried at the front of the

procession and later nailed to the cross above the head. This sign with its staff nailed to the top of the cross would have given it somewhat the characteristic form of the Latin cross.

The physical passion of the Christ begins in Gethsemane. Of the many aspects of this initial suffering, I shall only discuss the one of physiological interest: the bloody sweat. It is interesting that the physician of the group, St. Luke, is the only one to mention this. He says, "And being in agony, He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground."



*The palace guards . . .
blindfolded Him and
mockingly taunted Him to
identify them as they each
passed by, spat on Him, and
struck Him in the face.*



Every attempt imaginable has been used by modern scholars to explain away this phrase, apparently under the mistaken impression that this just doesn't happen.

A great deal of effort could be saved by consulting the medical literature. Though very rare, the phenomenon of Hematidrosis, or bloody sweat, is well documented. Under great emotional stress, tiny capillaries in the sweat glands can break, thus mixing blood with sweat. This process alone could have produced marked weakness and possible shock.

We shall move rapidly through the betrayal and arrest; I must stress again that important portions of the Passion story are

missing from this account. This may be frustrating to you, but in order to adhere to our purpose of discussing only the purely physical aspects of the Passion, this is necessary. After the arrest in the middle of the night, Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin and Caiphias, the High Priest; it is here that the first physical trauma was inflicted. A soldier struck Jesus across the face for remaining silent when questioned by Caiphias. The palace guards then blindfolded Him and mockingly taunted Him to identify them as they each passed by, spat on Him, and struck Him in the face.

In the early morning Jesus, battered and bruised, dehydrated, and exhausted from a sleepless night, is taken across Jerusalem to the Praetorium of the Fortress Antonia, the seat of government of the Procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate. You are, of course, familiar with Pilate's action in attempting to pass responsibility to Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Judea. Jesus apparently suffered no physical mistreatment at the hands of Herod and was returned to Pilate. It was then, in response to the cries of the mob, that Pilate ordered Bar-Abbas released and condemned Jesus to scourging and crucifixion. There is much disagreement among authorities about scourging as a prelude to crucifixion. Most Roman writers from this period do not associate the two. Many scholars believe that Pilate originally ordered Jesus to be scourged as His full punishment, and that the death sentence by crucifixion came only in response to the taunt by the mob that the Procurator was not properly defending Caesar against this pretender who claimed to be the King of the Jews.

Preparations for the scourging are carried out. The prisoner is stripped of His clothing and His hands are tied to a post above His head. It is doubtful whether the Romans made any attempt to follow the Jewish law

in this matter of scourging. The Jews had an ancient law prohibiting more than forty lashes. The Pharisees, always making sure that the law was strictly kept, insisted that only thirty-nine lashes be given. (In case of a miscount, they were sure of remaining within the law.) The Roman legionnaire steps forward with the flagrum (or flagellum) in his hand. This is a short whip consisting of several heavy, leather thongs with two small balls of lead attached near the ends of each. The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus' shoulders, back and legs. At first the heavy thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles. The small balls of lead first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by subsequent blows. Finally the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When it is determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped.

The half-fainting Jesus is then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with His own blood. The Roman soldiers see a great joke in this provincial Jew claiming to be a king. They throw a robe across His shoulders and place a stick in His hand for a scepter. They still need a crown to make their travesty complete. A small bundle of flexible branches covered with long thorns (commonly used for firewood) are plaited into the shape of a crown and this is pressed into His scalp. Again there is copious bleeding (the scalp being one of the most vascular areas of the body). After mocking Him and striking Him across the face, the soldiers

take the stick from His hand and strike Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into His scalp. Finally, they tire of their sadistic sport and the robe is torn from His back. This had already become adherent to the clots of blood and serum in the wounds, and its removal, just as in the careless removal of a surgical bandage, causes excruciating pain. It's almost as though He were again being whipped — and the wounds again begin to bleed.

In deference to Jewish custom, the Romans return His garments. The heavy

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*As the arms fatigue, great
waves of cramps sweep
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▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

patibulum of the cross is tied across His shoulders, and the procession of the condemned Christ, two thieves and the execution detail of Roman soldiers, headed by a centurion, begins its slow journey along the Via Dolorosa. In spite of His efforts to walk erect, the weight of the heavy wooden beam, together with the shock produced by copious blood loss, is too much. He stumbles and falls. The rough wood of the beam gouges into the lacerated skin and muscles of the shoulders. He tries to rise, but human muscles have been pushed beyond their endurance. The centurion, anxious to get on with the crucifixion, selects a stalwart North African onlooker, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross. Jesus follows, still bleeding and sweat-

ing the cold, clammy sweat of shock. The 650 yard journey from the fortress Antonia to Golgotha is finally completed. The prisoner is again stripped of His clothes — except for a loin cloth which is allowed the Jews.

The crucifixion begins. Jesus is offered wine mixed with myrrh, a mild analgesic mixture. He refuses to drink. Simon is ordered to place the patibulum on the ground and Jesus is quickly thrown backward with His shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square, wrought-iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly, he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexion and movement. The patibulum is then lifted into place at the top of the stipes and the titulus reading "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" is nailed in place.

The left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The Victim is now crucified. As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain — the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As He pushes Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet.

At this point, another phenomenon occurs. As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to

push Himself upward. Hanging by His arms, the pectoral muscles are paralyzed and the intercostal muscles are unable to act. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the bloodstream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, He is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen. It was undoubtedly during these periods that He uttered the seven short sentences which are recorded:

The first, looking down at the Roman soldiers throwing dice for His seamless garment, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

The second, to the penitent thief, "I tell you the truth today, you will be with me in paradise."

The third, looking down at the terrified, grief stricken, adolescent John (the beloved apostle). He said, "Behold thy mother," and looking to Mary, His mother, "Woman, behold thy son."

The fourth cry is from the beginning of the 22nd Psalm, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Hours of this limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber; then another agony begins, a deep crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.

Let us remember again the 22nd Psalm (the 14th verse), "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels."

It is now almost over — the loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level — the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues — the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues send their flood of stimuli to the brain.

Jesus gasps His fifth cry, "I thirst."

Let us remember another verse from the prophetic 22nd Psalm: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth



Our Lord died, not the usual crucifixion death of suffocation, but of heart failure due to shock and constriction of the heart.



to my jaws; and thou has brought me into the dust of death."

A sponge soaked in Posca, the cheap, sour wine which is the staple drink of the Roman legionnaires, is lifted to His lips. He apparently doesn't take any of the liquid. The body of Jesus is now in extremis, and He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. This realization brings out His sixth words — possibly little more than a tortured whisper.

"It is finished."

His mission of atonement has been completed. Finally He can allow His body to die.

With one last surge of strength, He once again presses His torn feet against the nail,

straightens His legs, takes a deeper breath, and utters His seventh and last cry, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit."

The rest you know. In order that the Sabbath not be profaned, the Jews asked that the condemned men be dispatched and removed from the crosses. The common method of ending a crucifixion was by crucifraction, the breaking of the bones of the legs. This prevented the victim from pushing himself upward; the tension could not be relieved from the muscles of the chest, and rapid suffocation occurred. The legs of the two thieves were broken, but when they came to Jesus they saw that this was unnecessary.

Apparently to make doubly sure of death, the legionnaire drove His lance through the fifth interspace between the ribs, upward through the pericardium and into the heart. The 34th verse of the 19th chapter of the Gospel according to St. John: "And immediately there came out blood and water." Thus there was an escape of watery fluid from the sac surrounding the heart and blood from the interior of the heart. We, therefore, have rather conclusive post-mortem evidence that Our Lord died, not the usual crucifixion death by suffocation, but of heart failure due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium.

Thus we have seen a glimpse of the epitome of evil which man can exhibit toward man. This is not a pretty sight and is apt to leave us despondent and depressed. How grateful we can be that we have a sequel: A glimpse of the infinite mercy of God toward man — the miracle of the atonement and the expectation of Easter morning! □

— Arizona Medicine, March, 1965.

Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury

Dear Archbishop,

In a class on biblical eschatology here at Atlanta Bible College, we used sections of your most interesting book *I Believe in Man*. I wondered whether I might be permitted to reflect on a couple of points you raised in your last chapter, "The Destiny of Man."

As one born and bred in the Church of England, and having "gone back to school" (as Americans say) to get a degree in theology and then to teach in a Bible College since 1981, I now realize that I earlier had only the vaguest notion of the various options in eschatology.

Following the excellent work of the biblical theologians of the 60s (Alan Richardson was particularly helpful), I am now fully convinced that, as you say, "man is by nature mortal" (p. 163), that "the ancient Greek concept of the immortality of the soul is at complete variance with the idea of the resurrection" (p. 167), that "it is impossible to conceive of personality or the self existing without a body" (p. 167), and that "a body-less soul is therefore alien to the Christian faith."

If as you further state, "we [Christians] do not step out with the immaterialist who postulates an immaterial soul over and above his physical body," why is it that the average Church of England churchgoer (and members of the mainline denominations in general) *does* in fact believe in just such a surviving soul, based on what is the clear implication of funeral sermons and what appears to be the accepted consensus amongst the clergy?

If "it is a false trail to look within the human body for an immortal 'soul,' mind or residual self which *somehow* survives the destruction of the flesh" (pp. 172, 173), might it be possible to initiate (in this decade of evangelism) an exciting return to biblical teaching on this fundamental question of the nature of man, death and hope? Surely a more vigorous Christianity would result from a clear view of the future, as the Bible presents it. By asserting the hope of resurrection of the whole person and of all the faithful at Christ's return (1 Cor. 15:23), we would immediately bring understanding to our personal Bible study and enjoy the immense advantage of reflecting the voice of the apostles. Though the corporate resurrection of the faithful is clearly laid out in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, many read these passages (and hear them preached at funerals) in the confusing shadow of a preconceived notion that the individual's moment of death is the instant of immediate conscious glory in heaven.

Far outweighing the moment of death is the hope for the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth and the resurrection which introduces it. This view of the future pervades both Testaments.

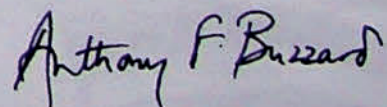
You observe what I think many of us can confirm that "sermons and talks on eschatology are rare indeed in Christian congregations" (p. 177). This must be because our accepted traditional teaching confuses the whole issue by speaking of "souls" departing their bodies at death. This must lead to a loss of the central NT teaching on resurrection from Hades as the only way out of death. The God of the Bible is one who "brings down to the grave and raises up." But I seemed in those early days to be presented with a prospect of going up without having to go down at all! Jesus emerged from the "heart of the earth" or Hades only via resurrection. And His experience is the model for our own expectation.

An appeal for a reform of basic Christian thinking along these lines is nothing new. The report in memory of Archbishop Temple, "Towards the Conversion of England" of 1945, contained in section 53 the assertion that "the idea of the inherent indestructibility of the human soul (or consciousness) owes its origin to Greek, not to Bible, sources." It seems to me that so far we have merely talked about the biblical view of death. Nothing has been achieved in terms of a revolution of thought to bring pulpit and pew into line with the Hebraic biblical view of man as a unity in need of resurrection *from* death, not survival of death. It is not surprizing that eschatology is not a vital subject in the church when our own teaching about surviving disembodied souls has made the NT so difficult to understand. The great virtue of Hope is undermined if not abandoned when we do not share the clear expectation of Jesus and the early church of a future, corporate "awakening" from death.

I write as one brought up in the Anglican community who was not exposed to biblical teaching in any depth until my 20s. What has been such a comfort to me is a clear view of the destiny of man as needing to be resurrected from death and of that resurrection being an event of the eschatological future. The whole matter of the Parousia is brought into focus when we abandon the false notion that the dead survive immediately. Traditional teaching (to which Tyndale also objected) changes the Bible's insistence that resurrection is essential for the gaining of immortality.

Thank you again for your encouraging teaching about the mortality of man. Our prayer is that a campaign might be launched so that the desires of the 1945 committee and the wisdom of the Bible theologians might bear fruit in the lives of many in England and the Christian West.

Yours sincerely in Hope,



Sir Anthony Buzzard, Bt., MA (Oxon), MA Th

The News Behind the News

*More than ever,
we're convinced
we will see our
country's morals
deteriorating . . .*



United States National Debt

U.S. News & World Report (11-27-95) calls attention to the national debt, which is piling up in the amount of \$1 trillion every four years. We are paying interest on the national debt at the rate of \$1 billion dollars a day.

Once a nation has reached our present indebtedness, no recipient of socialized medicine wants to give up all the benefits he has known and surrender to the austere measures necessitated by a balanced budget.

Already, hear the President say, "This budget will mean dirtier water, more smog, more illness, and a diminished quality of life." Instead of being truthful and relating the quandary we are in, President Clinton is merely offering false hopes. He portrays those calling for cutbacks as wanting to allow more arsenic in our drinking water and raw sewage on our beaches.

These are a few of the signs which reveal the dilemma into which we have fallen.

God's News Prediction — Moral Sinkhole in the USA

More than ever, we're convinced we will see our country's morals deteriorating, so that we might con-

sider giving up our television sets because programs will become so immoral.

One network program recently featured a clip from the actress who earned acclaim from movies like *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music*. Julie Andrews said she has intentionally set out to destroy her image as a moral decent character. In a scene from another movie she was seen ripping off the front of her dress, leaving part of her anatomy exposed.

Procter & Gamble, the nation's largest advertiser, said it has taken ads off talk shows because they have become too raunchy. And the trend can be expected to continue, with nudity shown increasingly on TV and movie screen.

By tapping a few keys on his computer, a 15-year-old is able to bring up more graphic sexual images than are found on a newsstand stocked with adult magazines. This is the age to which we have come — with access to 3,000 razor sharp images of nude men and women, graphic sex, and indescribable acts.

Surely the days of Sodom and Gomorrah are upon us, and we predict our Lord will soon appear, for "as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:28-30).

We predict more action will be taken by churches which are seeking to protect their young people from the environment of wickedness that surrounds them. We are reminded of the words of our Lord who exclaimed, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:12). We lament the condition of lukewarm, Laodicean believers, but think of waxing cold!

*TV and Film Industry —
Hollywood's Poison Pill*

USA Today (July 28th, 1995) carried these bold headlines: "Networks Turn Up Volume on Words" and "Breast Jokes Will Be Found in Abundance," along with "Court Narrows Times Indecent Shows Can Air"!

As we come closer to 2000 A.D. we can expect a carnival atmosphere to prevail, with a hatred developing for those who try to stop erotic sex and sadistic violence.

How needful to turn to the Word of God for instruction such as Paul gave young Timothy: "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:22). "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16).

With condoms being passed out in our public schools, we need to emphasize 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither . . . abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God."

Television, films, and computer bulletin boards are *packed* with pornography — an indisputable indicator of a culture in steep decline. □

— Submitted by Richard K. Smith. Permission to reprint granted from *God's News Behind the News*, Box 10475, St. Petersburg, FL 33733.

Be Careful What You Pray For

In Scripture the Lord says, "Ask and it shall be given," but what happens when it is given? For me, I asked the Lord to send me where I was needed, and to grant me patience, but I didn't think it would happen this quickly! But, here I am at ABC, at New Friends Bible Church, and working with the Fast Forward youth ministry on Wednesday evenings.

For those of you who are not familiar with this program, let me offer you a brief explanation. We take in the neighborhood children for supper and classes on Wednesday evenings. Some of these children come with a minimal amount of the knowledge of Christ, but the majority just know what they learn here. They come from all different types of family backgrounds, and difficult situations.

Sometimes I feel that we are making no progress whatsoever, but then one of them will say something that makes me think that there is a breakthrough! Sometimes things go well, and sometimes they don't. Some days I want to tear my hair out by the roots, or just go home and cry. Then some days I can't believe what I see and hear from these children!

I have learned from them that life is never a bed of roses, and that no matter how bad you think your problems are, there is someone else far worse off than yourself. It has always been my dream to become a missionary, but right now I feel that my mission is right here.

These children need me and I need them, too! I need them to help keep me focused on how much people really need the Lord. These children have become a great blessing to me, in such a short time. They teach me new things regularly.

So if you want a prayer answered, be careful what you pray for! For if you are not willing to put 110% — or your whole heart — into it, then should you really pray for it in the first place? You will get what you pray for. Look at me, I'm living proof!

I thank you, Father, for answered prayers! Please continue to pray for this and the other ministries that we, the ABC students and staff, participate in. Pray that all shall see the glory of God through our deeds! God's richest blessing on you. □

By Melissa Lee, ABC freshman from Hammond, LA

The Power of the Name

*We should walk
and live in the
power and victory
of His name.*

WHEN YOU KNOW someone's name, you have access to a certain degree of power. You have invested time and interest in remembering their name, earning yourself a certain amount of respect. You have the power to call across a crowded room and get their attention. When we invest time in knowing God's name and the potential we have through that name, we will be blessed. God's name is power and we as children of God have access to that power. "No one is like you, O LORD; you are great, and *your name is mighty in power*" (Jer. 10:6).

God's name is mighty in power! Jeremiah could only accomplish his prophecy through the power of the name of God. Jeremiah was equipped or empowered to accomplish his preaching and teaching. In Jeremiah 1:18 God reassures Jeremiah that "Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land." In fact, Jeremiah's name means "the LORD exalts" or the LORD empowers, raises on high, elevates, lifts up or glorifies. In Exodus 23:21 we see that "the Name" is indwelling: "since *my Name* is in him." The power of the name is indwelling.

From early on in Genesis we see references to "the name of God" or "the name of the LORD." Repeatedly throughout Genesis we see God's servants calling on "the name." Every one of the Ten Commandments speaks of the significance of "the name." "You shall *not* misuse the name of the LORD your God" (Ex. 20:7). Throughout the remainder of the Pentateuch and into 2 Chronicles we see the importance of a dwelling place for "the name."

Jeremiah 10:6 plainly states, and other passages confirm, that "the name" is indeed mighty in power. In 1 Samuel 17 we have the story of David and Goliath. David comes against Goliath in the name of the LORD: "but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel" (v. 45). In the power of the name of God David defeated Goliath, which led to the defeat of the entire Philistine army. Second Chronicles 14 gives us another example of the power in "the name." King Asa of Judah was being confronted by Zerah the Cushite and "a vast army." King Asa knew he was out-manned and out-equipped, but he also knew that his God was more powerful than the entire Cushite army (read his prayer in 2 Chron. 14:11). "Such a great number of Cushites fell that they could not recover; they were crushed" (2 Chron. 14:13). This same power-filled, victorious lifestyle is echoed in Psalms 44:5-8 and 118:10-12.

Where has that power gone? Why don't we act in that power today? That power is still available. God has not changed (James 1:17b); have we? We no longer recognize that this power is ours, but God wants us to live in victory and power (1 Cor. 15:57; 1 John 5:4). There are two steps we must follow. The first step, as we have shown, is to believe that the name has power.

The second step is to recognize and accept that our salvation is in "the name." In Psalm 54:1 David cries that his salvation is found in God's name. Joel 2:32 says, "And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved." And Jesus echoes this to His disciples in the Great Commission: "go and make disciples

BY JEREMY SMITH

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of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Baptism is the believer's connection to the power. We have access to the power through the steps of salvation. We have limited our salvation, our God and ourselves by taking the power out of the equation.

When we emerge from the waters of baptism as new creations, we are called by that name, the name of the LORD God Almighty. We walk in power and victory through the name of God. "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble

themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14). In the 14th chapter of Jeremiah, the prophet hears from God concerning the trials and tribulations facing God's people. Jeremiah responds on behalf of God's people, "You are among us, O LORD, and we bear your name; do not forsake us!" (Jeremiah 14:9b).

We have a new image or identity; we are new creations. A wise young man once told me, "We are not old people called by a new name, we are new people called by an old name." It is not God who has changed, but rather it is us. The former things no

longer fit. We are no longer called by our career or our employer or our financial status; we are called by the name of God.

That power is available today. We must first believe that we have access to the power of the name. Second, we must believe and accept that we have salvation through that name. Finally we must believe that we are called by that name. We are the children of God and that means we should walk and live in the power and victory of His name. □

— Jeremy Smith is a
1995 graduate of Atlanta Bible College.

A Vindication of Unitarianism

"THE UNITY OF GOD, AS ONE individual person, is denoted throughout the Bible by the almost constant use of *singular pronouns*, whenever any thought, action, attribute, or condition, is ascribed to the Supreme Being. In all languages the personal pronouns of the singular number are understood to apply only to one person. Thus, if I were writing a letter, by employing the pronouns of the *first* person and singular number, *I, me, my*, I should confine my assertions to myself as one individual person. By using the pronouns of the *second* person and singular number, *thou, thee, thy*, I should indicate that my assertions were addressed to my correspondent as one individual person. By introducing the pronouns of the *third* person and singular number, *he, him, his*, I should denote that it was one person only I was speaking of. If on the contrary, I were writing a letter in conjunction with any other intelligent being, we should use the pronouns *we, us, our*; and if I were writing anything of more than one person, I should say *they, them, their*. Such being the universal application of pronouns, it is evident, not only to those who have studied Greek and Hebrew, but to all who know the use and meaning of human speech, that throughout the whole Bible God is almost uniformly mentioned as one person, this being implied in the almost constant use of singular pronouns . . .

"The doctrine of the Unity of God is implied in every passage in which the personal pronouns of the singular number are used to denote the

Supreme Deity. . . . Thousands and tens of thousands of passages imply, by the use of the singular pronouns, that God is one person" (Yates, *Vindication of Unitarianism*, Boston, 1816, pp. 66, 153).

Examples: God appears to Abraham: "I am the Almighty God; walk before *Me*, and be thou perfect, and *I* will make *My* covenant between *Me* and thee" (Gen. 17:1-2). (Not, "We are Almighty God; walk before *Us* and be thou perfect . . .")

Levites address God: "Thou, even Thou, art Lord alone; Thou has made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, and Thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worship Thee" (Neh. 9:6).

In the New Testament, the book of Hebrews: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that comes to God must believe that *He* is and that *He* is a rewarder of those who diligently seek *Him*" (Heb. 11:6).

There are thousands and thousands of similar passages throughout the Bible. *Singular pronouns prove that God is a single Person.* In three passages, God says "Let us . . ." These passages tell us that He was speaking to someone *other than Himself*, just as when we say "let us . . ." we are referring to someone other than ourselves. □

BY ANTHONY BUZZARD

On Target

IS AMERICA BECOMING MORE violent? Read the newspapers or talk to any therapist. News of the 90s has been rife with incidents of wives, lovers, teenagers, husbands, even strangers and pets being objects of pent-up anger.

Seattle Post-Intelligencer columnist Debera Harrell agrees, saying that signs point to the problem getting worse. Citing a litany of examples as well as experts, she points the finger to an emotion as old as Cain and Abel. "Society has become saturated with walking time-bombs — hotheads unable to control or vent their anger except through violence."

Recent events only serve to illustrate flash points of anger vented in violence. An irate military officer, upset by a teenager tailgating his car, shot the boy after motioning him over to the side of the road. He told officers he intended only to lecture him on bad manners. Two sisters killed their stepmother over a dispute. Recently, police

arrested a baby-sitter for beating an infant to death because the little girl wouldn't stop crying. A man, convicted of being a serial arsonist, confessed to setting seventy-six fires. It goes on and on.

The number of violence-prone people in society has reached epidemic proportions. Psychologists, law enforcement officers, social workers and public health officers worry that unchecked anger will explode. Society, however, fails to place the blame where it belongs. It consistently evades the root cause — sin in the human heart.

Much of the blame is placed on a shaky economy, unemployment and job insecurity. Even secularists, however, agree that the fragmented American family is a primary source of the problem. While the causes are complex and numerous, changes in family structure, high divorce rates, a higher percentage of women in the workplace and confusion over sex roles place stress upon traditional values. All of these and more cause confusion, according to Roland Meinro, director of a Washington anger management and domestic violence program.

Is violence just a public health problem? I doubt it, and millions of other Americans probably agree. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus restated the Law of Moses. Likening anger to murder, Jesus said: "Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court" (Matt. 5:22). As a boy I worried over that text because of my own normal sibling conflicts. Irritation, however, need not become conflict, and conflict need not spill over into violence. Murder is the final play-out of the tragic anatomy of anger.

There is wisdom in the proverb: "Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man" (Prov. 22:24). The Preacher gave good advice and clear-headed analysis: "Do

not be eager in your heart to be angry, for anger resides in the bosom of fools" (Ecc. 7:9). In the New Testament, Paul lists anger as one of the works of the flesh. Along with immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness and carousing, Paul pegs outbursts of anger as actions unfit for the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:20).

There will be those who object to this analysis as doing little more than producing guilt. The Gospel, however, is good news. Anger doesn't have to control people. Fran Minetta, manager of a mental health program in Bellevue, Washington, agrees. She feels that anger is a feeling and violence is a behavior — a learned behavior that can be unlearned.

At heart, anger is a spiritual issue. The fundamental answer to anger is the transformed life. When God places His Spirit within us, the natural outworking — the fruit of the Spirit — is the opposite of the works of the flesh. One of its flavors is self-control.

Our society desperately needs self-control. Anger may be with us until our final perfection, but we can control it. "Be angry and sin not," the Bible declares; "let not the sun go down on your wrath" (Eph. 4:26).

Injustice and evil of all kinds legitimately prompt in us at times a response of righteous indignation. But we aren't like God who is always able to balance justice and mercy. At best our attempts are flawed. That is why we need God's help and the offer of divine forgiveness. "Rid yourself," the Bible says, "of anger" (Col. 3:8). □

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*Our society
desperately needs
self-control.*

BY ED HAYES

Middle-Class Christians

MANY PEOPLE, IT SEEMS, prefer to be middle-class Christians. They don't claim to be sinners. They wouldn't dream of being saints. To them a sinner is a very undesirable person who enjoys his lifestyle and refuses to submit to the authority of God. Someday these sinners will be destroyed forever. It serves them right.

On the other hand, to them a saint is a weak, colorless person trying his best to keep detached from sinners while at the same time working hard to be saved. He turns thumbs down on amusements and frowns on too much happiness.

So the middle-class Christian considers both classes, the saint and the sinner, and condemns both as extremes. He is uncomfortable with both. He would do well to reconsider his picture of a saint. In the New Testament a true saint was anything but a weak-kneed, pale-faced killjoy. Rather he was a person who had chosen to let Christ control his life. As all students know, the words "saint," "believer," and "Christian" are used interchangeably in the New Testament. Paul the apostle addressed the believers of the infant church in the New Testament world as "saints" (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2). They were men and women with the joy of the Lord in their hearts (John 15:11; Phil. 4:4). The true picture of a saint is not one of gloom or pessimism. A healthy saint lives a full, rich life stimulated by the Spirit of God, reflecting the light and love of Christ.

A minister called on a man in his home. Trying to brush the pastor off, the man said: "I have two things against the church. The first time I went the minister threw water on my head. The second time he tied me to a woman that I've had to listen to ever since." The minister replied: "The next time he'll probably throw dirt in your face."

The church has been compared to a football game with 50,000 spectators desperately in need

of exercise watching 22 players desperately in need of rest. Perhaps the analogy is more often true than we care to admit. Church growth people continue to remind us that in the average church all the work is done by about 20% of the people. Obviously, the great need is to mobilize the other 80% for ministry. Many a man has been on the King's highway 20 years without traveling 20 yards. We have so many irons in the fire that none of them is hot.

According to a Gallup poll:

Many Americans belong to a category of "not-quite Christian"; who believe, but without strong convictions; who want the rewards of faith without the obligations; who say they are Christians . . . but tend to keep the news to themselves. Many are spiritual illiterates who can articulate their beliefs only in the most vague fashion. And while most homes have at least one Bible, many Americans have not learned how to bring the Bible into their daily lives.

That appears to be a pretty accurate picture of our society today.

The important thing is that we choose to let Christ take complete control of our lives. "And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him" (2 Cor. 3:18, LB). That's what living the victorious Christian life is all about.

This is really what it means to be a saint and remain a saint. You don't have to be a sinner. You don't have to be a middle-class Christian. You can be a saint. You can be a saint in the here and now. Go for it!

The middle-class Christian considers both classes, the saint and sinner, and condemns them both as extremes.

BY HOLLIS PARTLOWE

The Simplicity of the Christian Message

*The key to our future
and that of humanity
at large is found in
Jesus' Gospel Message
of the Kingdom of God.*



THE POINT AND PURPOSE OF Christianity has been buried under a mass of theological tradition. There is general agreement only about the ethical demands of the present Christian life: a Christian must love and serve his neighbor. But almost nothing at all is known of the ultimate purpose and goal which Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, intended for those who follow Him. Contemporary religion, which claims the name of Christ, has abandoned the purpose of the faith which is clearly spelled out by Jesus in His Gospel message — the Gospel about the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:43, etc.).

In the purpose of the faith proclaimed by Jesus lies the very reason for our existence as individuals. The key to our personal future and that of humanity at large is found in Jesus' **Gospel Message about the Kingdom of God**. This is simply the Message of the Good News that God, in the person of His Son and Agent, Christ, the promised Messiah, intends to establish *just government and universal peace on earth* and to grant immortality to those who love Him. The future of the earth, and of the whole universe, is related to the future of the individual believer in this way: The Kingdom which will be established *on earth when Jesus returns to the earth* will be administered by those to whom God grants immortality.

The scheme implied by the **Good News of the Kingdom** is the very opposite of complex. The mind of a child is required to grasp it. Jesus said: "Unless you reorient your life and become like little children, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of God."

To understand the Christian message, words must be taken as any child would take them — in their natural and normal sense. The Kingdom of

God, about which Jesus spoke, is thus a real Kingdom, a divine government on earth, to be administered by Christ and the saints, with a renewed Jerusalem as its capital. Luke 19:11 should be taken as a key to the whole New Testament: "Because Jesus was near to Jerusalem, they thought that the Kingdom of God was going to appear immediately." This verse gives us the clue to the meaning of the principal theme of all that Jesus taught. He was expecting to establish the Kingdom as a worldwide rule on earth.

Much of what goes by the name of theology is no more than an exercise in the evasion of the plain meaning of words, an excuse for unbelief. The churches have abandoned hope in the Kingdom which Jesus promised would be inaugurated at His return. It is obvious that the Kingdom has not yet been established. It will be manifested on earth at the (second) coming of the Messiah in glory. For this Christians are to pray: "Thy Kingdom come!"

In answer to the very reasonable question as to what His followers might expect to receive in the Coming Age of the Kingdom, Jesus promised the disciples positions of rulership with Him in the coming Kingdom (Mat. 19:28; Luke 22:28-30). This promise was extended to the whole church (1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12). It was the natural confirmation and clarification of the promise made to Abraham, the Father of the faithful, that he would one day possess the world (Rom. 4:13).

The Kingdom will have Jerusalem as its capital, as foreseen by all the O.T. prophets, and it will be established by a spectacular divine intervention (Ps. 2), when the process of universal disarmament (Isa. 2) leading to total world peace will ensue. The vision of the world at peace under the

BY ANTHONY BUZZARD

government of the Messiah is read annually at Christmas, but few believe it. They have been persuaded that the promises of universal divine government do not mean what they say. (See, for example, Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-9; Zechariah 14:9; Micah 4:7.)

The reason for this is twofold. People have been taught from childhood that the reward of Christianity offered in the Bible is to depart to a realm "beyond the skies" as a disembodied soul/spirit. Such a notion is completely without foundation in the Scriptures and must be banished from the thinking process before any progress in understanding the New Testament can be made. The dead according to the Bible are at present all dead, not alive in another place! They are waiting to be resurrected *from the dead!*

Secondly, it has not been realized that the "everlasting life" promised by the NT properly means "the Life of the Coming Age." This is a well-known expression used by Jesus and His contemporaries; the restoration of this definition

of the goal of Christianity allows us to understand that the object of the Christian life is not to disappear at the moment of death to another world: It is to participate, through a future resurrection from the dead, in the *Future Age*, the Age of the establishment on earth of the Kingdom of God. It is everywhere taught in Scripture that the faithful dead are now "sleeping," unconscious in the grave, awaiting the resurrection to occur at the Coming of Jesus (Dan. 12:2; John 5:28, 29). All the faithful will then share with Christ in the promised Kingdom.

In the light of this simple scheme, the New Testament can be read with complete understanding, for the facts noted here represent the presupposition held by the NT writers. The challenge to the reader is one of belief. Jesus' first recorded utterance in Mark's Gospel is a command to repent (i.e. reorient one's mind and life) and *believe* the Good News about the Kingdom (Mark 1:15)! It was when potential converts

believed the Good News (Gospel) Message about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ that they were baptized into the faith (Acts 8:12). This is the process by which we are to be initiated into the faith.

The Gospel of the Kingdom thus confronts each of us as individuals at the moment we receive the proclamation of it by Jesus or the New Testament evangelists. Thereafter, our response to the Divine Message is all-important for salvation.

A warning about the danger of ignoring the invitation to the Kingdom of God was given by Jesus:

When anyone hears the message about the Kingdom [Mat. 13:19] and does not understand it, the devil comes and snatches away the Message which was sown in his heart so that he may not *believe and be saved* (Luke 8:12). □

No Offense

(Continued from Page 22)

I find you and your teachings offensive. I don't want you to be my Messiah. I'll look for someone else to be my savior."

Or we can twist Jesus' words and actions and try to make them fit into our existing view of the world. We can take out our files and remove the sharp edges of His teaching. We can say that He didn't really mean what He was saying — He was just exaggerating to make a point. He doesn't really expect us to radically alter our lives, to put our old selves to death and follow Him — He was

just saying that. What He really meant was, "Relax, enjoy your lives, you don't need to make any changes, everything's just great the way it is."

While few Christians would admit it, that's exactly what many of us do. We act as if that's truly what we believe.

But there is a third possibility: We can change our paradigm. We can allow the words of Jesus to alter us. We can change our way of thinking. We can change our way

of living. We can become His disciples.

That's the choice that John the Baptist had to make in his prison cell. That's the choice that the rich young ruler, Nicodemus, and the Samaritan woman had to make for themselves.

That's the choice that every one of us has to make, daily. What will you choose to do with Jesus?

"Blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." □

No Offense

A Bible study
based on
Matthew 11:2-6



WEHUMAN BEINGS ARE VERY much creatures of habit. Most of us don't like the prospect of change very much. Oh, we like some changes — most ladies enjoy buying new clothes and shoes, and most men enjoy buying a new truck or boat. Those kinds of changes are okay, but there are other kinds of changes that we don't like, because they are threatening to us.

I'm talking about major changes that dramatically affect the ways in which we view the world. Scientists and business leaders refer to these changes as **Paradigm Shifts**. They are major transformations in the ways that we order our view of the world. You see, it's amazing how easy it is for us to get locked into a certain way of thinking about the world around us . . . reality. We see things a certain way for so long, it is taken for granted. We look for things to happen a certain way, and when we are presented with data that is different, that challenges our existing paradigms, we are tempted to do one of two things:

We are tempted to either reject the new data altogether or try to twist the new data into our existing paradigm (we alter it to fit within our traditional way of thinking).

Let us consider an example: Do you believe that planet Earth is the physical center of the universe and that all of the planets and stars revolve around it? Of course not. Why don't you believe it? People used to believe it. In fact, from the time of Aristotle up to the 15th century that was the paradigm in which people operated. Everyone took for granted that the Earth was the center of the universe — until Copernicus proposed an alternative way of understanding.

Copernicus wrote "De revolutionibus orbium coelestium" (*On the Revolutions of the Heavenly*

Spheres, 1543). In this classic work he challenged the belief that the Earth was the center of the universe. Copernicus proposed that a rotating Earth revolving with the other planets about a stationary central sun could account in a simpler way for the same observed phenomena of the daily rotation of the heavens, the annual movement of the sun through the eclipse, and the motion of the planets.

The heliocentric theory of Copernicus marked the beginning of the scientific revolution (see Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*) and of a new view of a greatly enlarged universe. It was a shift away from the comfortable view of the ancient and medieval world. A scientific theory that reflected so profoundly on humanity was not welcomed by the church.

Copernicus died before the full ramifications of his theory began to reverberate through the culture. However, in the 17th century along came a man named Galileo, who built on the previous work of Copernicus and set out to defend this new view of the universe.

He was vigorously opposed in this belief, because the Bible was interpreted as supporting the view of a stationary Earth. Galileo argued for freedom of inquiry, but despite his argument that sensory evidence and mathematical proofs should not be subjected to doubtful scriptural interpretations, the Holy Office at Rome issued an edict against Copernicanism early in 1616.

Galileo went on to write about Copernicus' ideas against the order of the church and stood before the Great Inquisition. In June 1633, Galileo was condemned to life imprisonment for "vehement suspicion of heresy." His *Dialogue* was banned, and printers were forbidden to publish anything further by him or even to reprint his

BY THE EDITOR

previous works. Outside Italy, however, his works were translated into Latin and were read by scholars throughout Europe.

Gradually, over time the shift was completed, and the world came to accept that the Earth really did revolve around the sun. Today Christians everywhere share this view without any damage to their faith in God.

When presented with new ways of understanding reality, new paradigms, very often we reject them altogether or twist them into our old way of thinking. The church leaders were threatened by the theories of Copernicus and Galileo, so they attempted to silence them, despite the fact that they were true.

But there is a third possibility. We can change our way of thinking and behaving. Consider the following illustration:

In the early 1960s nearly all watches in the world were made in one little European country, Switzerland. The Swiss and watches were synonymous with each other. People thought of watches as mechanical instruments that had to be wound. But during the 1960s someone came up with the idea of using a quartz battery to power the watch. This would eliminate the need for the watches to be wound. They would keep going for months and maintain a higher level of accuracy. The response? The Swiss watch manufacturers laughed at the idea. It didn't fit into their paradigm for manufacturing watches, so they rejected it. But the Japanese didn't laugh at the idea. They saw it as a great opportunity and they began to produce quartz watches. They took a few years to catch on, but now virtually everyone owns a watch that was made in Japan, not Switzerland. Know what the most ironic thing is? The idea for the quartz watch came from a Swiss watchmaker, but his own countrymen rejected the new paradigm. The Japanese changed their way of thinking — they were willing to shift their paradigm (see *Paradigms, The Business of Changing the Future*, by Joel Barker).

Now, what does all of this have to do with the Bible? The answer? A lot.

In the third chapter of Matthew's Gospel we read about John the Baptist who preached that

one was coming after him who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire — the Messiah. The long promised son of David would come and shake up the world. He would fulfill all of the biblical prophecies that dealt with judgment. You see, during this period of time, in first-century Israel where the Romans were in control and the Jews had to kowtow to their leaders, the people were expecting a Messiah who would exterminate wickedness in all of its forms. They believed that the sinful elements of Judaism would experience a wrathful rejection, and that the political forces would be overthrown and Israel moved into a position of political supremacy.

John was part and parcel of this expectation. John had great disdain for Jews who, in effect, betrayed their Jewish heritage by selling out to the Romans. He loathed men like Herod, who lacked character and made compromises in order to get ahead. He had no patience for people who used their positions of power and wealth to subvert the law. When it was learned that King Herod had committed adultery with his brother's wife, John challenged Herod. He had the guts to tell him that what he was doing was not right in God's eyes. Herod was offended by this and had John thrown into prison.

In the eleventh chapter of Matthew we see John in prison for his faith and zeal. John is being punished for telling the truth about Herod's sin. There he hears reports about Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was the man whom John had baptized in the Jordan River. Jesus was the man upon whom he had seen the Holy Spirit come down in the form of a dove. It was Jesus whom John had sent many of his disciples to follow. And now John hears reports of Jesus' activities: attending weddings and turning water into wine (John ate locusts and wild honey, he had taken a Nazirite vow and had never allowed a drop of wine to pass over his lips, and yet Jesus is out there partying with sinners). Jesus is talking with sinners, healing sinners, surrounded by sinners . . . meanwhile John is cooling his heels in jail and his future is in serious doubt.

"Why isn't Jesus doing something? Why isn't he out there judging sin and baptizing with fire?"

Jesus didn't fit very well into John's paradigm for how the Messiah was to behave. So John begins to have doubts. He sends word via his messengers, "Go put this question to Jesus: 'Are you the one we've been waiting for, or should we look for someone else?'" So much is implied by those words.

Can't you just hear John asking, "Jesus, what gives? What are you waiting for? Get busy and judge sin. Look at me here in jail . . . I've been out doing what I thought you were supposed to be doing. Are you the Messiah or not? If you're not, please tell me so I can stop wasting my time and my disciples' time following you."

Jesus' actions didn't fit John's paradigm for how a Messiah is supposed to conduct himself. Like many other Jews of his day John was expecting a zealous, judgment-bringing, fire-and-brimstone preacher calling down fire from heaven, condemning all of the wicked and vile sinners, and calling them to repentance. He was waiting for someone to come along and bring the Roman government, and their Jewish puppet leaders like Herod, to their knees. But instead Jesus is out socializing with sinners. John was expecting someone very much . . . like himself. But Jesus wasn't a souped up version of John the Baptist . . . He was different.

How easy it is for us to get locked into a certain way of thinking, to see things in a certain way for so long, and when we are presented with data that is different, we are tempted to either reject the new data or try to cram it into our own ways of thinking.

So, how does Jesus respond to John? He doesn't give a clear yes or no answer. He doesn't say, "Yes, John, I am the Messiah. Be patient, I'll get around to judging people soon enough." What He does say is this: "You go and report to John what you've seen with your own eyes and heard with your own ears. Let John be the judge. Let him decide if I am the Messiah or not. Tell him how blind people are receiving their sight, tell him how the lame are now walking, tell him that you've seen lepers being cleansed, deaf people given the ability to hear. Tell him that the dead are being raised and that the poor are having

the gospel of the kingdom proclaimed to them. And tell him that God's blessing rests on anyone who is not offended or scandalized by what I am saying and doing."

Jesus left it to John to decide for himself whether or not Jesus was the Messiah. John had to choose either to believe that Jesus was the Christ or to look for someone else. But in offering John this choice Jesus gave him all the evidence he needed. In His reply He reminded John of what the Scriptures said. He reminded him of the prophecies of Isaiah 35 about the lame leaping like a deer. The evidence was unmistakable, the eyewitness accounts were credible, these things were happening through the ministry of Jesus. No, Jesus wasn't bringing judgment like John had expected, He was bringing healing.

How did John respond? Did he shift his paradigm and come to a new understanding about the Messiah or did he reject Jesus and go to his death offended that he had placed his hopes in the wrong man? God's Word doesn't give us the answer.

But then again, that's not really what's important. What is important is how we respond to Jesus. Will we reject Jesus because He fails to fit into our view of the world? Will we be offended by Jesus' words? Or will we try to twist and cram Jesus' words to fit into our paradigms?

The Gospel isn't easy to believe or live by because it causes offense and scandal. It is a *skandelon*, a stumbling block. John was scandalized by Jesus' behavior, associating with tax collectors and sinners. The rich young ruler was offended by Jesus' admonition to sell everything, give it to the poor and come follow Him. Nicodemus was offended by Jesus' assertion that in order to enter the Kingdom he must be born again. The Jews were scandalized by the notion of a crucified Messiah.

The Gospel of Jesus causes offense. Too often preachers, and the writer is guilty of this, try to soften the words of Jesus — we dull the edge, we remove the sting, we take out the bite.

Jesus said you must DIE to yourself, take up your cross and follow Him. That's offensive to people who are looking for a comfortable reli-

gion. That's offensive to many modern-day believers whose only religious experience is sitting in a pew for an hour on Sunday morning, when it's convenient. Many of us find it tough to get out of bed and sit in church for just one hour, yet Jesus tells us we have to die. For many of us that's offensive.

Consider some other things that Jesus said that may be offensive to many people.

To look upon a woman with lust is to have already committed adultery with her in your heart. Jesus has virtually condemned every man as having adulterous hearts. That's offensive to most men, because it reminds us that we really are sinners.

To be angry with another and hold that anger in our hearts by failing to forgive, or to insult another is the equivalent of committing murder. That is offensive because it reminds all of us that we are really sinners.

To dismiss your marriage vows by arbitrarily bringing an end to your marriage because you're "not happy" or it's not what you expected, and then marry another, is adultery, according to Jesus. That is offensive to nearly half of the U.S. population.

Jesus said that when we are attacked by another we are not to retaliate, that instead we should turn the other cheek, that we should love our enemies. That's offensive to people who believe in the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and that it's okay for people to defend themselves with lethal force.

Jesus said that our charitable giving should be done in secret. That's offensive to people who give large endowments to charitable organizations and like to be noticed, or who want to take tax deductions for their giving when filing their income tax.

Jesus tells us not to judge others, but that before we try to remove the speck from someone else's eye we should first remove the 2x4 from our own eye. That's really offensive to people who like to complain, and who love to gossip and criticize others.

Jesus said that it's not enough just to say "Lord, Lord," to go through the motions and

rituals of religion. He said that what's important is to do the will of God. That's offensive to nominal Christians who feel that the sum total of their religious requirement is to show up for church whenever they feel like it.

Jesus touched lepers. That's offensive to people who refuse to reach out and come in contact with the untouchables of society: AIDS patients, homosexuals, drunks, sex offenders, child molesters, the homeless, and the handicapped.

Jesus talked to Samaritans. That's offensive to people who have prejudices towards people of other races, religions or lifestyles. We don't want to have to associate with them, but Jesus' actions condemn us.

Jesus said that it's hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. That's offensive to most middle class Americans who live in nice homes, drive nice cars, have money to buy toys, take vacations, eat more food than we need and throw away more scraps than people in many countries get to eat.

Jesus told the Pharisees who wanted to stone the adulterous woman that the one among them who was perfect had permission to throw the first rock. That's offensive to people who live in glass houses but still enjoy throwing stones.

Jesus ate and drank with sinners. That's offensive to folks who don't think it's proper for good and godly folk to associate with "those kinds of people."

Is there anyone who hasn't been offended by any of the words and actions of Jesus?

If so, congratulations. You're perfect! You can stop going to church — you don't need it and you're making the rest of us look bad.

For the rest of us, let's pause for a moment and reflect on what this means. Before we can fully appreciate and accept God's saving grace, we must acknowledge our sins and turn to the savior. The decision is ours — like John the Baptist, we have a choice.

We can reject Jesus. We can say, "Jesus, your words and actions don't fit into my world view.

(Continued on Page 19)

May I Help You Carry That?

IN THE POPULAR COMIC STRIP "Peanuts," Lucy asks Charlie Brown, "Why are we here on earth?" He replies, "To make others happy." She ponders this for a moment and then asks, "Then why are the others here?"

We may laugh at Lucy's thinking; she can be silly, dense and selfish — all at the same time. Think for a moment about her second question, "Why are the others here?" Answer: They are here to help other "others." We are those persons!

One of our God-given missions for this life is to reach out to fellow mortals and help them carry the things they cannot manage without help. Grief, loss, stress, sorrow, emotional pain of any kind — these cannot be carried alone; we must have help in carrying them. "May I help you carry that?" is not just the question of a boy scout to a little old lady with a heavy load of groceries, it is a question that reflects a philosophy of living — helping others and making them happy.

In the New Testament the apostle Paul wrote, "Help carry one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2), and "We who are strong . . . ought to help the weak to carry their burdens. We should not please ourselves. Instead we should all please our brothers for their own good" (Rom. 15:1, 2).

Often people get caught in the trap of an isolationist lifestyle with a fortress mentality. After working all day in front of a computer screen we drive home from work in a sealed vehicle listening to music on the tape player. We press the remote control garage door opener; up goes the gate; we enter; down it comes again. We are sealed away in our fortress. With our microwave TV dinner in hand we park ourselves in front of the box and watch sitcoms about "real" life. In this kind of routine there is no contact with people; no interaction with the emotions others are experiencing; no acknowledgment of human need. Self-serving patterns have dominated; car-

ing for others has been aborted by an isolationist lifestyle.

We could beg off, rationalizing a solitary existence, and say like Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9), yet we know humans are gregarious by nature, not hermetic. We are prone toward interrelatedness and interdependence. Therefore we need to grow and develop our lives according to the way God made us! "Help carry one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). Be a burden bearer to someone in your sphere of acquaintance. Stretch yourself, reach out and ask, "May I help you carry that?"

The founder of the Salvation Army, General William Booth, was prohibited by illness from attending the Army's international convention. He cabled a one-word message to the delegate assembly: "OTHERS!"

Why are we here? Like the Salvation Army we are all here to help others carry their burdens.

Recently I have been feeling "down" and depressed by the haunting memories of hurts and disappointments from my distant past. I shared this fact with our Wednesday night Bible study group and was overwhelmed by their loving concern and support. In our shared prayer time there was frequent mention of me and my pain. I am privileged to have so many burden carriers helping me.

"Help carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will obey the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Not only is helping to carry others' burdens an act of human compassion, it is also obedience to Christ's prescription for our lifestyles. Isolationism fails the obedience test; sharing others' burdens proves our Christianity!

If you and I should meet on the street, stop me and engage in a conversation. I have a question I want to ask you — the same one I want you to ask of me — MAY I HELP YOU CARRY THAT? □

One of our God-given missions for this life is to reach out to fellow mortals and help them carry the things they cannot manage without help.



BY STEPHEN BOLHOUS

Summer Is Coming . . .



Summer Ministries Program 1996 Come Join Our Team!

Would you like to be part of a team that assists churches around the country with Vacation Bible Schools, calling, etc? If you can spare even a week this summer for this valuable service, we need you. If you can spend two weeks or more with us, we can offer you a salary. For the first time this year, we are offering Atlanta Bible College credit to high school juniors and seniors (and college students) who serve for at least two weeks. Housing and food are provided for all workers. Call Sarah Buzzard at the General Conference toll-free number (1-800-347-4261) for more information.

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The Restitution Herald

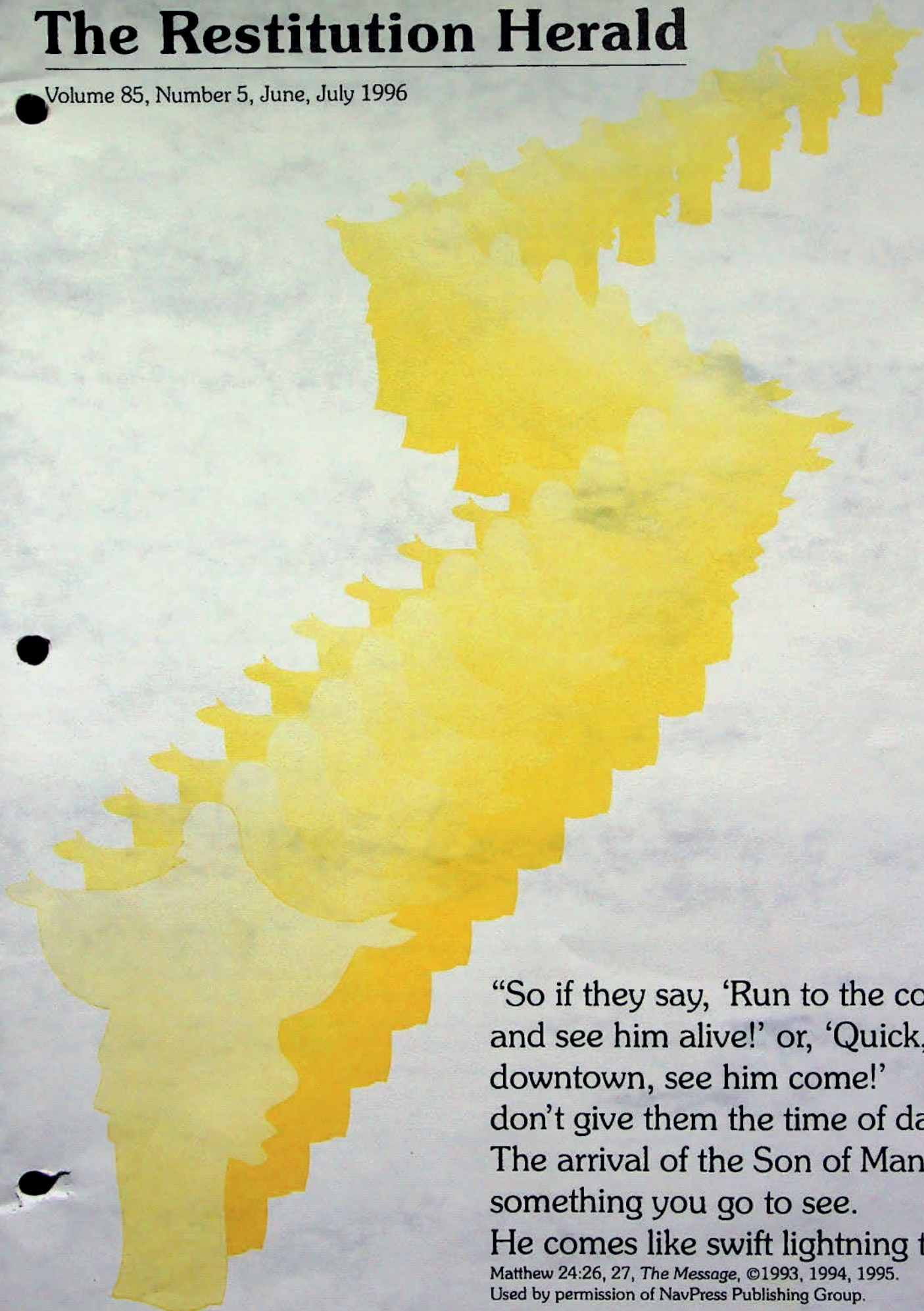
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“So if they say, ‘Run to the country and see him alive!’ or, ‘Quick, get downtown, see him come!’ don’t give them the time of day. The arrival of the Son of Man isn’t something you go to see.

He comes like swift lightning to you!”

Matthew 24:26, 27, *The Message*, ©1993, 1994, 1995.

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What If God Was One of Us?

*God has gone to great
lengths to reveal
Himself to us.*



AS I WAS TURNING MY radio dial recently searching for a station, I was intrigued by the lyrics of a pop song which asked the question . . . "What if God was one of us?" God, of course, is not "ONE OF US" in the sense that He is God and we are human. He could never be truly human any more than we could ever be truly God. Nevertheless, God does desire to be made known to us. God has gone to great lengths to reveal Himself to us, to provide us with a revelation.

What is REVELATION? The Oxford Concise Dictionary defines it as "Disclosing of knowledge to man by divine or supernatural agency . . . striking disclosure . . . revealing of some fact."

We devote this issue of THE RESTITUTION HERALD to discovering ways in which God reveals Himself to us.

We introduce the subject with an article by Hollis Partlowe who lays out for us three key ways in which God reveals Himself. This is followed by a look at "God and the Sciences." This article is written from the perspective of a Christian minister who also happens to be a trained scientist.

When most Christians think about revelation they naturally think of the book of the Bible that goes by that

name and the whole area of prophecy, so we have devoted a number of pages to articles on the Millennium, the Rapture, the timing of the Parousia, the Mark of the Beast, and citizenship in the Kingdom of God.

It pleases me to be able to present articles from three generations of Christian thinkers who happen to be grandfather, father and son. Please note how God reveals himself to each generation of Mattisons.

God has revealed Himself to us as gracious and compassionate toward the hurting among us. Perhaps one group of hurting persons that have tended to be overlooked in our churches is those who have been divorced. We include some information providing practical advice on how to minister to the divorced in our churches.

As always, it is a pleasure for me to be able to serve you in this way. Please feel free to send your letters and articles to me along with suggestions. I do appreciate hearing from you. Please note I have an updated E-Mail address — JFletcher@aol.com

The Restitution Herald

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES.

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND
IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY
THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD
UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND
ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN
BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD
BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).

IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN
THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS
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How God Has Revealed Himself to Man

God has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ who is the "express image" of His Father.

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲



BY HOLLIS PARTLOWE

EVERY CAUSE HAS AN effect. The cause is always greater than the caused. God is the first great cause. He is greater than His creation.

Many today question God's existence. Is there really a God out there somewhere? How can I know for sure? God has revealed Himself to man in three distinct ways.

1. NATURE: "The Heavens are telling the glory of God; they are a marvelous display of his craftsmanship. Day and night they keep on telling about God. Without a sound or word, silent in the skies, their message reaches out to all the world" (Psa. 19:1-2, LB). Yes, the heavenly bodies silently and continually give testimony that God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Moreover, we are expected to believe in God "by the things which are made," and if men choose not to believe in Him, they are "without excuse" (Rom. 1:18-20).

God is. He exists. Facts are stubborn things. You can doubt or deny them, but they remain unchanged. God is a fact. The universe didn't just happen. God is its Maker.

2. HIS SON: God has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ who is the "express image" of His Father (Heb. 1:1-3). The purpose of Christ's coming into the world was to reveal God to man. He reflected God to man so perfectly that He could say: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). As we see our reflection in a mirror, so men saw a

perfect reflection of God when they looked upon Christ. Jesus is the perfect embodiment of the attributes of God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). To find God we must meet Him in Jesus Christ who is the only door to God (John 10:1-2, 9). "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, NIV).

3. THE BIBLE: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God . . ." (2 Tim. 3:16). Every Scripture portion, the Old Testament and the New Testament, all 66 books form the explicit revelation of God to man. The word "inspired" means God-breathed. God breathed into the Bible writers what He wanted them to write, and that is what they wrote — no more and no less.

No churches have been built where the Bible has not been preached. In Bible times God spoke directly to men and through dreams and visions, etc. Today we have God's Word which contains all the information that we need concerning His will for our lives.

The Bible does not set out to prove God's existence. It is quite obvious that He exists. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psa. 14:1). Mark Twain once said: "Creation resulting from chance is about as likely as the unabridged dictionary resulting from an explosion in a print shop." □

Psalm 19: God and the Sciences

CHAIM POTOK'S BOOK, *The Festival of Lights* (1981), contrasts two important strands of thought regarding light in modern Jewish life. One is the little known mystical tradition among Jews involving light. The other is the atom bomb. In this fictional book, Potok portrays Albert Einstein speaking at a graduation ceremony after WWII:

There are times, I must tell you, when I regret a certain act of mine. I made perhaps one great mistake in my life — when I signed the letter to President Roosevelt recommending that atom bombs be made. There was some justification to that act — the danger that the Germans would make them. They did not succeed. We succeeded and dropped them on Japan. It ended a terrible war. But also it stained us forever. All that cannot be undone. It is damage human beings have done to themselves that cannot be repaired (p. 113).

Potok's point is that Jewish Americans especially felt the weight of this invention, since many of the most important scientists involved in the Manhattan Project were Jews who had fled Nazi Germany.

This stain that Potok speaks about is a part of the legacy of science in the United States. While we all enjoy many of the benefits of science and technology in our daily lives, many are concerned about the legitimacy of science. We hear of the war between science and religion; we read in the Hammond, LA paper about

the threat of the ACLU to sue our school board if an evolution disclaimer is not removed from the regulations; we fear the cold, hard-hearted, calculated thinking that science and medicine can sometimes thrust into our lives.

Is there an inherent conflict between science and Christianity? Is science stained with a humanism that is foreign to the Bible? Is the pluralism and relativism of the social scientist a threat to the theologian's task? Is theology divine work, while science is "dangerous human wisdom"? Ted Ward has pointed out that Psalm 19 unites the study of nature and the study of revelation into a single, sensible paradigm that gives security to the Christian layperson, scientist, social scientist and theologian.

The text naturally falls into three sections. Verses 1-6 exclaim that the "heavens declare the glory of God," verses 7-11 hammer in that "the law of the LORD is perfect," and verses 12-14 summarize with "who can discern his errors."

The Psalmist begins his praise to God by bluntly stating, "the heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." The idea that there is some kind of conflict between the creation and the creator is rudely dismissed. Instead the creation tells humans something about the creator — "declares his glory," "proclaims his work," "displays his knowledge." In the Psalmist's paradigm, there is not only no tension between science and religion, but science as the exploration and understanding of

Psalm 19 unites the study of nature and the study of revelation into a single, sensible paradigm that gives security to the Christian layperson, scientist, social scientist, and theologian.



BY MICHAEL LANDON

Psalm 19: God and the Sciences

(Continued from Page 5)

God's creation is inherently a religious activity.

Verses 4-6 perhaps begin to illustrate where this modern tension between science and religion originated. First, many try to read the Bible as a science book. Thus, there is an inherent discrepancy since verses 4-6 portray a universe where the sun not only revolves around the earth, but is also to some degree personified. A better understanding of the Bible is that it is a collection of inspired writings of many types, but none of those types resemble a modern scientific treatise. These verses here are poetic, and their purpose is to demonstrate that even that powerful sun, on which humans depend for survival, is subject to the creator God.

A second root for the modern tension between science and religion is embedded in the context of early modern science. Modern science began during and is dependent on what is called the Enlightenment for its view of knowledge, but the Enlightenment itself was a reaction to a social context.

Most of all, the Enlightenment began as a response to the religious wars of the seventeenth century and an attempt to end the conflicts. If the wars had been fanned by unbridled emotions, the Enlightenment would focus on reason (Allen and Hughes, *Roots of Restoration*, Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1988, p. 76).

Although many early scientists were followers of Christ, the overarching view of knowledge was anti-religious. It was assumed that religion was inherently emotional and that science could be in-

herently non-emotional — pure reason. This world view stood strong in scientists' minds and permeated western culture — until the atom bomb! A friend told me of regularly meeting one of the scientists from the Manhattan Project during evening walks. Each time, during the several years he lived in the neighborhood, the old man compulsively brought the subject up. "We didn't know! We were so involved in this rapidly advancing edge of nuclear technology that we never realized that this bomb would wipe out entire cities! I'm so sorry! We're all so sorry. If only we had stopped to think!" Pure reason, or reason without morality, can lead to disaster.

The paradigm of the Psalmist was that while the creation displays knowledge, "the law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul." There is no misunderstanding — while the creation tells humans something about God, God's revelation is perfect, not human reason, not human technology. Verses 7-11 hammer in the concept, using the words law, statutes, precepts, commands, fear, and ordinances to refer to this knowledge-giving revelation. The section concludes with this tempting picture of God's words:

They are more precious than gold,
than much fine gold;

They are sweeter than honey, than
honey from the comb.

By them is your servant warned;
In keeping them there is great reward.

The purpose of the knowledge that comes from the creation and the perfect law of the LORD, in the Psalmist's mind, is to answer the question, "Who can

discern his error?" This is a pertinent question to the retired Jewish physicist, as well as to all of us. Verses 12-14 explain that the purpose of knowledge is to: 1) discern one's errors, 2) receive forgiveness, 3) keep oneself from willful sin and 4) be transformed — blameless and worshipful. The purpose of knowledge is not to increase material comfort, but to better understand one's self, especially in relation to the Creator.

Is there then a tension between science and Christianity? Yes, if science is seen as pure reason, devoid of emotion, intent on the promotion of knowledge regardless of the consequences to human life! No, if science is seen as an orderly way to learn something about the creation, and hence the creator, and is held subject to God's revelation. God revealed Himself in diverse texts and types of literature. While these contain many facts, most of the Bible deals with God's actions in history, not orderly descriptions of matter. The Christian need not fear the scientist, nor the theologian the social scientist. As John Yoder put it:

Believers have a bigger picture, an older vocabulary and a richer narrative with which to illuminate and guide their alternative modes of struggle and forms of community than the social scientists have, but the story happens and is told and retold in the same world (John H. Yoder, "To Your Tents, O Israel," *Studies in Religion* 18, Summer, 1989, p. 358). □

— Michael Landon is a scientist and the minister of West Church of Christ in Hammond, LA.

The Millennium

THE MILLENNIUM, A TERM meaning “thousand,” refers to the thousand-year reign of Christ in connection with His return to earth. Some Christians believe the Millennium will be an age of blessedness on the earth. Some believe the Millennium is the present church age — a period of indefinite length. Still others regard the Millennium as a way of referring to the ages of eternity.

The Bible’s only specific mention of the Millennium is in the twentieth chapter of Revelation, a book of visions and prophecies written by the apostle John while in exile on the Isle of Patmos off the coast of Asia Minor. Many Old Testament passages also seem to point to a millennial reign (Isa. 11:4; Jer. 3:17; Zech. 14:9).

Interpreters differ greatly in their understanding of the Millennium and when and how it will occur.

Postmillennialists expect Christ’s visible return to earth *after* the Millennium. They look for teaching and preaching to usher in a thousand years of peace and righteousness before Christ’s return. Some postmillennialists believe this “golden age” has already begun, without our being able to mark a specific date when it started.

Amillennialists interpret Christ’s millennial reign in a spiritual sense. While believing in the Lord’s return, they reject a literal thousand-

year reign on earth. Some see Christ’s reign as having begun in His life or at the time of His resurrection. They cite Peter’s declaration that Christ now rules from the right hand of God (Acts 2:33-36). The kingdom promises to Israel are viewed symbolically by amillennialists and are applied either to the church age or to the ages of eternity.

Premillennialists believe that Christ will return *before* the Millennium. Interpreting Revelation 20 literally, they hold that Christ will reign on earth (probably in Jerusalem) for a literal thousand years. According to this view, God’s promises made to the nation of Israel will be fulfilled. Satan will be bound and cast into a bottomless pit during Christ’s reign (Rev. 20:2, 3). All believers will be raised before the Millennium to share Christ’s reign (Rev. 5:10; 20:4). The remaining dead will wait for the second resurrection (Rev. 20:5). Premillennialists also believe that after the Millennium Satan will be released for a season but ultimately will be thrown into a “lake of fire” (Rev. 20:7, 10).

— Reprinted from West Church newsletter.
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Editor’s Note: The Church of God has historically proclaimed the premillennial return of Jesus Christ. Let us prepare for and proclaim His return! □

Where Will We Be?

BY HAZEL CRAMER

THE CONTROVERSY concerning the "rapture" or "taking away" of the resurrected saints and those living during the end times is a fascinating subject. Daniel 9 and various Scriptures in Revelation have long provided biblical scholars with much thought-provoking material for the rapture theory. Will Christians living in the end times face seven years of tribulation, three and a half years, or none at all?

1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 tells us that the dead in Christ shall rise first; then those living at the time of Christ's return will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Where will these risen or changed saints, Christians and pre-Christians, be taken? To heaven? Hardly! Jesus plainly stated that where I go ye cannot follow. Also in John 3:13 He stated: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to the heavens from "The Mount of Olives" or "Mt. Olivet." Acts 1:9-11 aptly describes the event. Angels spoke to those witnessing this phenomenal occurrence, saying that Jesus would come back again in like manner as they had seen Him go into heaven.

When our Lord returns, will it be over New York City? A Russian city? Where will He come to command the dead to arise and the living in Christ to be changed to immortality? Doesn't it seem plau-

sible that Jesus will also return to earth in like manner, descending upon Mt. Olivet?

Zechariah 14:4 prophesies that He will indeed do so! "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very



*Where will our Lord come
to command the dead to
arise and the living in
Christ to be changed to
immortality?*



great valley: and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south."

Verse 5 continues, "And ye shall flee to the Valley of the mountains, for the Valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal, yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah; and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." Notice that the verse says "all" the saints! Surely this is referring to the second coming of Christ, who will call up the resurrected and change them to meet Him in the air, transporting them, as well as mortal Jews who acknowledge their Messiah, to a place of safety. This

place of safety will be Mount Olivet, from whence Jesus departed. Isaiah 29:6 speaks of a great earthquake apparently occurring in the vicinity of Jerusalem in the "end times" (v. 8).

When I visited Israel several years ago, our Jewish guide brought us up to the top of Mt. Olivet. He made a rather startling statement to us that there is a fault running through the middle of the Mount of Olives. Surprisingly, he affirmed that many Jews believe that their promised Messiah would appear there in glory to be their King. Our Jewish guide believed that Mt. Olivet would ultimately be split by an earthquake, when Messiah "comes."

Many Bible students believe that in the so-called rapture the risen saints will be taken to heaven, to a place of safety "somewhere up there" until the judgement of the nations "is past." Thus they would escape the great tribulation period that non-Christians must go through. If that were true, Christ would have to come back the second time, transport the saints to heaven, and come back a third time to judge the nations and rescue a remnant of the Jews. Then Jesus would have to go back to heaven to retrieve the saints, coming back yet a fourth time.

It is not until after the thousand-year reign that God will visit or be with mankind, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 affirms, so the saints won't go to God's abode.

Surely, it is far more plausible to accept the Scriptures about being transported to Mt. Olivet than a non-scriptural reference to a place of safety in heaven. □

Sorting Out Matthew 24

A GLANCE AT THE commentaries shows that there has been little agreement about what Jesus said in Matthew 24. What He intended to convey was information about events destined to happen in Judea: "Behold, I have told you in advance" (Matt. 24:25). But how well has He been understood? The radical skeptic thinks the church made up the whole story *after* the fall of Jerusalem and put it on the lips of Jesus. This would give the impression that Jesus had made a prediction!

Some are persuaded that Jesus did not see beyond A.D. 70 and that the end of the age and even the second coming happened then. Others sense that there is more to the description of His "coming with power and great glory" than can possibly be squared with events in A.D. 70. But the problem is: Jesus speaks of a terrible time of distress in connection with Jerusalem, to be followed *immediately* (v. 29) by His appearance in glory. How can Jesus have spoken of the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and of His coming *immediately* after that? One reaction has been to accuse Jesus of being mistaken about the time of His coming.

All this is unsatisfactory and confusing. How shall we resolve the difficulties? Quite simply: by following the sequence Jesus gave and believing it! Truth is often simple, and there is a straightforward structure to Jesus' prediction of the future. It looks like this:

When you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel standing in

the holy place, flee to the mountains For then shall be great tribulation *Immediately* after the tribulation of those days [Mark 13:24, "In those days, after that tribulation"] the sun will be darkened . . . and then they will see the Son of man coming in power. . . . And he shall send forth his angels . . . to gather the elect" (Matt. 24:15, 16, 21, 29-31).

Attempts to explain this material have often foundered for one simple reason. The critically important connecting time expressions have been ignored or explained away. In this way Jesus' message has been distorted. Vitaly important is the adverb "immediately" in verse 29. This links the great tribulation of verses 15-24 with the cosmic signs of verse 29 and the second coming which follows. These events occur in quick succession.

Commenting on verse 29, "Immediately after," A. H. McNeile, former professor of theology at Cambridge, says: "This verse is the true sequel to verse 15. The tribulation (v. 21) is the climax of the birthpangs (v. 8) being followed immediately by the end. In Mark, too, the tribulation and the second coming are in those days, i.e., they are successive events in the same period . . . The tribulation will be terrible but the Parousia [Second Coming] will follow it at once."¹ There is no gap between the tribulation, the heavenly signs, and the second coming. It follows, then, that the concentrated time of trouble Jesus described did not happen in A.D. 70. No cosmic signs followed

Truth is often simple, and there is a straightforward structure to Jesus' prediction of the future.



BY ANTHONY BUZZARD

Sorting Out Matthew 24

(Continued from Page 9)

that event immediately. Nor did Jesus come back.

Confirming Our Findings

There are two ways of confirming the simple series of events which Jesus says will happen in quick succession: tribulation, heavenly signs, second coming. Firstly, in verse 14 we read of "the end": "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a witness to the nations; and then *the end* shall come." Now observe verse 15: "When you *therefore* see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place (let the reader understand) . . ." The little Greek word translated "therefore" connects the abomination of desolation with the end referred to in verse 14.² This confirms what we have already seen: that the abomination of desolation is a feature of the end of the age. Its appearance triggers the awful time of trouble which *immediately* precedes Jesus' arrival. The abomination of desolation signals the approaching end of the age.

Secondly, confirmation of Jesus' simple scheme for the future is found in Daniel. Here we follow Jesus' instructions carefully. The abomination of desolation is the one described by Daniel (Matt. 24:15). The precise expression "abomination of desolation" occurs in Daniel 11:31 with a further reference to its appearance in the holy place in Daniel 12:11. Daniel 9:27 contains a third reference. In all three cases Daniel describes a final evil ruler, a king of the north (from the region of Syria or Iraq), who sets himself (or his image) up as "the abomination of desolation" and puts an end to

temple sacrifices (Dan. 11:31). It is crucially important to see that in Daniel 12:11 about three and a half years will elapse between the appearance of the abomination of desolation and the end of the age. Jesus is merely elaborating (in Matt. 24) what was already laid out by Daniel: abomination of desolation (Dan. 11:31; Matt. 24:15); tribulation for 3 1/2 years (Dan. 12:1, 7, 11); resurrection (Dan. 12:2). The whole of Daniel 11:5ff. and 12 must be read as one connected story and the Daniel passage must be kept in mind as the background to Jesus' discourse in Matthew 24.³

Breaking the connection between Matthew 24:15 and Daniel 11:31 is the one single factor leading to mistaken systems of prophecy. The link is established by Jesus' own words: "Let the reader understand that I am referring to the book of Daniel" (see Matt. 24:15).⁴

Daniel 9:27 speaks also of an abominable person on the rampage in Jerusalem for 3 1/2 years. Daniel 8:13, 14 gives more information. All these verses form the background to Matthew 24:15-31 and harmonize with it. Remember the one key to Matthew 24: The tribulation of which Jesus spoke is to be followed *immediately* by cosmic signs and the second coming. And the tribulation is to be triggered by the abomination of desolation already prophesied by Daniel 11:31. When these facts are held together they build up a composite picture of events destined to happen just before Jesus arrives. When that will happen no one knows. But when Christians see the abomination of desolation, and the events which follow, then they may "look up, because their redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28). The time will have arrived for the reordering of earth's affairs under

the supervision of Jesus, the Messiah. The kingdom of God will be here.

Some will ask: Why did Jesus say that "this generation will not pass before all these things come to pass"? He was clearly referring to all the great events of Matthew 24 including His arrival in power and glory. Did these events happen within 40 years of His giving the prediction? Clearly not.

The solution is that "this generation" can mean "this present evil era of human history" lasting till the second coming. We will not come to the end of this present evil age until all the awful events Jesus outlined have happened.

Jesus Himself did not know the day or the hour of His coming back to the earth. He looked out over the temple building and knew from prophecy that there would be great trouble in Jerusalem and in the temple just before He came back. Jesus would not have known whether the temple then standing was the one which would suffer trouble just before His return. What He *did* know, based on Daniel, was that there would be extreme trouble in Jerusalem just before His return. That time of tribulation is still in the future. As we, or subsequent generations, watch the Middle East, we shall one day see the unfolding of Jesus' prediction in Matthew 24. Meanwhile, the Messiah's precious words are given to us as vital instruction until the Kingdom of God comes. □

¹ *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, pp. 351, 352.

² *Ibid.*, p. 347.

³ For a full-length study showing that Mark 13 (the parallel to Matt. 24) is a commentary on Daniel 11 and 12, see *Prophecy Interpreted*, by Lars Hartman, Coniectanea Biblica.

⁴ The parenthesis is no doubt added by Matthew, reflecting Jesus' intention.

PROPHECY

My Picture Is Worth a Thousand Numbers

BY N. W. HUTCHINGS

This past summer I checked in for a flight to Los Angeles, and the airline asked for my driver's license for identification. The agent wanted to see something with my picture on it. Why? Security was tighter because the pope was coming to the United States. In October I checked in for a flight at Kennedy Airport to go to Athens. The same thing occurred. Why? Security was tighter because of an international terrorist alert. In February I checked in for a flight to attend the National Religious Broadcasters Convention at Indianapolis. Again, I had to show my picture. Why? Federal agents were getting ready for the summer Olympics in Atlanta.

Because of increased international travel, fingerprints, passports, or traditional identification methods are insufficient. Millions check through international airports every day. Europe is employing a machine for instant hand identification, but these machines are installed in limited numbers. All governments are searching for a common ID, a counterfeit-proof, foolproof system. *Popular Science*, July 1995, proposed its own solution to the problem:

Just imagine: no jangly coins in your pants, no crinkled bills in your wallet. . . . Such is the vision of smart card proponents. . . . Smart cards are also referred to as chip cards and electronic purses. . . . "If we had our way, we'd implant a chip behind everyone's ear at the maternity ward," said Ronald Kane, a vice-president of Cubic Corp's automatic revenue collection group.

The June 1995 edition of *Spectrum* reported:

An uncompressed digitized image of a typical passport photograph occupies about 9,000 bytes. Yet the subject is still recognizable when the image is compressed. . . . for ID purposes on the magnetic strip of a credit card.

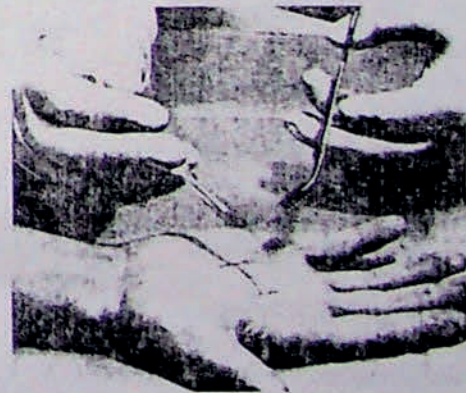
In other words, a computer chip on a credit card, or implanted under the skin, will now project your picture image on a miniature screen for ID purposes. Could this be the image of the Beast described in Revelation 13?

American Express' motto is, "Don't leave home without it," meaning the American Express credit card. The January 21, 1996 edition of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, in an article titled "Who's Plugged into the Future?" stated in part:

Thirty years from now chips will be implanted in our bodies encoded with credit card, passport, driver's license, and other personal information. We'd no longer have to worry about leaving home without it.

Without a doubt, within a very few years every person on earth will be required to carry an embedded computer chip, else they will not be able to travel, work, buy, or sell. Right now, this is projected for the immediate future. □

— Submitted by Betty Ackels, *Prophetic Observer*, March 1996.



Look Up and Become a Citizen!

BY DELBERT RANKIN

BUT WHEN THEY believed Philip announcing glad tidings concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were immersed, both Men and Women" (Acts 8:12, *Emphatic Diaglott*).

Today we yet proclaim "the name of Jesus Christ" — Him crucified, buried and risen again, totally, literally and according to the Scripture. The apostle Paul argued in defense of understanding the mortality of the man called Christ and His resurrection from the sleep of the dead. (Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-21.) There's just something about that name, the name of our Savior.

An important aspect of that proclamation is the good news of the Kingdom of God. This the apostle also declared in the very same breath. (Read 1 Corinthians 15:22-28.) The prophetic sequence in his presentation is thus: (1) the resurrection of "they that are Christ's at his coming" (vv. 22-23), (2) Christ's reign, during which all things and enemies are subdued (vv. 25-27), (3) finally, the Son turning the Kingdom over to His Father who is God (vv. 24, 28).

Revelation, chapters 20-21, follows a comparable sequence: (1) "the first resurrection," (2) the millennium, "a thousand years" of righteous rule by Christ, during which the enemies are subdued, (3) and finally God Himself shall be with men.

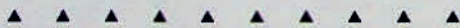
The Kingdom of God, complete with King and throne, government and laws, subjects and territorial expanse, has not

yet begun. Psalm 2:7 was fulfilled, for instance, in the first coming of Christ, but Psalm 2:1-3 has not been fully realized and Psalm 2:4-6, 8-9 has not yet happened. Zechariah 9:9 happened during the first advent, but Zechariah 9:10 speaks of His kingdom that will not occur till His second coming.

Jesus stated that His kingdom was *not* of this worldly chaos and that it was not to start then when He was about to die



Jesus stated that His kingdom was not of this worldly chaos and that it was not to start then when He was about to die.



(John 18:36-37). The Kingdom would centralize with the restoration of Israel (Luke 1:31-33) but would not happen during the post-resurrection days prior to Pentecost (Acts 1:6-8), apparently placing the evangelistic work of the church among the Gentile kings and nations as the major thrust for this age, and placing the date of the start of that kingdom on the same basis as the date of Christ's second coming (cf. Mark 13:26-27, 32).

The Kingdom of God and His Christ did not start for us at Pentecost nor has

it started since, for several reasons. (1) The Lord taught His disciples to pray "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10), indicating to us that the expected kingdom is to be an establishment on earth. (2) The church people are "heirs of the kingdom" (Jas. 2:5). Today we are "joint-heirs with Christ," waiting for this inheritance, expecting one day to be glorified together at the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:17-18, 23). (3) Christ's glorious coming and subsequent enthronement as King will give way to the steps by which the kingdom will be inherited (Matt. 25:31-34). (4) The Kingdom of God "under the whole heaven" becomes a focal point in human history in that it replaces human governments, not through internal subversion and revolution or even through social or legislative reform, but by public declaration of divine intervention during a time of international upheaval over Jerusalem and at the time of resurrection and divine wrath (Dan. 2:44-45; 7:26-27; Zech. 14:1-9; Rev. 11:15-19). (5) The Kingdom of God will be known by true and lasting disarmament and universal peace, the likes of which the world since Cain has never known (cf. Isa. 2:2-5).

Do we want to be citizens of that coming Kingdom? Then consider in your devotions: Colossians 3:1-4 (it's important what we mind); Philippians 3:17-21 (it's important what we hope); 2 Peter 1:1-11 (it's important that we act in order to enter "into the everlasting kingdom"). □

The Prayer of Faith

"AND THIS IS THE confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14-15).

We can have complete confidence in God, that He hears and will answer and give us the petitions we ask of Him, *if it is according to His will.*

What is God's will? *His Word is His will.* Whatever He has written in His Word is His will. Any promise He made He will keep. Everything He said is truth. He will keep His Word. He does not lie. *His Word is His will.*

Notice that we are invited to ask for "anything" and "whatsoever." If we have a need and humbly ask Him for help through Jesus, He will give us our petition. This is a powerful statement made here by the apostle John.

Similar Promises

Matthew 18:19. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father in heaven."

This is the word of Jesus. This promise is true. We can believe it.

John 14:12-14. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."

John 15:7. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

John 15:16. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it unto you."

Mark 11:22-24. "And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

Matthew 7:7. "Ask, and it shall be given you."

James 5:14-16. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

We ought to *know* these promises and *believe* them. Know and believe God's

If we have a need and humbly ask Him for help through Jesus, He will give us our petition.



BY JAMES MATTISON

The Prayer of

promises to you and others. These promises are for true believers. If you are a believer these promises are for you.

Pray, Believing

In Mark 11:13-14, 20-25, Jesus cursed a fig tree and it dried up. Peter remarked about this, and Jesus told him what the great teaching was about this. He said, "Have faith in God." I believe Jesus means, "Really believe in the Almighty God. He can do anything."

Then Jesus went on to give God's teaching for *anyone who will believe God and His words*: "Whosoever shall say unto this mountain [problem], Be thou removed, and be cast into the sea [be completely gone]; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith."

Jesus continued, summing it up: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

There are two parts to this: believing and saying. First of all, when we pray about this mountain we have or someone else has, that needs removing, we are to believe it will happen and not doubt in our hearts.

Second, we are to speak to this mountain and tell it to be removed. Three times in this passage a form of the word *say* is used. "Whosoever shall say." "Those things which he saith." "He shall have whatsoever he saith."

The obvious (isn't it obvious?) teaching of Jesus here is that we are to say to our mountain, "Be removed." Jesus said we should say to our problem, "Be removed."

And when we do this, we are not to doubt in our hearts, but believe it will go.

If we follow this teaching I believe we can have a more abundant life. Whatever your need is, pray, and believe you will receive what you pray for. Believing the answer is coming is one of the rules.

This was the kind of faith Abraham had. He believed in things that were not as



These promises are for true believers. If you are a believer these promises are for you.



though they were. God told him he would have a son. It was 25 years before that certain son was born. Abraham had to wait on God's timetable, yet still believe. In those 25 years, Abraham's faith deepened as he saw God working always in his life. He continued to believe even when his body and Sarah's body were too old for childbearing. It was then that the child was born. Paul explains the depth of Abraham's faith:

Against hope he believed in hope . . .
Believe not weak in faith, he considered

not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God [even before Isaac was born], being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform (Rom. 4:18-21).*

Abraham lived by faith, not by sight. We should too. He believed God and God's promise even when the natural senses told him it was impossible to have a son. That is the kind of faith we want: faith in the unknown, hope of things yet to come, because of the promise of God. Most people believe when they see. We are asked to believe when we cannot see.

Speak to the Mountain to Be Removed

This is what Jesus did.

Mark 11:14. "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever."

Mark 1:25, 27. "Hold thy peace, and come out of him." "With authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him."

Mark 1:41. "Be thou clean."

Mark 2:5, 11. "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." "Arise, and take up thy bed."

Mark 3:5. "Stretch forth thine hand."

Mark 5:8. "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit."

Mark 7:34. "Be opened."

Luke 7:14. "Young man, I say to thee, arise."

Many times Jesus spoke the word for a mountain to be removed, and it was re-

Faith (Continued from Page 13)

moved. We are also to tell our mountain to be removed, and believe that it will be removed. Then it will be.

Thank God for the Answer Even Before It Comes, and Act upon It

If you believe that God has answered your prayer, and that the mountain has been (will be) removed, you will automatically want to 1) thank Him for it, and 2) act upon it.

Romans 4:20. Abraham gave glory to God even before Isaac was born. He praised God because he was "strong in faith," and because he "believed" that God would give him a son, that "what God had promised" He would do. Therefore he could praise God for the answer, even before the answer came, before he could see it or feel it.

Jonah 2:9. Jonah "sacrificed unto God with the voice of thanksgiving" even before the fish vomited him up. He cried to God because of his affliction (inside the fish), and God heard him. He knew God would get him out of this mess (to fulfill God's purpose for him to go preach to Nineveh?). Therefore he thanked God even *before* he left the fish.

What do you suppose it was that Joshua and the people shouted *before* the walls fell? (Joshua 6:10-16). It must have had something to do with the Lord giving them the city. They shouted even before the walls fell. They had this same kind of faith, faith that what God had said would actually happen. It did.

2 Chronicles 20:1-28. When the Ammonites and Moabites came to fight Jehoshaphat, and he was afraid and had all the people pray to God, God said, "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle. Stand still;

I will fight for you." That is why the singers went in front of the army singing God's praises. The mountain removed itself.

We, too, can thank God even before the answer comes, for it is on its way. David said, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord." Paul said, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God



*Sometimes God's promises
take a long time to fulfill . . .
We do not see all things as
God sees all things.*



continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

Acting on Belief in the Answer Coming

Not only will the believer who really believes God's promise that the mountain will be removed praise God for giving him the answer, but he will also act upon it, even before the answer comes.

Almost all of James 2 deals with this. Faith without acts of faith is dead. James said in effect, "try to convince me you have faith when you never act like it, and I will

ask you to observe my faith by my actions."

All through the Bible faithful people acted upon their faith. Abraham left Ur and went to Canaan. Noah built the ark. Daniel's faith stopped the mouths of lions.

In Mark 2:11, when Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "Arise and take up thy bed and go thy way into thine house," the man did *not* say, "But Lord, I'm paralyzed. I can't get up." No, it says, "Immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went forth before them all." He acted on Jesus' word.

Jesus told the man with the withered hand to "Stretch forth thine hand." The fellow didn't say, "But I can't." He stretched it out. "And his hand was restored whole as the other." That man believed Christ's words strongly enough to act upon them.

Jesus met a crippled man by the pool. He told him, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." The man didn't say, "I can't walk." He did what Jesus told him to do. He acted upon Jesus' words. "Immediately the man was made whole" (John 5:8, 9).

When Jesus was at Peter's house, He took the mother-in-law by the hand after He rebuked the spirit, and "lifted her up." Immediately the fever left her. This is faith in action.

In the book of Acts Peter told the crippled man, "In the name of Jesus rise up and walk." The man obeyed and began to walk and leap and praise God (Acts 3:6-8).

We act upon the word of the law officer, the word of the doctor, the banker, and everyone else. We ought to also act upon the Word of the Lord. If we will, we will have a "more abundant life."

We want to trust and believe in God's promises. The angel said, "No word from God is void of power" (Luke 1:37, RV).

(continued on page 23)

"Lord, Don't You Care?": Martha (Luke 10:40B)

BY MICHAEL MATTISON

"I FEEL YOUR PAIN." This emotional expression of empathy helped elect President Clinton. After generations of rising prosperity, Americans feared the loss of their security. People wanted the comforting promise of a head of state who would care about them.

Amazingly, less than two years later, President Clinton complained bitterly that cynicism so saturated the public mind that hardly anyone believed anymore in either the honesty of what politicians say or the worth of what government does. But the manipulation of the public by politicians, businesses, unions, and even evangelists has created an atmosphere of wariness. After all, the relief of America's pain was supposed to come through tax cuts, welfare reform, and other promises that never materialized. It wasn't long before the return of the disillusionment that came from Watergate and Vietnam, the HUD and S & L scandals, TV evangelists who double-sold condos in their religious theme parks or were entertained in scandalous ways, big companies who promoted useless or dangerous products, and so on.

Perhaps the deepest source of skepticism was people losing faith in themselves, people who wanted something for nothing while demanding tax cuts. When we lose our self-confidence we easily lose our belief in everyone else. And when leaders express their concern and then are unwilling or unable to help, cynicism grows. The perceived victim of the problem begins to doubt that the other person cares. He may even begin to believe that his anticipated benefactor not only doesn't care but actually is worsening his problem on purpose. This attitude is reflected in the ironic humor of the non sequitur, "I'm from the government and I'm here to help!"

Legend has it that a country grandma responded to this offer by saying, "I never vote, it only encourages them."

In desperation, many people turn to God. Surely the Creator cares! But after attending church or praying or reading the Bible or doing good deeds and finding that nothing improves, we start to feel the same frustration, disillusionment and cynicism with God that we felt from our disappointments with people. We ask, "Is there really a God?" "If so, does He care about me?" If you have ever had these painful questions, you are not alone. In many places in the Bible God asks us to give Him a try. In the Old Testament God says, "Put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour out for you a more than sufficient blessing" (Mal. 3:10b, Modern Language Bible). In the New Testament, Paul says, "Be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how his ways will really satisfy you" (Rom. 12:2b, LB). God knows you have to get real with someone before you can be emotionally intimate with that person. That sometimes includes doubts, misunderstandings, and even anger. Do you think God is afraid of you being honest with Him? When we face the storms of life and react with confusion, fear, and anger, God is not in crisis! We are in crisis; God is still in control.

When the disciples of Jesus were afraid of drowning in a literal storm, they woke Jesus and asked Him, "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?" (Mark 4:38b, RSV). Jesus immediately responded to their need by calming the storm. He can deliver on His care for people!

A good friend of Jesus had a less dangerous problem, but nevertheless one that

made her doubt Jesus' concern for her. Imagine Martha pattering around the kitchen talking to herself, angrily banging pots and pans while she works.

"There must be 25 people to feed in my house today. No, 35!" (More banging.)

"Where is my sister? There is more to hosting a group than growing a garden. Somebody has to cook all this stuff — but first it has to be washed, peeled, and cut up! . . . It's so hot! . . . Now where did Mary put the salt? . . . Something's burning! MARY! Come in here! . . . Nobody cares about me," Martha says, sobbing.

Martha then went to Jesus and asked, "Lord do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" (Luke 10:40b, RSV). Those are some sad words that we sometimes feel: "do you not care"; "left me"; "alone." I can really relate to her feelings of self-pity. But Jesus gave her help in an unexpected way. He said to her, "Martha, dear friend, you are so upset over all these details! There is really only one thing worth being concerned about" (Luke 10:41, 42, LB). That one thing was listening to Jesus and learning from Him. Instead of pity, Martha was given insight. When we ask for help from God through Jesus, we seldom get exactly what we ask for, but we always get what we need. Jesus cares so much about us that He wants us to be shaken loose from worrying and being upset about the many things that are less important, as Martha was doing. Instead, He wants us to choose the most important thing to focus on, Himself, from whom we receive security and peace. When we lift our eyes up from our self-centered problems to gaze on Jesus, we are connecting with the source of beauty, love, serenity, and even miracles. Jesus delivers on His care for us! □

Augustine and the Doctrine of the Trinity

BY MARK MATTISON

THE APOSTLE PAUL wrote to the Colossians, "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends, on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (Col. 2:8). History shows us, however, that Christendom has not taken Paul's warning seriously. The very Greek philosophy which Paul denounced was quickly absorbed into the church.

Perhaps the most famous and influential theologian who embraced Greek philosophy is "Saint Augustine" (354-430), who became the bishop of Hippo late in the fourth century. According to *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, "St. Augustine's influence on Christianity is thought by many to be second only to that of St. Paul, and theologians, Roman Catholic and Protestant, look upon him as the founder of theology."¹

Though raised as a Christian, Augustine gave up the faith while studying rhetoric in Carthage. He later joined a religious group called the Manichaeans, but through the study of Greek philosophy he abandoned that too. His study of philosophy ultimately caused him to become a Christian! His version of Christianity, of course, was influenced by both Manichaeism and Greek philosophy.²

In his *Confessions* (book seven, chapter 18), Augustine describes the doctrine of the deity of Christ. He then writes:

But I thought differently, thinking only of my Lord Christ as of a man of excellent wisdom, to whom no man could be equalled; especially for that, being wonderfully born of a virgin, he seemed, through the divine care for us, to have attained so great authority of leadership, — for an example of contemning

temporal things for the obtaining of immortality. . . . But somewhat later it was, I confess, that I learned how in the sentence, "The Word was made flesh," the Catholic truth can be distinguished from the falsehood of Photinus (*Confessions*, VII.19).

As we have seen in an earlier article,³ Photinus denied that Jesus Christ existed before He was born. The Church historian Sozomen wrote that Photinus "acknowledged that there was one God Almighty, by whose own word all things were created, but would not admit that the generation of the Son was before all ages; on the contrary, he alleged that Christ derived his existence from Mary" (*Ecclesiastical History*, IV.6). Augustine states that this was once his own belief, that the Lord Christ was a man.

How is it that Augustine "learned" that "the Catholic truth can be distinguished from the falsehood of Photinus"? He goes on: "But then having read the books of the Platonists, and being admonished by them to search for incorporeal truth, I saw Thy [God's] invisible things" (*Confessions*, VII.20).

Several chapters earlier Augustine writes that God led him to "the books of the Platonists":

Thou procuredst for me . . . certain books of the Platonists, translated from Greek into Latin. And therein I read, not indeed in the same words, but to the selfsame effect, enforced by many and diverse reasons, that, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (VII.9).

The books Augustine procured were undoubtedly the books of the Neoplatonists

such as the *Enneads* of Plotinus. Several concepts in these books heavily influenced Christians of the third century and beyond. Augustine wrote, for example, that: "No philosophers come nearer to us than the Platonists" (*City of God*, VIII.5). He apparently saw Platonic philosophy as very similar to Christian teachings.

When Augustine told the father of bishop Ambrose that he had been reading the writings of the Neoplatonists, he was commended for doing so because they, "in many ways, led to the belief in God and His Word" (*Confessions*, VIII.2).

Though he had been raised as a Christian who understood the humanity of Jesus, Augustine immersed himself in the Greek philosophy about which Paul had warned. This study of Neoplatonism convinced him of the metaphysical deity of Christ, and he later used Neoplatonic philosophy in explaining the doctrine of the Trinity.⁴ "Through Augustine several Greek traditions passed into Medieval Christian theology, some of which are still unquestioned as Church truth today."⁵

Surely it would have been far better if Augustine had avoided Greek philosophy and relied entirely upon the Bible instead!

□

¹ *The Columbia Encyclopedia in One Volume*, second edition, Columbia University Press. "Augustine," p. 120.

² Cf. Kurt Rudolf, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. by Robert McLachlan Wilson, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983, reprinted 1985, pp. 370-371.

³ "Photinus of Sirmium," *The Restitution Herald*, December '91/January '92, Vol. 81, No. 2, pp. 21, 25.

⁴ Cf. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., "Platonism," p. 892.

⁵ Mark M. Mattison, *The Making of a Tradition*, Wyoming, MI: Ministry School Publications, 1991, p. 79.

Helping Divorced Persons: Needs the Church Can Meet

*A positive ministry
can make a
tremendous difference
to suffering people.*

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

BY SUE RICHARDS &
STANLEY HAGEMeyer

HOW IS THE CHRISTIAN community responding to those mourning the death of their marriage? There are probably as many answers to this question as there are Christians in the world. We feel it would be helpful, however, to characterize the church's responses in three ways: hurting, ignoring, and healing.

Probably the most hurtful way the Christian community can minister is in being judgmental. The attitude that "real" Christians don't get divorced is a terrible stumbling block to ministering to real Christians who get divorced.

Being judgmental will not edify the ministry of forgiveness that Jesus modeled for us. Jesus associated with the undesirables of His time. The unique quality of His healing ministry was that the King came to serve and heal the needy, the sick, and the lost.

Another negative approach of ministry is to ignore. "We don't have that many singles, so we really can't justify a program for them." "Our main thrust is families. That's where most of our congregation is. The rest will just have to fit in where they can."

But the church can't stop there. The problem of what to do with singles isn't vanishing. Rather, it is increasing.

It's okay not to have a singles program, but the church must then find out where to refer singles for various activities: social, Bible study, sharing, therapy.

A positive ministry can make a tremendous difference to suffering people. Here are some examples of how a positive ministry can help those going through a divorce.

Good Listeners

One way a faith community can respond in loving ministry is to have some people trained to listen. Perhaps your pastor is qualified to train listeners. Perhaps there is a psychologist or social worker in the congregation who would be willing to devote a few hours for a couple of listener training sessions. If not, perhaps the church could pay a Christian psychologist for the needed training. Many congregations in larger populated areas contribute to Christian counseling centers where they can get counseling help at a reduced fee.

It is for each of us to minister to one another. Our pastors can't possibly minister to all the needs of everyone in their charge. The laity must take seriously the responsibility cited in Galatians 6:2 to "carry each other's burdens, and in this way . . . fulfill the law of Christ." A heavy burden can be lifted just in our listening to someone share his grief as he works through the pain of the past.

There may be a time when you can share your faith and hope as well. (The emphasis is on sharing, avoiding pontificating.) One effective way that we have discovered is to relate a common experience (if you have one) and then explain how God worked in that experience. For example, perhaps you have been through a divorce and can easily relate to many of the same situations the other person is now dealing with.

Or, perhaps you haven't been through a divorce, but you have had a hurting experience that you have learned to accept and overcome, such as a poor rela-

relationship with your father. You felt you were neglected by him and frequently verbally abused. You found yourself having love/hate feelings toward him. As years went by, your hostility grew into bitterness that ate at you constantly. One Sunday there was a sermon using Romans 12:14-21 as the text: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse Do not repay anyone evil for evil Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

You had been praying about getting rid of your bitter feelings and now God, through a Sunday message, was telling you how to be free. Be kind to your father. Give up the hatred. Don't punish yourself with the burden of hostility. If your father needs punishing, God will handle it.

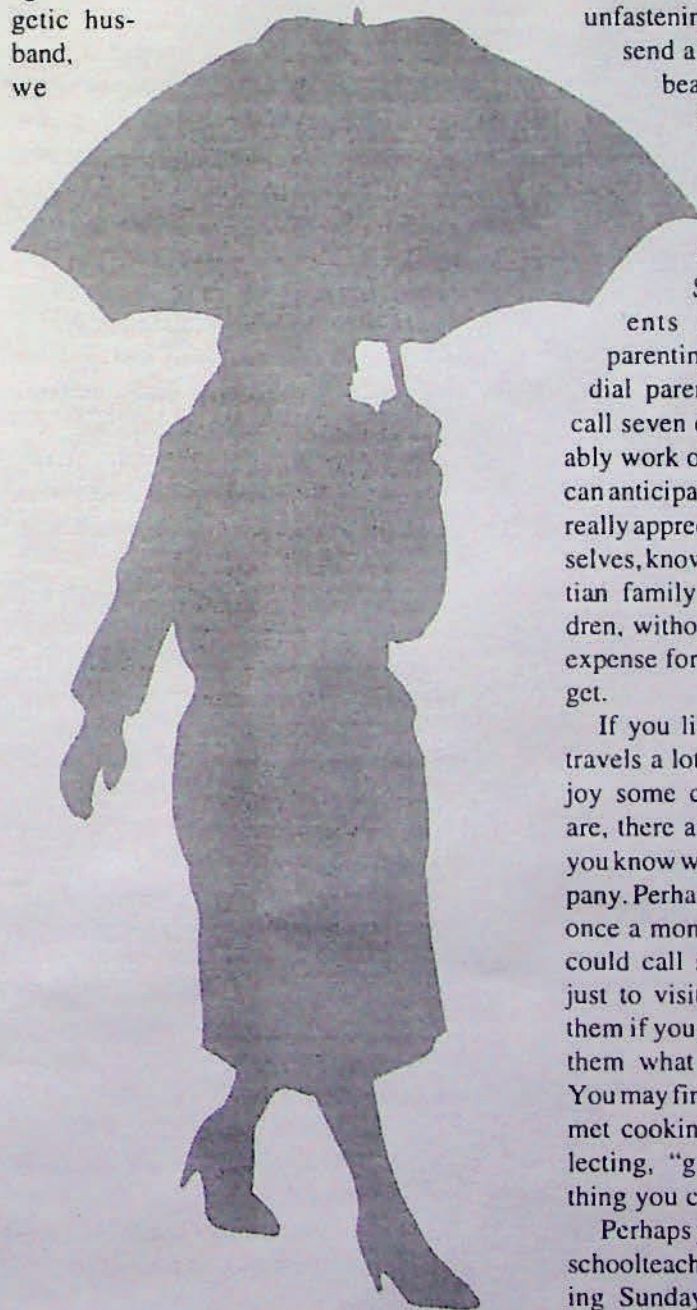
So when someone comes to you and says she's filled with bitterness toward her former spouse and is being eaten up with hatred, you can share your story with her. You can relate how you were once filled with bitterness and how you gave it up with God's help. Then you can write down for her where God's promise is found in Scripture so she can read and study it.

It is much more helpful for us to share the way God helped us than it is simply to quote Scripture at somebody. When hurting people can witness the living God at work in another person, they have truly been witnessed to by God's love and power. So when we share our hope and faith in the living God, we should do it through our own lives. Let God use our weakness as His strength.

Practical Friendship

Sometimes listening and sharing our faith and hope isn't enough. We must

also confirm God's will for us through good works. As it says in Hebrews 13:16, "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." If we know a divorced person who is a custodial parent with young children, we can anticipate many needs. If we live in a northern climate, winters are snowy. Perhaps if we have a hardy teenager or an energetic husband, we



could call during a big storm and say, "As soon as we shovel out, we'll be right over." If we are older and have the shoveling done for us, we could offer to watch the little ones so the parent can go out and shovel for himself.

We might call one day and offer to watch the kids for a morning so Mom can have some quiet time at the grocery store or run some errands without hauling two little people in and out, fastening and unfastening car seats. We could send a postcard saying that the bearer is entitled to three hours of baby-sitting any Wednesday morning in March, twenty-four hours' notice requested.

Some noncustodial parents aren't interested in parenting. That leaves the custodial parents on twenty-four-hour call seven days a week. They probably work outside the home too. We can anticipate that most people would really appreciate a little time for themselves, knowing that some nice Christian family is watching their children, without the burden of another expense for their overextended budget.

If you live alone or your spouse travels a lot, perhaps you would enjoy some companionship. Chances are, there are some divorced people you know who would love some company. Perhaps you could go to a movie once a month together. Perhaps you could call somebody on the phone just to visit. You may want to ask them if you could pray for them. Ask them what their prayer needs are. You may find a common hobby: gourmet cooking, gin rummy, coin collecting, "garage saling" — something you could do together.

Perhaps you know an unemployed schoolteacher. She might enjoy teaching Sunday school. Reestablishing

Helping Divorced Persons: Needs

that part of her identity by using her talents can minister to her as she ministers to others. It also keeps people feeling they are a useful part of the body of Christ — that they can give as well as receive. Also, teaching Sunday school may help fill the gap of a noncustodial parent by letting him or her work with children. Encouraging a single person to host a meeting or some other event is another

way the person can be encouraged to contribute.

Material Assistance

Sometimes material assistance may be called for, and there are many ways this can be handled. My pastor sent me to a psychologist. My church contributed to a Christian counseling center and paid most of my counseling fee. The center sees people on a sliding scale based on their income. I was unemployed and had no insurance, so I paid one-third of my reduced fee, and the church paid the rest. If the church hadn't been involved in a program like this, I would have missed a lot.

Another good way my church has found to provide material assistance is through a care-and-share pantry. The fourth Sunday of each month, the congregation is reminded to bring in canned goods, staples, or other items, which are collected in the narthex. These goods are moved into a pantry area and may be taken and used by people in need or distributed by the diaconal board when it hears of a need in the community.

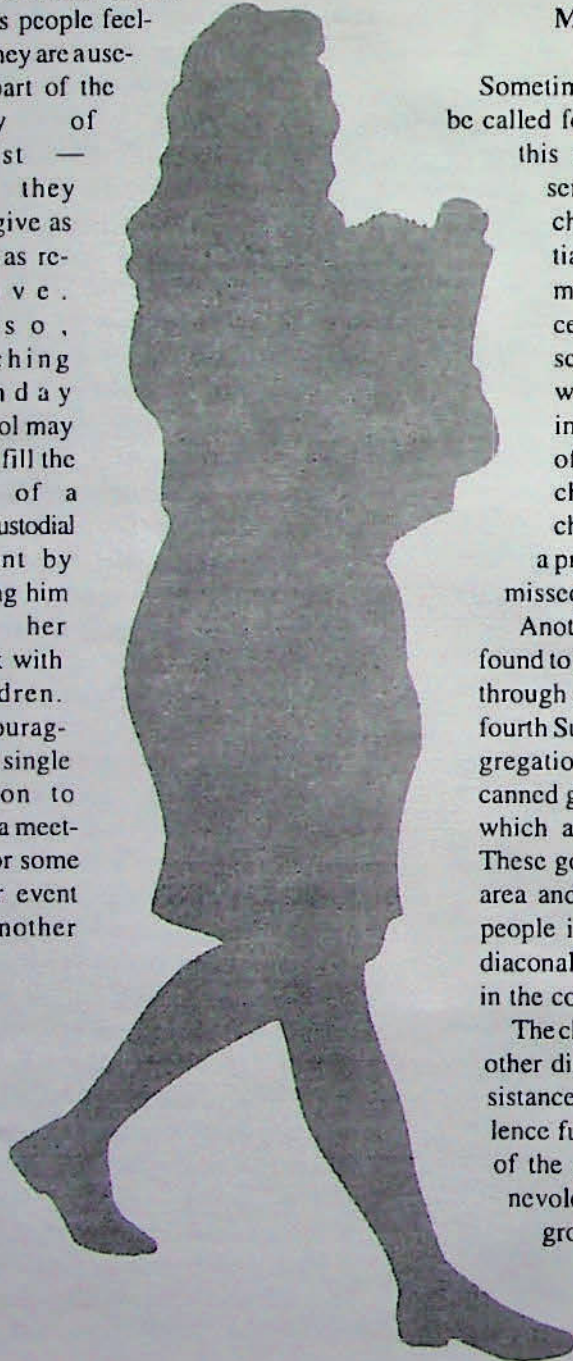
The church supports counseling and other direct and indirect material assistance financially through a benevolence fund. Usually the first Sunday of the month is designated for benevolence giving. When the fund grows low in times of greater community need, the congregation is informed so they

can prayerfully consider their benevolence giving.

In Hebrews 13:2 we are reminded how important hospitality is: "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it." For the divorced, mealtime is just one more painful reminder of being alone. For the custodial parent, dinner is the beginning of second shift: It's coming home after a hard day's work to visit with the kids and get supper on the table. There's no one to share your day with. The kids are starved and crabby. And when you get the meal on the table, it's not time for you to eat, but rather to cut up food for the children. And if you don't have too many glasses of spilled milk, you may get a bite before everything's cold and the children have left the table.

For the noncustodial parent or divorced people without children, mealtime is when you read the paper while watching the news and eating something you really don't taste, because you just don't want to know you're eating alone again just as you do every other morning and every other evening. A nice way to minister to a divorced person is inviting him or her for a meal.

Sundays and holidays are even worse than regular mealtimes. Those are the traditional family times. Those are the days you feel the loneliest. On Sunday morning you sit alone in a family of believers. You see the loving glances of couples around you as they commune with the Lord. And you sit there feeling like an amputee. Half your being has been cut away, but unlike an amputee, no one can see your bloody stump.



the Church Can Meet (Continued from Page 19)

Call someone who is divorced. Ask him to meet you in the narthex at 9:50, sit with your family, and come home with you for dinner after church.

Invite a divorcée and her two little children to your Fourth of July backyard picnic. It's a small gesture from you, but it can make a big difference to a lonely family.

These are just a few needs we can anticipate and minister to. We don't need to be psychologists, nor do we need to be rich. Just sensitive.

Calling someone and saying "If there's ever anything I can do" is usually a safe tactic, because most people will never call us back. If we really want to minister, we should think of a specific need. We can offer to mow the lawn or watch little ones while the divorced person mows it. Perhaps someone in the Christian community can repair a malfunctioning appliance, because many single-parent families just can't afford to buy a new one.

A good way to help divorced people feel welcome at church activities is not simply to say "all families welcome," but to make it clear that one-parent families and singles are meant by the term "families" also.

Wounded Healers

We have mentioned training listeners. Congregations today generally have a significant number of divorced members. Many of these have made healthy adjustments through difficult times and have made the important discovery that God was there strengthening them every step of the way. These people are espe-

cially valuable as trained listeners, since they will be able to empathize with many of the

problem issues and will also share how God worked amid their weakness or pain.

For the person currently going through the pain of divorce, it is often helpful to see that others have survived the pain. It gives them hope that the Lord will sustain them and they will also survive.

Here is the key question we need to ask: "In fostering equipping ministries of various sorts, including evangelism, pastoral care, or teaching, can we focus upon the situation of divorce as an opportunity for healing ministry?" If the answer is yes, we should act on these ideas and develop even more.

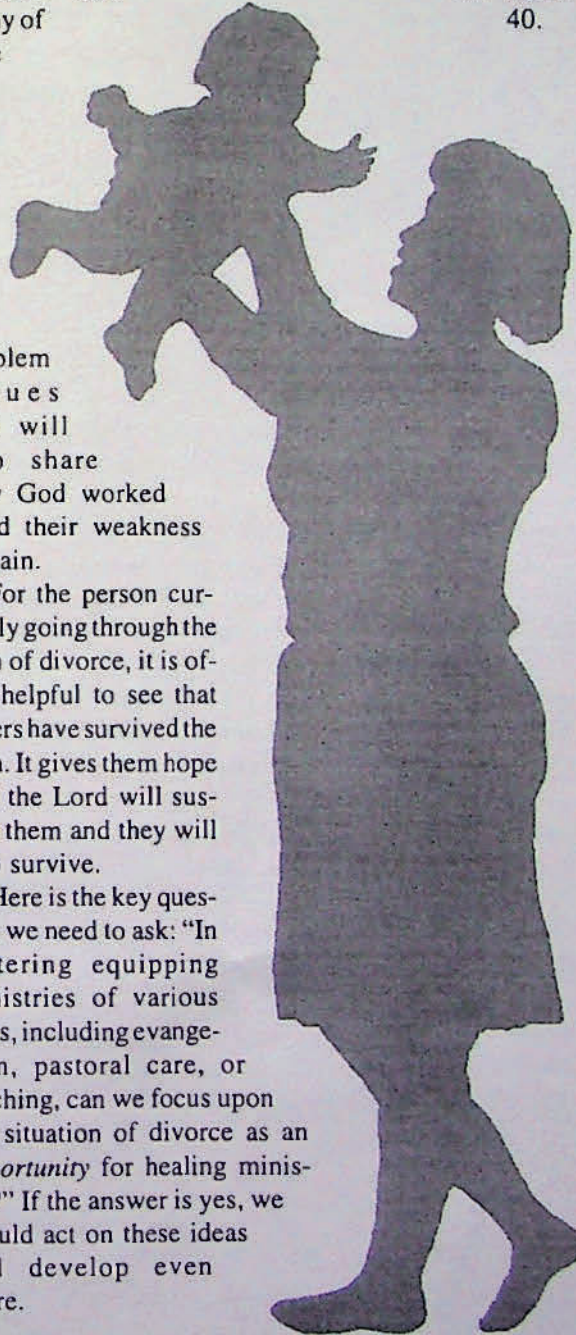
As we each use our special gifts in ministering to others, let us remember the words of Christ from Matthew 25:35-40.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"

The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." □

— Adapted from
Sue Richards and
Stanley Hagemeyer,
Ministry to the Divorced,
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Just For

INSURANCE COMPANIES require forms to be completed after a client has an accident. One of the questions asks the client to state briefly and correctly what happened. The following quotes were taken from those forms and were eventually published in the *Toronto Sun*, July 27, 1977:

Coming home, I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I don't have.

The other car collided with mine without giving warning of its intentions.

I thought my window was down, but I found out it was up when I put my hand through it.

I collided with a stationary truck coming the other way.

A truck backed through my windshield into my wife's face.

A pedestrian hit me and went under my car.

The guy was all over the road; I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him.

I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law, and headed over the embankment.

In an attempt to kill a fly, I drove into the telephone pole.

I had been shopping for plants all day, and was on my way home. As I reached an intersection, a hedge sprang up obscuring my vision. I did not see the other car.

I had been driving my car for forty years when I fell asleep at the wheel and had an accident.

I was on my way to the doctors with rear end trouble when my universal joint gave way causing me to have an accident.

As I approached the intersection, a stop sign suddenly appeared in a place where no stop sign had ever appeared before. I was unable to stop in time to avoid the accident.

To avoid hitting the bumper of the car in front, I struck the pedestrian.

My car was legally parked as it backed into the other vehicle.

An invisible car came out of nowhere, struck my vehicle, and vanished.

I told the police that I was not injured, but on removing my hat, I found that I had a skull fracture.

I was sure the old fellow would never make it to the other side of the roadway when I struck him.

The pedestrian had no idea which direction to go, so I ran over him.

I saw the slow moving, sad-faced old gentleman as he bounced off the hood of my car.

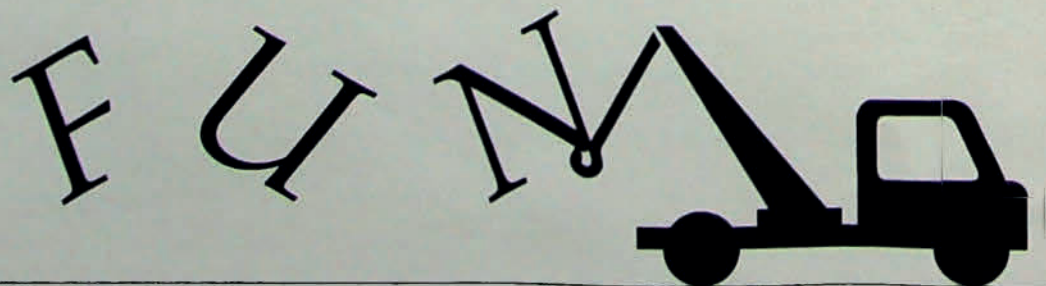
The indirect cause of this accident was a little guy in a small car with a big mouth.

I was thrown from my car as it left the road. I was later found in the ditch with some stray cows.

The telephone pole was approaching fast. I attempted to swerve out of its path when it struck my front end.

I was unable to stop in time and my car crashed into the other vehicle. The driver and passengers then left immediately for a vacation with injuries.

Words can be tricky at times, especially when we're trying to make excuses for our actions. This is why we should always remember to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). □



The Prayer of Faith (Continued from Page 15)

"Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" (Jer. 32:27).

Wait on God's Timing

Years ago, when I was under great stress and cried to God for help, He gave me peace instantly. But answers do not always come so quickly. Sometimes we have to wait on God's timetable.

When the children of Israel were frantic at the Red Sea because of the Egyptians behind them, and Moses said to them, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord," they had to wait till the Lord rolled back the waters before they could cross.

Psalms 27:14 says, "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." Jeremiah said, "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord" (Lam. 3:26). God told the Jews in Zephaniah's day to wait for Him to work (Zeph. 3:8). Jesus asked the apostles to wait for the promise of the Father. Paul said it this way, "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:25).

Sometimes God's promises take a long time to fulfill. He promised Abraham inheritance in the earth long ago and it still has not come. Other times people were

healed immediately. Peace came to me immediately. But other times we may have to wait till God sees it is the right time to answer. Perhaps something else has to happen first. We do not see all things as God sees all things.

Also, we must remember that God may have a better use for our mountain. Paul besought God three times concerning a mountain, and God told him it was better for him to keep it. But it appears this was more of an exception than the rule. The promises the Bible records show that God is ready to help us remove the mountain. It is the reward for a deep faith. It also will deepen our faith.

What, Then, Do We See?

1. God has promised powerful promises to His people.
2. He never lies. We can believe His words.
3. If we follow the rules: 1) Really believe God's promises, 2) when we pray, believe we will receive them, 3) tell the mountain to remove in the name of Jesus, 4) thank Him and act upon it, our prayer will be answered.
4. This is what James called "the prayer of faith." He also said that we should not waver, but ask in faith, for the man who

wavers or doubts God will receive nothing (James 1:5-6).

5. God wants to give us the desires of our hearts (Psa. 37:3-5), when our desires are in accordance with His will. Some desires are not spiritual ones or right to ask for.
6. God will answer according to His timetable. We must wait on Him.
7. In everything we can give God thanks. This is His will. And this is something we are so happy to do. Praise ye the Lord!

When a person sees a miraculous answer to his prayer or the prayer of another, it deepens faith and humility, and gives so much glory to God.

There are so many mountains that people have in this world. We can help them to remove them. A more abundant and faithful life will result. Let us live by faith, not by sight. We live in faith that the Kingdom of God is coming. We live by faith that we have been forgiven and are God's children. Why not live by faith in Matthew 18:19? Is it not true that if two of us earnestly agree on some mountain to ask God to remove, and follow the scriptural teachings, will that mountain not be removed?



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The Performance Trap

BY DAVE OPEL

"AFTER BEGINNING WITH the Spirit, are you now trying to obtain your goal by human effort?" (Gal. 3:3).

Performance plays a big role in today's job market and in our culture. Similarly, this American way of life has also become the American way of religion, a "do-it-yourself" religion. Emphasis is placed upon your achievement. Salvation is viewed as meritable by personal effort, works, and acceptable behavior. People see themselves as "masters" of their own fate and "captains" of their own souls. God is viewed as helping only those who help themselves (not a text of Scripture).

Why not emphasize what God does for us instead of what we do for Him? God freely gives us the "gift" of salvation (Romans chs. 5, 6). This means that

salvation is strictly undeserved, never meritable. It is absolutely and totally free. You cannot earn it. You cannot buy it.

Receiving God's grace by humble acceptance through simple faith always stands in sharp contrast to earning it on the basis of works. Some have called this concept "cheap" grace. But it really is even cheaper than "cheap." It is absolutely free! Unfortunately, some have misinterpreted true grace as "cheap." "Cheap" grace justifies the sinner rather than the sinner while "true" grace justifies the sinner, not the sin.

"Everyone who hopes to be eternally justified must come to God the same way: on the basis of grace; it is a gift, and that gift comes to us absolutely free."

— Charles Swindoll

"The trouble is that most Christians think they're saved by grace but grow by sweat."
— Stephen Brown

"Unmerited favor vs. earned acceptance. Freely bestowed vs. conditionally given. Undeserving receivers vs. worthy achievers."
— David A. Semands

"Yes, God is working in you to help you want to do what pleases Him. And He gives you the power to do it."

— Phil. 2:13, New Century Version

"Without the power of the Holy Spirit all human efforts, methods, and plans are as futile as attempting to propel a boat by puffing at the sails with our own breath."

— D.M. Dawson

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Volume 85, Number 6 • August, September 1996



Oh Lord, heaven is your throne and the earth is your footstool.
The kingdom is yours.

Time Flies . . .

*The sixth
Fletcher arrow . . . is
Kailyn Elyse Fletcher.*

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

It's hard to believe, but with this issue we've completed our first year together, I as editor and you as reader. I hope you are finding our partnership as joyous and refreshing as I am. I have tried to include articles that are encouraging, yet at the same time challenging. Within the Church of God we have many excellent writers, and I suspect that we are only beginning to scratch the surface of the available talent out there. There are probably a number of you with at least one good article inside of you. Next time you're reading or thinking about some issue that really challenges you, take a minute and jot down your ideas . . . before you know it, there might be some ideas worth sharing with others.

In this issue we're pleased to be able to offer you another fine selection of articles. We begin with a topic dear to us — our Kingdom hope. Anthony Buzzard tells us about the future implications of the Kingdom while Tracy Savage talks about some of the present-day aspects of the Kingdom. This is followed by an imaginative conversation at the Kingdom dinner table between Chris Seiders and the apostle Paul. Merry Peterson then captures some of the poetic excitement of Christ's coming with "One Night" — sure to bring a tear of joy to your eyes.

Robert Hach provides us with a stimulating exploration of "Three Kinds of Faith" and Rex Cain gives some suggestions for parenting.

This month I received several letters which I've included for your interest. You

will find the points of view concerning capital punishment challenging. Be prepared to stretch yourself and look at several sides of the same issue.

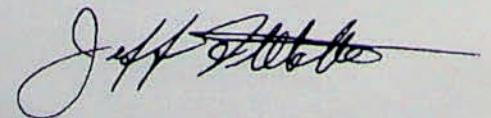
We follow this with a look at our faith in action. It has been said that the best way to determine a person's true values is to look through their checkbook. We have two excellent articles — one by Hollis Partlowe and another submitted anonymously — which challenge us to think about our stewardship.

Jeff Herring and Jim Mattison give us some excellent advice for coping with stress and burnout; take the time to read them.

We have included a very special article in this issue about a subject that touches many lives today, Alzheimer's disease. "Muriel's Blessing" is the story of one Christian man's experience of his wife's struggle with Alzheimer's. I want to thank Pastor Francis Burnett for locating this article and obtaining permission from its author to share it with you.

On a personal note, God has blessed our family with another beautiful, healthy child. The sixth Fletcher arrow entered our quiver on July 27th. Her name is Kailyn Elyse Fletcher and she reminds me again of how generous and kind our heavenly father is to His children.

May God be good to you all. Lift up your hearts! Jesus is Lord! □



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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17, PSA. 146-4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21);
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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The Message of the Kingdom as the Only Tool to Create Immortality

Luke's report of Jesus' teaching makes reception of this message the absolute essential for salvation. The Kingdom is the object of faith and it is the means of salvation.

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲



BY ANTHONY BUZZARD

According to 2 Timothy 1:13 the proclamation of Paul is a model of sound teaching (cp. Romans 6:17, "a model of teaching"). The Greek word *typos* (model, shape or form) describes the "outline" of the teaching of Jesus and Paul.

There is a fixed form of teaching in the New Testament and it all goes back to the teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God. Jesus lays out this "paradigm" or "model" in Matthew 13:11ff. The *seed* is called *the message of the Kingdom* in the parable of the sower (actually a parable about the progress of the Gospel of the Kingdom):

To you is given the knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of God When someone hears the Message about the Kingdom and fails to understand it, the devil comes and snatches away what is sown in his mind As for the one who is sown on good soil, that is the man who hears the message [about the Kingdom] and understands it He bears fruit.

Luke's report of Jesus' teaching makes reception of this message the absolute essential for salvation. The Kingdom is the object of faith and it is the means of salvation:

The seed is the message of God [the message about the Kingdom, Matthew 13:19]. Those on the road are the people who hear, but then the devil comes and carries off the word from

their hearts so that they may not believe it and be saved (Luke 8:11, 12).

Those who receive the message of the Kingdom become "the sons of the Kingdom" (Matt. 13:38) (= the royal family in training for rulership in the coming Kingdom¹). The devil sows his ideas and produces "weeds" (darnel, which looks very much like true wheat). A Christian disciple is one who has been instructed in the Kingdom (13:52).

Jesus obviously believed that certain information had to take root in the heart of an individual for the salvation process to get under way. That information is "knowledge of the message of the Kingdom of God."

"To you it is given to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but it is not granted to these others" (Matt. 13:11).

Peter, who was chosen as the "rock" apostle, describes the same process: Christians are "born again not from corruptible seed (*spora*) but incorruptible seed through the Message of the living God . . . which remains forever" (1 Peter 1:23, 25). "This is the word which was preached to you as the Gospel" (v. 25) — i.e., the Gospel of the Kingdom (Luke 4:43; Matt. 13:19; 24:14; Acts 19:8; 28:23, 31).

The germ of immortality is transmitted to the believer only by this process, the planting of the incorruptible seed of the word of the Kingdom. Satan knows this and tries to remove the seed or corrupt it so that it will not develop into immortality (by resurrection).

There is no other message than the message of the Kingdom which Jesus and the apostles preached which can possibly transmit the seed of immortality. Having been sown it has to be cultivated so that it can bear fruit. This being true the early church proclaimed the Kingdom, made sure it had been grasped and then baptized the convert:

When they believed Philip as he proclaimed the Good News [Gospel] about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus [everything Jesus stands for], they were getting baptized, both men and women (Acts 8:12).

The Bible teaching has a definite "mold" or shape (a Messianic apocalyptic shape). Unfortunately there is another, Greek philosophical "mold" through which the teachings of Jesus were run in the second century. No wonder that the faith came out bearing a different shape! People are shocked when you give them the biblically-shaped faith.

The Platonized Christianity of the denominations (since the 2nd century) promotes a *present* "kingdom" and a destiny which has to do with departing as a disembodied soul to heaven at death. Jesus never taught these things and would have rejected them as dangerous counterfeits. The denominational system, unable to give up its cherished Gnosticism/Platonism merely twists the model of the Bible to fit its non-Messianic understanding. Thus it can have the "comfort" of the Bible while maintaining the traditional status quo. That's "the mess we're in"!

Everyone who hears you teach is a candidate for immortality or destruction

depending on whether they take to heart the Kingdom Message or not (including the cross of Jesus, of course, and His resurrection and coming again).

The seed-Message contains the spiritual information designed to spark new life (rebirth).

God causes the rebirth through this word/seed and it launches in us a living hope (1 Pet. 1:3, 4), namely the hope of the inheritance of the Kingdom and immortality in it.

No wonder then that Paul speaks of "the health-giving words, namely the words of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:3). These words lead to good health forever — immortality through resurrection.

Some say that the Kingdom of God is not part of the gospel but merely of interest to students of prophecy. This theory overlooks two basic facts:

Jesus calls the Gospel "the Gospel about the Kingdom" (Matthew 13:19; Luke 4:43, etc.). Philip and Paul preached the Kingdom as the Gospel (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). "The Gospel of the Kingdom" is equivalent to "the word of the Kingdom" and these phrases are identical in meaning to "the word of God/the Lord" and "the Gospel of God." They also appear in the New Testament in the shortened form "the word," and "the Gospel." Another synonym is "the Gospel of Christ," or "the Gospel of salvation." The same Message of the Kingdom appears also as "the word of truth," or "the truth." All these terms are traced to the "parent text" given by Jesus: the Gospel (word) about the Kingdom of God/heaven. In John's account of Jesus' ministry the same

Gospel is "the word," or "words" of Jesus. Many Bible readers have never grasped the meaning of the Gospel as it originated with the historical Jesus (see Hebrews 2:3).

There is only one Gospel and it is the Gospel of the Kingdom as proclaimed first by Jesus when He was here on earth. After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus the same Gospel — "this Gospel about the Kingdom" (Matt. 24:15) — is to be announced until the end of the age, when Jesus will return to inaugurate the Kingdom of God on earth. The Kingdom is the Christian hope as well as the subject of the Gospel. Reception of the Gospel message and hope bears on everything we do now. Even love and faith *spring from hope* (Col. 1:4, 5).

Popular evangelism asks people to "receive Jesus." Jesus asks us to "receive the message of the Kingdom." There is an essential difference. Jesus is accepted through His message about the Kingdom (Matt. 13:19ff., John 17:8, 14, 20). This is God's creative tool designed to transmit immortality to the believer. Today it is extremely rare even to hear mentioned the biblical phrase "Gospel about the Kingdom" which is the basis of all that Jesus and the apostles taught. □

¹Cp. Eric Sauer (*From Eternity to Eternity*, 1993, p. 93): "the Church is the official administrative staff, the ruling aristocracy of the coming Kingdom."

Kingdom Power and Kingdom Joy in Your Life Today

BY TRACY SAVAGE
ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

God has given us His spirit as a deposit until we reap the full extent of His grace in the kingdom. Therefore, we have kingdom power in our lives today. The kingdom of God is a matter of righteousness, peace and joy in the holy spirit (Romans 14:17-18).

Upon Him giving us His spirit, we receive that which is of His spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. When we possess His spirit, we possess all these qualities of His spirit. These fruits of His spirit are just that, of His spirit. They are not a result of anything we did or can do. Through faith we receive His spirit and through that same faith we receive these blessings.

So then, why do so many Christians, those possessing His spirit, lack one or more of these qualities in their lives? God has been teaching me about joy, so I will focus on that. But what is true of joy is true of all the fruit listed in Galatians 5:22-23.

We receive and we possess joy. It doesn't have to and shouldn't leave us. It isn't dependent on outer circumstances or even inner feelings or emotions. Joy is also not the same as happiness, which is dependent on outer circumstances. The only time we lack in joy, or have no joy, is when we choose to give it away. At times we give up our inheritance of joy for sorrow, pain, frustration, anger or hatred.

Imagine a steep rock plateau surrounded by an ocean. Waves of fear, sorrow, anger, etc. touch our lives, but they need not reign on our rock. Jesus is our rock on which we stand, but we are responsible for what sits on that rock with us. When frustration begins to climb up there we must acknowledge it and kick it off. We must not even let the fingers of negative thoughts or feelings pull themselves up onto our pedestals. When we see them we must sweep them right back over the edge with the broom of joy. Visualizing this helps us to realize and acknowledge what is happening, and that something must be done. Seeing yourself do this also helps you claim the victory that is yours.

We are entitled to joy. We are given joy. It is ours to possess. God Himself gave it to us. The joy He gives is

greater than any other joy. And as I said, it isn't dependent on another person, on circumstances or on possessions, or the lack of them. Therefore, people, things or circumstances have no power over the joy that we have been given. We believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy (1 Peter 1:8-9). God fills us with a greater joy than anything created can give us (Psalm 4:7). His joy in us is our strength and we need not grieve (Nehemiah 8:10). If we want to be strong, we need to have joy.

Jesus desires that we have joy and that our lives would be full and complete. He tells us that when we follow His commands and remain in His love our joy is complete. He says that He expresses His love for us so that His joy could be in us — so that our joy would be complete (John 15:9-11). If Jesus is concerned that we would have complete joy, we ought to be as well. He tells us to ask for what we lack and He will give it, and our joy will be complete (John 16:24).

As I searched for more of God's understanding of joy in the Word three important things were revealed. We are given joy when He puts His spirit in us, but we can have more of it if we desire — as we can also have more love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

First of all, our joy increases as we digest the Word of God. As Jeremiah said, "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight..." (15:16). God's words are joy to us. Why? Because they bring us His salvation, His healing and His hope. He speaks to us and reveals Himself, His love and His faithfulness to us by His words. Therefore, the Bible is one place we find joy and there it is made available to us.

Secondly and most predominantly in Scripture, joy abounds in praise and worship of God. Throughout the Old Testament we see the magnitude of worship and its importance not only for God, but for the worshiper as well. We aren't merely to worship to find joy, but to express our joy. "On that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and

children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away" (Nehemiah 12:43). In this verse (and many in the Psalms) we see that praise and worship are not silent, taking place only in the heart. They are expressed outwardly and with one's heart, mind, body and all one's might. The people's praises were heard even far away. WOW! What rejoicing! What joy! In another example of praise Nehemiah records that the Israelites had not celebrated like this for a long time, and their joy was very great (8:17). We must reflect; when was the last time our joy was "very great"? When was the last time we "celebrated"?

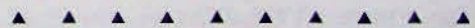
God's joy is found in His presence, in His dwelling place. When we enter the holy of holies there is joy (and all the fruit of the spirit). "O Lord, surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence" (Psalm 21:6). "You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" (Psalm 16:11). "Splendor and majesty are before Him, strength and joy in His dwelling place" (1 Chronicles 16:27). If you desire strength or joy, go into His dwelling place. There you will be strengthened, revived and restored. "Clap your hands all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy. God has ascended amid shouts of joy, the Lord amid the sounding of trumpets. Sing praises to God, sing praises;

sing praises to our King, sing praises (Psalm 47:1, 5, 6). Again we see the connection between praise and joy. They are reciprocal. We praise and are filled with joy. And we have joy and therefore we praise.

Thirdly, the Scriptures reinforced my conviction that sharing the Word brings one of the greatest joys one can attain. What greater joy is there above praising



*If you desire strength
or joy, go into His
dwelling place. There you
will be strengthened,
revived and restored.*



God and revealing that God and His Messiah to others?! Sharing the hope of His coming kingdom gives us that inexpressible and glorious joy. Throughout Paul's writings we see that much of his joy lies in his children, his converts, his brothers and sisters. "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when He comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy" (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). Indeed, people

saved are God's joy. They ought to be ours as well.

If we want to keep joy and experience it more fully in our lives daily, we must not allow negative thoughts or feelings place in our minds. Joy must remain on top of our rock, even though in the world there are struggles, heartaches and pain. What has been helping me attain this domination of joy and find victory in this spiritual battle is, as I shared earlier, visualizing the plateau and myself defending it, not allowing any thought or feeling to invade or overcome my joy. I see myself sweeping or kicking any negative thought or feeling back over the edge it came from. Then at the same time I focus on the Lord and immediately come into His presence with a song of praise. Singing "alleluia, alleluia . . ." is the quickest and most effective for me. I keep repeating it and giving Him praise until His joy is victorious in my heart and mind over whatever thought or person or situation invaded His territory. At this point, recalling His Word also encourages and gives strength. This also helps us to not give the devil a foothold in our hearts or minds. Victory is ours, if we claim it. Our joy is restored and we have all the more reason to rejoice and give them praise.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the holy spirit" (Romans 15:13). □

A Dinner Conversation with the Apostle Paul

*I see myself in a long
line to speak with the
apostle Paul.*

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

This is a hypothetical conversation set in the future. When in the future I am not quite sure, but it is in the future. After the return of Christ, the hope of this group of believers, the millennial kingdom will be established upon the earth. In that kingdom we will be joined by the powerful men of God from the past. This includes the list of heroes in the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews. These people will join with us in the kingdom and we will rule together with them and Christ.

There is an exciting hope that many people are looking forward to in the kingdom. This is the chance to speak with the men of the past — those who died for the cause, and others who simply possessed the faith Jesus spoke of that was able to move mountains. Some people may want to speak to Abraham, seeing that our faith claims him as father. Others may want to ask Elijah the prophet about the fear he may have had when he confronted the prophets of Baal. Others may want to ask David about his confrontation with Goliath. Still others may probe the wisdom God gave to Solomon.

I see myself in a long line to speak with the apostle Paul. There are several questions that I want to ask him. I can see myself filled with awe at the banquet table, as I speak to the man who was responsible for taking the Gospel to the gentile people who filled the world. What an awesome burden to have on your shoulders. These questions do not cover

all of my concerns but round out the major issues.

The first question I would ask Paul concerns his conversion experience and the life story that he told to Agrippa. I would like to ask him to retell the story. I really would like to hear it from the mouth of the apostle himself. The message that almost turned the king to the ways of Christianity must have been one of the most powerful messages that was ever preached. That is the first thing that I would like him to address at the table.

After Paul has described his life in the fullest detail, I would ask him of the influences that played a vital role in his ministry. I can just imagine Paul saying that the most important influence on his ministry was his vision of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. I think that we would all have the same response if Jesus were to personally visit us. The ironic thing is that each of us has been called to carry the gospel message to those who have not yet heard. This is an awesome responsibility that we possess as the followers of Christ.

Perhaps some of us forget some of the less important influences in the life of the apostle. In my research, I found it interesting that one of the first things commentators address is the upbringing Paul (at that time Saul) had in the city of Tarsus. This reinforces the idea that children are (and need to be) instructed in the home more than the church. In Proverbs 22:6 it says that if you show someone the

BY CHRISTOPHER SEIDERS

way they will not depart from it. This is also emphasized in the second law that God gave the Israelites through Moses.

In Tarsus Paul had a lot of luxuries, as the city itself was one of the largest of the time. While there Paul was more than likely instructed by his mother. From what we can figure she was of Jewish heritage. Paul was so strong willed and zealous for the law because that is what the Jews stressed in their communities. They thought that through the law they could reach perfection. Paul later realized that no one is saved by simply observing the law and the commandments.

Another contributing factor in the life of the apostle was that he was both a Jew and a Roman citizen. This meant that he had certain inherent rights and privileges. On more than one occasion we see the results of that citizenship. Once he was about to be scourged, but a Roman soldier discovered who he was and it was cancelled. Another occasion seems not to have involved a personal reason, but aided the spreading of the gospel.

The second example was Paul's appeal to Caesar. Paul probably would have gone free if he had not made this appeal. He realized the importance of spreading the good news about Jesus. Eventually this appeal would lead to his death. If all of us could have the conviction of the apostle Paul all of the people of the world would know the good news of Jesus.

After asking that the mashed potatoes be passed from across the table I would ask the apostle to describe the way that he dealt with his "thorn in the flesh." We all have such thorns. They are a constant reminder to each of us that we are but the servants to the Master, who shaped us for His use. Paul would offer the explanation that "only through the weaknesses that I have can I be strong." This is probably one of the toughest realizations that the apostle needed to make during his ministry.

I think this was tough because of the training Paul had before his encounter with Jesus. We do not understand the hardships that Jews endured, oppressed by the Romans. They were waiting for

the Messiah to establish His kingdom on the earth. Paul came to understand that Jesus was the Messiah. That is the confession of faith we need to look for from our friends and loved ones.

The true understanding of this statement came when Paul said that he had been crucified with Christ. In the time Paul spent as a persecutor of the church this would have been a contradiction of his interpretation of the word "Christ." The Christ was to be filled with all power and to rule the kingdoms of the world. This blew Paul's mind. Only when he knew that the Christ first had to die, to save the people for the kingdom, could he identify with the Savior.

Paul was and is an encouragement for the church. His example of the ability to change is what we need to note. Probably we have not had the experiences he had, but we are all called by the grace of God to lift our crosses and say "We are crucified with him. I no longer live but Christ lives in me!" □

A Child of God Learns What They Live

If a child of God lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.

If a child of God lives with hostility, he learns to fight.

If a child of God lives with fear, he learns to be apprehensive.

If a child of God lives with pity, he learns to be sorry for himself.

If a child of God lives with jealousy, he learns to feel guilty.

If a child of God lives with encouragement, he learns to be confident.

If a child of God lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.

If a child of God lives with praise, he learns to be appreciative.

If a child of God lives with acceptance, he learns to love.

If a child of God lives with approval, he learns to like himself.

If a child of God lives with fairness, he learns what justice is.

If a child of God lives with honesty, he learns what truth is.

If a child of God lives with security, he learns to have faith in himself.

If a child of God lives with recognition, he learns to have a goal.

If a child of God lives with friendliness, he learns that the world is a nice place in which to live.

If a child of God lives with reverence, he learns to worship God.

If a child of God lives with wonder and love, he learns to respond to God's will.

Aren't we all children of God? □

One Night

BY MERRY PETERSON

The air fills itself with silent
sounds, slipping shadows, and
silver thin moonbeams. The
air is cool and sweet, all is
peaceful and calm.

The coals in the fires have died
and the last embers have
shone their light. The breeze
blows gently in all the trees.

Little children lie asleep in their
beds.

Mothers, fathers, sisters, and
brothers, are all soundly
sleeping.

Even the homeless on the streets
have dozed off into a peaceful
rest.

All is peaceful, Oh, so peaceful.
The whole wide world in a state of
perfect harmonious slumber.

No one knows, or even suspects
what is about to come.

A storm is brewing. A storm that
has been brewing for such a
time as this.

A magnificent storm, whose power
and wonder gives reverence to
its heavenly creator.

An ear shattering crack of thunder,
a flash of white lightning
which burns with holy wrath.

A jubilant, triumphal trumpet
sounds like a wake up call.
It is enough to wake the dead.

Dark clouds compose the sky while
the thunder beats out a drum
roll of appearing.

In the clouds, those dark billowing
clouds, a figure arises.
The figure of a man robed in white
splendor.

From his eyes beams the purest
light, and from his face comes
a glorious glow

Fear and awe strike the heart with
the vision of this man.

He is descending from heaven
towards earth.

All around figures of those who
were once dead are rising.
Each face forming familiarity, each
body being recreated in
tender flesh and bone. All
eyes look upon the figure in
white. Every eye shining with
the glory of what they behold.

Men, women, children, who were
so peacefully sleeping just a
short time before are now
present in the air floating to
meet the man who reigns the
sky with splendor.

The clouds are clearing . . . the sun
peeks through.

The sun shines but its light is
nothing compared to the light
that radiantly beams from the
son. His brightness chases all
the fears out of innocent eyes
and chases all shadows from
the sky. In the gathering in
the sky of the redeemed there
is an incomprehensible peace.

The rest of the world are aroused
by the light and jubilant
victory sounds.

They wonder what is happening.
Some with fear and trembling,
some with disgust, and some
with anguish.

Some rush to their windows and
others cower under their
blankets.

Babies cry at the commotion, and
animals cry out their alarm.
The rocks and trees cry out for joy
at the coming of the Lord.
This is the beginning of a new age.
This is the age of a kingdom whose
ruler is the King of kings and
the Lord of lords.

Nothing will ever be the same.
No one will ever be the same.
This is one very special, very quiet,
very still night that no one will
ever forget. □

Three Kinds of Faith

BY ROBERT HACH

The divisions that exist among professing Christians are generally attributed to doctrinal differences. Just as significant as differences concerning what believers believe, however, are differences concerning how believers come to those beliefs. How believers come to their beliefs does not so much divide believers into more than one group as it divides faith itself into more than one kind. At least three kinds of faith can be identified and described with reference to how each is acquired.

Indoctrinated and Mystified Faith

First is the faith that comes by indoctrination. People come to this kind of faith by being raised in religious homes, which are often governed, in terms of their beliefs and behavior, by religious groups.

Indoctrination is the process of absorbing beliefs through constant repetition, to the exclusion of a consideration of alternative beliefs. Since children are, generally, not able to think independently until adolescence, parents with strong beliefs of their own condition their pre-adolescent children to believe and behave as they do. After a child reaches adolescence and moves into adulthood, and the religious home gradually lessens in its influence, the religious group continues and intensifies the indoctrination process.

Second is the faith that comes by mystification. People come to this kind of faith by a religious experience of one kind or another.

Mystification is the process of experiencing a sense of divine intervention that cannot be explained in rational terms.

The term "mystification" is a form of the word "mysticism," which denotes a direct knowledge of God, apart from the use of either sensory perception or rational thought. The mystified believer claims to have a "personal relationship with God." This is not a knowledge of God that consists of an understanding of God as He is revealed in the teaching of Jesus Christ; it is, instead, a kind of extra-sensory perception of God that begins at the point of a "conversion" experience. Before one's conversion, he may have known a great deal "about" God; now, however, he "knows God personally." When asked for an explanation of this "personal relationship with God," the mystified believer is likely to say that it's a matter of "faith," in the sense of a "feeling," a "reality," or an "experience" that he can't put into words in the sense of rational explanation.

Mystification without some degree of indoctrination generally produces an enthusiastic faith that lacks discipline. Indoctrination is often employed in mystifying religious groups in order to channel religious enthusiasm into church work as well as to keep religious experience from becoming so personal that it inhibits identification with the group.

By comparison, indoctrination without some degree of mystification generally produces a legalistic faith that is void of passion. Mystical interventions of God in the form of religious conferences and revivals bring emotional relief and renewal to indoctrinated believers, some of whom also rely on a "personal relationship with God" to give them a sense of individuality to offset mandatory conformity to group standards.

Persuaded Faith

Third and last is the faith that comes by persuasion. People come to this kind of faith by the use of their ability to reason.

Persuasion is the process of seeking to understand arguments and counter-arguments for the purpose of arriving at the most probable belief regarding any subject of inquiry. The object of persuasion, as the term is used here, is oneself. In other words, the persuaded believer seeks, first of all, to persuade herself of the truth by considering all reasonable options. For persuasion to be genuine, the believer must be an active participant in rather than merely a passive recipient of the process of persuasion. When one weighs opposing arguments against each other with a view to the supporting evidence of each, she is, in effect, persuading herself that one is more probably true than the other. Only in this way can one come to a persuaded faith.

The active character of persuasion distinguishes it from both indoctrination and mystification.

Indoctrination, by controlling access to information, forces people into a passive mode of believing; the indoctrinated believer has no alternative but to believe what he is told because he is permitted access to no other sources of information. The meaning of "obedience to God" is doing what he is told by the indoctrinating religious group.

Similarly, mystification forces people into a passive mode of believing by portraying God as the active agent, the One who intervenes to bring knowledge to

Three Kinds of Faith (continued from page 12)

the mystified believer. The most common expression of the mystified response to God is the act of "surrender," the passive "letting go" of one's "self" in the belief that God will "take control" of one's life. Whether God or the mystifying religious group then takes control is another question.

Persuasion, by comparison, can only produce behavior impelled by beliefs that have been actively processed and internalized. The process of coming to persuaded beliefs is best described by the biblical word "seek" ("seek first his kingdom"; "seek and you will find"; "seek the things above"; "believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him"), representing the biblical activity of questioning, comparing, and discerning. This kind of seeking leads to a knowledge best described as an understanding that can be acknowledged, or put into words, by the persuaded believer.

First-Century Persuasion

The first-century Jews of Beroea were examples of persuaded believers in that "they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." Evidently, Paul did not expect them to believe his presentation of the Christian message without question because of his doctrinal authority, nor did he expect them to suddenly believe because of a mystical intervention into their lives. (It was the message itself that had intervened in their lives, through their association with Paul.) Rather, they are called "noble"

because not only were they receptive to Paul's message, but they also questioned it, comparing it with the written testimony of the prophets and discerning it for its truth value.

Similarly, Paul "dialogued with" (*dialegomai*) the believers in Troas, a "discourse" (*logos*) that lasted "until midnight," making it likely that Paul was asked many questions and was obliged to give considerable explanation.

Instances in which forms of the Greek word for "persuade" (*peitho*), often coupled with forms of "dialogue" (*dialegomai*), are used with reference to the presentation of the Christian message to unbelievers include: persuasion in Pisidian Antioch, where, after Paul's public proclamation in the synagogue, "many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and persuaded them to continue in the grace of God"; persuasion in Thessalonica, where Paul entered the synagogue and "dialogued with them from the Scriptures . . . And some of them were persuaded"; persuasion in Corinth, where Paul "dialogued in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks" and was accused by the Jewish leaders of "persuading people to worship God contrary to the Law"; persuasion in Ephesus, where Paul "entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, dialoguing and persuading about the kingdom of God"; and, finally, persuasion in Rome, where Paul was "from morning to evening, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and

from the Prophets." These instances of persuasion occurred in the context of extended dialogue, consisting of rational arguments and counterarguments regarding conflicting interpretations of the Scriptures. (All quotations in the previous three paragraphs are from Acts of the Apostles.)

Persuasion is not an automatic response to the Christian message or an involuntary submission to divine intervention; on the contrary, as indicated by Jesus' judgment on the Jewish religious establishment of Jerusalem: "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead." The miraculous signs performed by Jesus and, later, by the apostles were not divine interventions that compelled people to believe. Instead, they served as evidence to support the persuaded faith of those who, like the Bereans, "received the word with all eagerness"; an open mind has always been a prerequisite to a persuaded faith, while a closed mind, like those of the majority of the Jewish leaders, could not be opened even by miracles and wonders.

Freedom vs. Certainty

The difference between persuasion, on the one hand, and indoctrination and mystification, on the other, is that persuasion always involves the freedom to choose between alternative possibilities; the possibility of being wrong is always present, and a persuaded faith is always open to revising its beliefs in the light of new data. In contrast, both

indoctrination and mystification insist that the knowledge that they impart are matters of absolute certainty. To believe with any degree of uncertainty would be a sign of weakness and unbelief.

The persuaded believer, however, can be an agnostic (from the Greek *gnosis*, meaning "knowledge," and "a," meaning "without") about many issues and is subject to varying degrees of uncertainty about others. The most that she can claim about any belief regarding God and his kingdom is a reasonable probability based on the necessarily limited data she has at any given time. The Bible, after all, must be interpreted by fallible humans, who must use their rational powers to understand its testimony.

Conversely, the faiths that come by indoctrination and mystification typically claim a certainty that would only be possible for prophets and apostles, which is to say, those who were inspired by the breath of God and, therefore, could speak with the authority of God. Indeed, indoctrinating and mystifying religious leaders often claim prophetic and apostolic authority because without such claims they could not instill in the minds of their followers the necessary sense of certainty that they were right. A persuaded believer, in contrast, can admit to uncertainties and doubts, along with the man who cried out to Jesus: "I believe; help my unbelief."

Conclusion

While persuasion does not provide the persuaded believer with certainty about the truth of his beliefs, it is compatible with "the assurance of faith" with which he worships and serves God as he lives in the flesh. In contrast to certainty about various doctrinal beliefs or mystical experiences, persuasion grants only the assurance that God will not count one's sins against him on the day of judgment. Being forgiven, the assurance of which allows one to look beyond the day of judgment to life in the kingdom of the age to come, is, after all, more important than being right. □

Suggestions for Parenting

by Rex Cain

In describing the last days, Scripture states that "children shall be disobedient to parents" (2 Tim. 3:2/Rom. 1:30). This is not to say we don't have many wonderful children obeying their parents and doing God's will. But there seems to be a trend, due to a growing population of alcoholic and drug using parents — and parents living without God — that is raising a generation of restless and unsettled children.

The Scriptures provide some sensible, workable guidelines for parenting. Consider some of the following.

- Teach and practice moral values based on The Word, i.e., "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 3:15-17).
- Set clear consistent guidelines (limits and freedoms) for behavior and stick to them. They need to know where they stand with parents and with God. Rules

should be meaningful and enforcement reasonable — and consistent (Gen. 18:19; 1 Sam. 3:12-14).

- For bad behavior use reasonable punishment not given in anger but in love (Prov. 3:11, 12; 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:14, 15; 29:15, 17; Heb. 12:9-11).
- For good behavior be sure to commend and praise — "positive reinforcement." This is as much a part of discipline as is punishment. "Do not provoke your children to anger" (Eph. 6:4).
- Set your children a good example. I think it's true that what we do speaks louder than what we say (1 Tim. 4:12).
- Treat your children as individuals, valued and loved in their own right. Help them develop feelings of self-worth and a good self-image and to know and realize a sense of achievement. Do not depreciate them. Don't expect them to behave and reason as adults (Eph. 6:4).

- Give your children your time, not things. Let them enjoy their childhood and family. Don't push them into adult behavior before they are ready. Listen to what they say and respond as seriously as you would to an adult. Communication involves both listening and speaking — don't overlook non-verbal communications (Prov. 18:13).
- In all things love your children. This is shown by you in patience, kindness, generosity, humility, courtesy, unselfishness, good temper, honesty, sincerity and forgiveness. Practice the Golden Rule — treat them like you would like to be treated! (1 Cor. 13:4-7; Eph. 4:15, 29-32).

These words (God's) "teach diligently to your children, and you shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (Deut. 6:4-9).

All the time! □

A Response: On Capital Punishment

BY ARTHUR FLETCHER

I read Mark Mattison's article on capital punishment ["Christ and Capital Punishment," April, May, 1996] assuming I was involved with the liberal's handbook based on humanistic rationalizations, not on scriptural concepts. Each question he discusses is not relevant to the question he poses. "Is capital punishment moral?" I believe what Mark poses is actually two questions — personal behavior and the responsibility of a just nation. Did God forbid the individual from taking human life because of deterrence, racism, resources, and forgiveness? Or was it because He created us all equal, we are the temple in which His Spirit dwells, and He alone is the determiner of life and death? So much for studies: if one is killed for the act of first degree murder, it seems, he will not kill again. Racism is always the cry of the true racist. The constitution calls for quick justice, not years and years of appeals. As for the victim, it is a little late to forgive. According to Mark capital punishment exists for the benefit of society (allegedly). However, in reality it exists to fulfill God's maxim of a life for a life and is society's way of acting as the advocate on behalf of the victim who cannot seek

justice. The one who inflicts capital punishment on another realistically should be tried by the same standard. "Live by the sword — die by the sword." Without it our land is "polluted," says the Lord.

Actually life imprisonment isn't (usually) — more likely it's ten to twenty years before one is freed from prison but not likely from violence. In reality, there is



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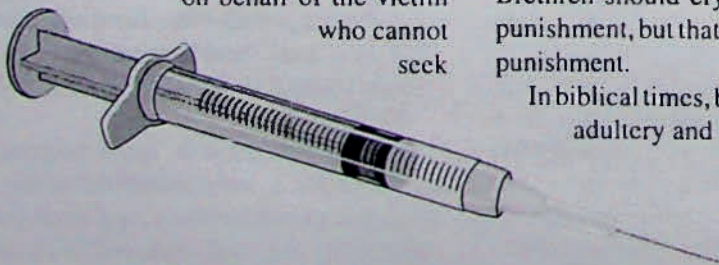
a strong case against capital punishment — that which is inflicted on "heretics" by religious forces. Throughout history many innocent people who believe in the one true God, YHWH, have been the victims of ungodly capital punishment. Pacifists and biblical unitarians such as the Polish Brethren should cry out against capital punishment, but that is an abuse of capital punishment.

In biblical times, blasphemy, as well as adultery and disobedience to par-

ents, was punishable by death but in reality this was seldom carried out. Thus the Messiah's charge not to repay evil for evil is relevant to the individual who believes God will repay in vengeance, but not to the state which acts in the place of God. I'm sure we are all aware that in God's commonwealth it was the responsibility of the family to avenge the death of one of its members — thus the cities of refuge to avoid miscarriages of justice before degree of guilt was established. Paul was not a murderer but an accessory to Stephen's death by those who felt he was blaspheming. As for visiting prisoners, I dare say they were not in prison for murder but most likely because of persecution or debt.

One major case against capital punishment is that it is possible to execute an innocent person, or a suicidal person who wants to die and murders to accomplish that wish; thus it is not perfect and can be abused. The same liberals who cry out and carry signs against capital punishment remain silent while innocent *fetuses* are executed by capital punishment at the whim of one who is its flesh and blood. Is that moral?

Mark asks whether capital punishment by the state, for first degree murder, is moral. We answer with a question: Is God, the author of capital punishment for a just state, moral? He is the author of moral law.



Counter-Response on Capital Punishment

BY MARK MATTISON

Art has raised several fundamental hermeneutical issues concerning Christian responsibility and the authority of the state. His keen insights into basic questions are both helpful and important. Having said that, I would like to respond to each of these points.

First, I do not believe it is possible to distinguish between personal and institutional morality. Either violence is wrong, or it's not. If I commit a sin in service to the state, am I absolved of personal responsibility for the act? Can I kill as a soldier, but not as a Christian?

Paul does not hold the state accountable to a moral standard different from that of the individual. In Romans 12:9-13:10, Paul contrasts the actions of the Christian with those of the state. Christians love their enemies and do not take revenge (12:9-21; 13:8-10); the state, on the other hand, exercises violence (13:4). True, God uses the state to accomplish His sovereign will and to punish, but this does not vindicate the state. God used Assyria and Babylon to punish Israel (Isa. 8:6, 7; Jer. 1:14ff), but that does not mean those nations were godly. God-ordained authority does not imply God's moral approval. We must remember that Romans 13:1-7 was not written about a

just democratic state, but an authoritarian empire ruled by one of its most ruthless dictators.

Second, I believe it is important to distinguish between the old covenant and the new covenant. God's maxim "an eye for an eye" (NASB) was limited to the sphere of old covenant Israel (cf. Matt. 5:38-42). An important event happened at the cross; God's covenant people ceased to be a theocracy (an earthly "nation under God"); they became the Church of God instead (cf. Eph. 2:14, 15). Henceforth God's covenant law with Israel was transformed into God's covenant relationship with His church. The new covenant counterpart to Deuteronomy 17:7 ("purge the evil from your midst," NASB) is not capital punishment, but expulsion from the body of Christ (1 Cor. 5:13). Similarly, Psalm 33:12a ("Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD," NASB) applies not to secular nation-states, but God's covenant people: The old covenant theocracy of Israel (Psa. 33:12b) and the holy nation which is the church (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9).

Third, regarding the extent of our ministry toward prisoners (Matt. 25:36), Jesus does not distinguish between righteous and unrighteous prisoners. We are to

love our enemies, for God "causes His sun to rise on the evil *and* the good, and sends rain on the righteous *and* the unrighteous" (Matt. 5:45, NASB). Our love is to be *inclusive*, therefore, as our Father's love is inclusive (Matt. 5:48). Christ died for us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:6. Note that Paul himself was a violent persecutor of the church before his conversion, 1 Tim. 1:13). Do we not have a responsibility to extend God's love to those outside the flock?

Fourth, Art is absolutely right that we should be consistent in working out our ethics. I agree that it is inconsistent to decry capital punishment and defend abortion. But the opposite is also true. How can we be pro-life when the issue is abortion, but not when the issue is capital punishment or nuclear proliferation? Are we pro-life, or aren't we?

In my article I tackled every major argument for capital punishment; my purpose was not to write a rationalistic liberal handbook. When all is said and done, as I pointed out in my final section, my stance is ultimately based not on statistics but on discipleship. Is God moral? Yes, He is the author of morality. Let us strive to incarnate His new covenant morality in our lives. □

My dear Jeff:

It required no more than four weeks to work up enough energy — not enthusiasm, but energy — to write you about the April/May issue of *The Restitution Herald*. At my age, and with my degree of put-it-off-until-tomorrow-tomorrow-tomorrow attitude, all this speaks well for the issue.

Seriously, I considered it one of the best I have seen in a long time. As a one-time assistant editor on *The Herald* and editor-in-chief of a brace of reasonably important professional magazines, I have been happy to see the wildly abandoned layout disap-

pear into history. (I only wish the supposedly automatic correction on this typewriter would function better than I do.)

Primarily, I point to two elements of the April/May issue as deserving applause:

Sir Anthony Buzzard's "Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury," which stood out because its direction, purpose, and tone were so different from the norm; and Dr. Davis' "The Crucifixion of Jesus," which amazed me not only because of its broad aspects of the medical conditions involved, but because *Arizona Medicine* had carried the piece even in 1965. Who-

ever saved it over that 30-year period deserves high praise.

The Davis interpretation of the Christ's reaction to the spear of the legionnaire curiously jibes with that of Gen. Lew Wallace in *Ben Hur*. In the original book, which almost no one reads any more, Wallace tells of the spearing and adds that the gush of blood and water resulted from a broken heart — broken not by pain, but by emotional turmoil.

God go with you in happy editing and pastoring.

J. Arlen Marsh

The Wings of Wealth

The most important things in life aren't things. Don't let your possessions possess you.



BY HOLLIS PARTLOWE

The story is told of a man living in the jungle who had a prized collection of diamonds and pearls. He had them spread out on a table in his backyard admiring them. While he went inside for a quick lunch, a bird flew in, ate them and flew away. Wealth is like that. Sometimes it takes wings. "Money talks," but it is always saying "good-bye" to me.

"Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless" (Eccl. 5:10, NIV). In contrast the Psalmist says: "Trust in the LORD and do good . . . and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psa. 37:3-4, NIV).

Not everyone has a rich uncle, but we all have a rich Father in heaven who can open an endless storehouse of untold riches which far outweigh the wealth of this world. I like the words from the hymn "A Child of the King": "My Father is rich in houses and lands, He holdeth the wealth of the world in his hands. Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold, His coffers are full, He has riches untold."

Wealth in itself is not an evil. Spiritually it is neutral. Wealth of itself is not a mark of virtue; neither is poverty. Jesus said, "You cannot serve both God and Money" (Matt. 6:24b, NIV). He didn't say you cannot serve God and have money, but you cannot serve both. Money is neutral. Few would proclaim: "Money is my God, my religion," but in practice many renounce God in favor of it. Some squeeze the dollar bill until George Washington almost turns white in the face. The most important things in life aren't things. Don't let your possessions possess you. Jesus condemned enslavement to wealth, not

wealth itself. I believe God wants us to prosper financially as long as He has first place in our lives. Check stubs tell what really count in one's life.

Owning things is central in our society. I've been through parts of Hollywood, and was amazed at the display of wealth — massive homes, automobiles, security guards and all the rest. The owner's importance is evident. In contrast Jesus owned only what He carried (Matt. 8:20). How could He impress this economic world without even a house to sleep in? He didn't view riches the way we do (Matt. 6:19-21, 24). He who was able to pay taxes with a coin found in the mouth of a fish and turn stones to bread could easily have become the financial baron of all time, but that was not His interest. Jesus allowed nothing to get in the way of giving Himself to people. He had not come to redeem things but people. He gave Himself fully to that task.

Paul informs us that "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10). Notice it is not money, but the **LOVE of money** (covetousness) that displeases God. You don't have to worry about how a person will handle his money, be it little or much, if his first concern is the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33). It is not how much money you make, but what money makes of you that counts. Let it be a servant, not a master.

An epitaph on a tombstone in England says: "She died for want of things." The tombstone next to it reads: "He died trying to give them to her." Some use their riches while others let their riches use them. Life without our Heavenly Father can be very empty and meaningless. "Remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth" (Deut. 8:18). □

Christian Stewardship

ANONYMOUS

For the past eight years I have served as the treasurer of one of our local churches. During that time I have only heard two sermons which gave the members any direction to follow in their stewardship toward God. One of those was given by the treasurer of a church in the middle west and the other by one of our pastors. The one given by the treasurer was more down to earth and direct. Perhaps pastors are reluctant to give direction in this area because they might appear to be feathering their own nests. Whatever the reasons, to reduce the drought of instructions in stewardship I offer the following for your consideration.

As those who are accountable to God, we should use in a responsible way all that God has given us. In Deuteronomy 8:17-18 we find what is the natural way to feel about our money and possessions: "You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.'" Verse 18 tells us to "remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth." He is the source of our ability to produce wealth. It comes not from our own doings except as God provides us with that knowledge and strength needed to complete the task for which we get paid by our employers.

Acknowledging the above we then turn to Proverbs 3:9 to find what we should do with our wealth: "Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops." In order to honor the LORD with our wealth, how should we go about it? At first glance this appears to be a rather stupid question, but it also appears that most people don't know or don't want to know how to honor the Lord with their wealth. Apparently Jesus was confronted with a

similar circumstance. Jesus answered that question in Matthew 6:2-4:

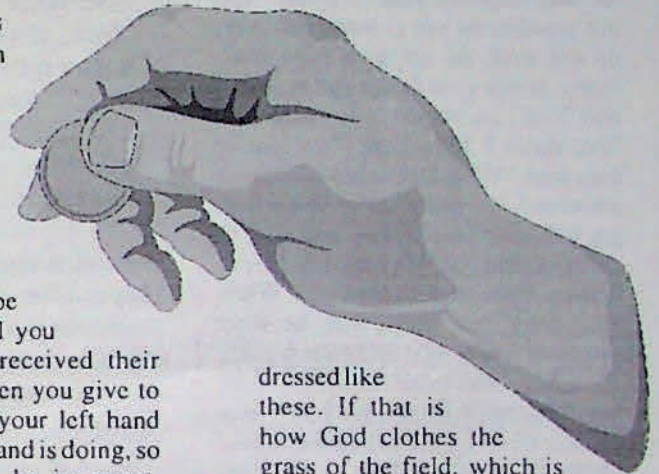
So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Jesus also gave us a piece of advice a little later in this same chapter. In Matthew 6:19-21, He said:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Our natural first reaction would be to think to ourselves, "Well, I need to take care of myself and my loved ones." Jesus encountered this same feeling when dealing with others and His reaction is found in Matthew 6:27-33:

Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was



dressed like these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Our first line of thought should be toward seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We need to put everything in its proper perspective. We need to adjust our frame of reference. We need a mind-set that is kingdom-oriented.

Let me give you an example from the Bible of what I mean by putting things in their proper perspective or changing our frame of reference. In Matthew 19:16-24 we read:

Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is

Christian Stewardship (continued from page 17)

good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." "Which ones?" the man inquired. Jesus replied, "'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'" "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Was this young man willing to change his mind-set? Was he really seeking life eternal? Was Jesus trying to make this young man poor or rich? Jesus knew what his mind-set was.

Jesus gave us another example to help us put in perspective the use of our worldly goods. We need to pay particular attention to certain phrases in Luke 12:15 and 21 to find the things about which Jesus warns us. In Luke 12:13-15, it is written:

Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" Then he said to them, "Watch out! *Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.*"

Here Jesus warns about all kinds of greed. They can be very subtle or very blatant. There are greeds that your subconscious will hide from you and those of which you are very aware. Looking further at the passage:

And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' *This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.*"

Here is the warning that Jesus gives us. It is not necessarily wrong to have possessions but it is if we leave God out of the picture. We need to be rich toward God as well as ourselves. Make sure that your mind is set on God as well as yourself.

Paul, in Acts 20:35, quoted Jesus as saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Christ gave us an example which we should attempt to duplicate as best we can. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 8:9:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

He gave up his life so that we might have life eternal.

(continued on page 24)



Muriel's Blessing

Seventeen summers ago, Muriel and I began our journey into the twilight. It's midnight now, at least for her, and sometimes I wonder when dawn will break. Even the dread Alzheimer's disease isn't supposed to attack so early and torment so long. Yet, in her silent world, Muriel is so content, so lovable. If Jesus took her home, how I would miss her gentle, sweet presence. Yes, there are times when I get irritated, but not often. It doesn't make sense to get angry. And besides, perhaps the Lord has been answering the prayer of my youth to mellow my spirit.

Once, though, I completely lost it. In the days when Muriel could still stand and walk and we had not resorted to diapers, sometimes there were "accidents." I was on my knees beside her, trying to clean up the mess as she stood, confused, by the toilet. It would have been easier if she weren't so insistent on helping. I got more and more frustrated. Suddenly, to make her stand still, I slapped her calf — as if that would do any good. It wasn't a hard slap, but she was startled. I was, too. Never in our 44 years of marriage had I ever so much as touched her in anger or in rebuke of any kind. Never; wasn't even tempted, in fact. But now, when she needed me most . . .

Sobbing, I pled with her to forgive me — no matter that she didn't understand words any better than she could speak them. So I turned to the Lord to tell him how sorry I was. It took me days to get over it. Maybe God bottled those tears to quench the fires that might ignite again some day.

It wasn't long before I found myself in the same condition, on the floor in the bathroom. Muriel wanted to help — hadn't cleaning up messes been her specialty? But now those busy hands didn't know exactly what to do. I mopped frantically, trying to fend off the interfering hands, and contemplated how best to get a soiled slip over a head that was totally opposed to the idea. At that moment Chuck Swindoll boomed from the radio in the kitchen, "Men! Are you at home? *Really* at home?" In the midst of my stinking immersion I smiled, "Yeah, Chuck, I really am." Do I ever wish I weren't?

Recently, a student wife asked me that. Cindi has sort of adopted us. As we sat at the kitchen table sipping coffee, she said, "Don't you ever get tired?"

"Tired? Every night. That's why I go to bed."

"No, I mean tired of . . ." and she tilted her head toward Muriel, who sat silently in her wheel chair, her vacant eyes saying, "No one at home just now." I responded to Cindi's question, "Why, no, I don't get tired. I love to care for her. She's my precious."

"Well, I certainly would."

Cindi and her husband are handsome, healthy, smart people, and yet she admits that it is hard constantly to affirm one another. What happens when there is so little to commend? How does love make a difference?

Love is said to evaporate if the relationship is not mutual, if it's not physical, if the other person doesn't communicate,

What some people find so hard to understand is that loving Muriel isn't hard.

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

Submitted by Francis Burnett.

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BY ROBERTSON MCQUILKIN

Muriel's Blessing (continued from page 19)

or if one party doesn't carry his or her share of the load. When I hear the litany of essentials for a happy marriage, I count off what my beloved can no longer contribute, and I contemplate how truly mysterious love is.

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

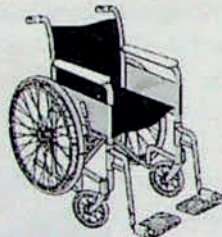
The five-column headline read: "Love Helps Alzheimer's Victims Survive, Study Says." The reporter wrote: "What's love got to do with it? Just about everything, says a researcher who studied what happens in a marriage when a spouse gets Alzheimer's disease." In Prof. Lore Wright's study of 47 couples over a two-year period, she had predicted with 100 percent accuracy who would die first, based on her analysis of the love relationship between husband and wife.

I attended a workshop in which another expert told us that there were two reasons people keep a family member at home rather than in a nursing facility: economic necessity or feelings of guilt. Afterwards I spoke with her privately, trying to elicit some other possible motive for keeping someone at home. But she insisted those were the only two motives. Finally I asked, "What about love?" "Oh," she replied, "we put that under guilt." So much for love.

What some people find so hard to understand is that loving Muriel isn't hard. They wonder about my former loves — like my work. A college freshman heard that I had resigned as president of Columbia International University to care for my wife. "Do you miss

being president?" Scott asked as we sat in our little garden. I told him I'd never thought about it, but, on reflection, no. As exhilarating as my work had been, I enjoyed learning to cook and keep house. No, I'd never looked back.

But that night I did reflect on his question and turned to the Lord. "Father,



Then the realization hit me; the Lord had spoken to me through an inebriated old derelict.



I like this assignment, and I have no regrets. But if a coach puts a man on the bench, he must not want him in the game. You needn't tell me, of course, but I'd like to know — why didn't you need me in the game?"

I didn't sleep well that night and awoke contemplating the puzzle. Muriel was still mobile at that time, so we set out on our morning walk around the block. She wasn't too sure on her feet, so we went slowly and held hands as we always do. This day I heard footsteps behind me and

looked back to see the familiar form of a local derelict behind us. He staggered past us, then turned and looked us up and down. "Tha's good. I likes 'at," he said. "Tha's real good. I likes it." He turned and headed back down the street, mumbling to himself over and over, "Tha's good. I likes it."

When Muriel and I reached our little garden and sat down, his words came back to me. Then the realization hit me; the Lord had spoken through an inebriated old derelict. "It is *you* who are whispering to my spirit, 'I likes it, tha's good,' " I said aloud. "I may be on the bench, but if you like it and say it's good, that's all that counts."

Some of my best friends don't agree. One wrote last week, "Muriel doesn't know you anymore, doesn't know anything, really, so it's time to put her in a nursing home and get on with life." That day may come — when, because of a change in my health or hers, she could be better cared for by others — but for now, she needs me, and I need her.

THE GOOD LIFE

"How do you do it? What are your resources?" asked the host on the television show *Day of Discovery*. I hadn't thought about it, but since then I have. Praise helps. Right now, I think my life must be happier than the lives of 95 percent of the people on planet Earth. Muriel's a joy to me, and life is good to both of us, in different ways. But I'm thinking of something more basic than just "counting your blessings."

By 1992, the blows of life had left me numb — my dearest slipping from me, my eldest son snatched away in a tragic accident, my life's work abandoned at its peak. I didn't hold it against God, but my faith could better be described as resignation. The joy had drained away, the passion in my love for God had frozen over. I was in trouble. If the only Companion you have in the lonely hours grows distant . . .

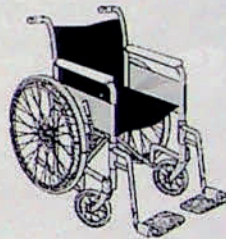
Of course, the passion of his love for me had never cooled. Even in the darkest hours when I felt my grip slipping and was in danger of sliding into the abyss of doubt, what always caught and held me was the vision of God's best loved, pinioned in criminal execution in my place. How could someone who loved me that much let anything hurt me without cause? But still, a one-sided love affair isn't very satisfactory. I missed the intimate companionship.

Then I remembered the secret I had learned in younger days — going to a mountain hideaway to be alone with God. There, though it was slow in coming, I was able to break free from preoccupation with my troubles and concentrate on Jesus. When that happened, I relearned what God had taught me more than once before: the heavy heart lifts on the wings of praise.

I have other resources: family, like my sisters, who have retired one by one and moved back to Columbia from the ends of the earth. They care for us lovingly; and friends do, too. It won't do to cultivate friends for the payback — that's not true friendship. But, I've concluded, those who don't build friendships in the

spring and summer of life must find winter a lonely time.

Memories help, too. Muriel stocked the cupboard of my mind with the best of them. I often live again a special moment of love she planned or laugh at some remembered outburst of her irrepressible approach to life. Sometimes the



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happy doesn't bubble up with joy but rains down gently with tears. In the movie *Shadowlands* when Joy Gresham reminds C. S. Lewis that their joy would soon end, that she would die, he replies that he doesn't want to think about it. Joy responds, "The pain is part of the happiness. That's the deal."

It's true. Recently, Muriel's right hand went limp — her first major decline since she lost the abilities to stand and to feed herself 18 months before. A little loss, you would think, but I shed a few tears. I wrote in my journal that night, "It's

almost like part of me dies with each of her little deaths." That precious hand was so creative, so loving, so busy for me and everyone else. But it wasn't just the old memories. That right hand was the last way she had to communicate. She would reach out to hold hands, pat me on the back when I hugged her, push me away when she didn't like what I was doing. I miss her hand.

Memories are both sweet and bitter-sweet. I often remember her repartee. Once I remonstrated that she didn't know everything. "I don't know everything?" she shot back. "Why, I know more than everything. I know some things that aren't so!" Once in reply to her request to do something, I said I was already doing something else. "Well, it's a poor man that can't do two things at once," she said. Muriel, being a woman, could do three things at once, of course, which she did. But not always. "I'm a selective quitter," she'd announce and cheerfully abandon a project. "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well? Pshaw. Very few things in this life are worth doing well." Once, before we signed off for sleep, I was winning the argument with irresistible logic when she raised up on one elbow, transfixed me with fire in her grey-green eyes, and said, "Well, let me tell you something. Logic's not everything, and feeling's not nothing." In the uninterrupted silences of today, the memories of sweet and spicy talk long gone bring pleasure once again.

It's just as well I have those memories of past conversations, for she hasn't spoken a coherent word in months — years, if you mean a sentence, a conversation

Muriel's Blessing (Continued from Page 21)

— though occasionally she tries, mumbling nonwords. Would I never hear that voice again?

Then came February 14, 1995.

I'M NO VICTIM

Valentine's Day was always special at our house because that was the day in 1948 when Muriel accepted my marriage proposal. On the eve of Valentine's Day in 1995 I read a statement by some specialist that Alzheimer's is the most cruel disease of all, but that the victim is actually the caregiver. I wondered why I never felt like a victim. That night I entered in my journal: "The reason

I don't feel like a victim is — I'm not!" When others urged me to call it quits, I responded, "Do you realize how lonely I would be without her?"

After I bathed Muriel on her bed that Valentine's eve and kissed her good night (she still enjoys two things: good food and kissing!), I whispered a prayer over her: "Dear Jesus, you love sweet Muriel more than I, so please keep my beloved through the night; may she hear the angel choirs."

The next morning I was pedaling on my Exercycle at the foot of her bed and reminiscing about some of our happy lovers' days long gone while Muriel

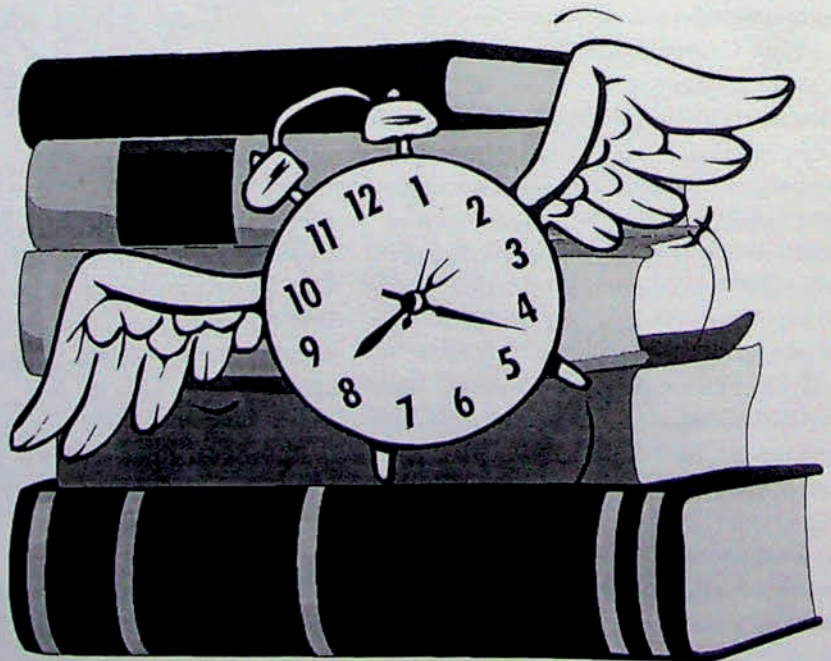
slowly emerged from sleep. Finally, she popped awake and, as she often does, smiled at me. Then, for the first time in months she spoke, calling out to me in a voice clear as a crystal chime, "Love . . . love . . . love." I jumped from my cycle and ran to embrace her. "Honey, you really do love me, don't you?" Holding me with her eyes and patting my back, she responded with the only words she could find to say yes: "I'm nice," she said.

Those may prove to be the last words she ever spoke.

ABC

Time has flown, and the fall quarter is underway. Has time gotten away from you? If you feel you might want some specialized training in the Bible and ministry, let us know. Winter classes will begin January 6, 1997.

For information about how Atlanta Bible College can enrich your future, call 1-800-347-4261.



Simple Ways to Untie the Knots of Daily Stress

by Jeff Herring

Stress is the feeling created when the mind overrides the body's intense desire to clobber some fool who desperately needs it.

— The office wall

A diamond is nothing more than a lump of coal that handled stress very well.

— Author unknown

These two quotes convey very different notions about how to handle stress. The first implies that stress is a bad thing, to be reduced and avoided.

But here's a tip: If you ever find yourself at a seminar or reading a book that is teaching you somehow to reduce or eliminate all your stress, get out of there quick!

The reason for this strong suggestion has to do with a common misunderstanding about stress. Most people consider it to be something clearly negative and harmful.

By contrast, James Lochr, in a book I highly recommend (*Toughness Training for Life*, Plume Books, \$11.95), defines stress as "anything that causes energy to be expended" and recovery from stress as "anything that causes energy to be recaptured."

Viewed in this manner, we can see that stress and recovery are simply a part of the experience of living. The problem seems to be that in our hectic lives we sometimes major in expending energy (stress) and minor in recapturing energy (recovery).

I recently asked a few people to name their daily sources of stress. Here's a brief sampling: traffic, bills, working overtime, too much paperwork, people who run red lights, hearing and reading about senseless tragedy, not getting along with a spouse.

I then asked these same people what they did to recover from stress. The answers were few, and they ranged from "huh?" to "taking a two-week vacation."

What this implies is that many of us either have no idea how to recover or we believe we can only do so once or twice a year, and over an extended period of time. Very few of us experience recovery on anywhere near a daily basis.

I think it was Jack Palance as the trail boss in *City Slickers* who said, "You folks spend all year getting knots in your rope and then come out here to try to untangle them all in two weeks."

What if we were able to find small ways, on a daily basis, to recover, to untangle our knots?

Here is a simple technique that I teach in seminars on stress: take a few moments to picture yourself somewhere indoors, in a place that is stress-free, comforting and very relaxing. Spend a few moments just enjoying the relaxation (recovery) you find in this place.

Now come on back (sorry, we've got to move on), bringing that feeling of relaxation with you. And now simply find a way to remind yourself quickly of that experience so that you are again able to feel that relaxation.

For some people, it's snapping their fingers; for others, it's a word or phrase ("Tahitiiiiii..."). Just use a quick reminder that allows you to feel relaxed for just a moment.

In this way, you can give yourself brief moments of recovery whenever you wish.

Stress is a normal part of our everyday life. I'd like to invite you to make it a goal this week to find small and simple ways to recover on a daily basis. Now just relax... □

(reprinted, written for *Knight-Ridder Newspapers*)

Burnout or Renewal?

by Jim Mattison

"Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Gal. 6:9

I've heard excellent Christian workers say, "I have burnout." What is burnout? My wife says it is becoming weary in well doing, or becoming discouraged when there don't seem to be many results from our efforts for God and Christ.

Burnout is real. It is a trick of Satan to get us to stop doing God's work. I think it is relying on our own human nature to do

God's work instead of relying on His Holy Spirit to give us the strength to do it. Isn't it taking our eyes off our Lord?

What is the answer to this becoming weary with well doing; this fainting and faltering in our support of God's cause? What is the answer to burnout? Didn't Paul give the answer when he said, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2)? Renewal, that's what we need. Paul told Titus this renewal is by the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5). In other words, we need the power of the Holy Spirit. This is

the source of our Christian strength. David said many times his strength was from the Lord. And so is ours.

As this evil age draws to a close we need more than ever before this strength from our Lord. "I can do all things through CHRIST, who *strengthens* me." Jesus is *today* to us "a shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isa. 32:2). It is a wearisome age but through our Lord Jesus we can overcome all things. Look to Him and be lightened! And isn't this renewal something we need every day? □

Christian Stewardship

(continued from page 18)

No matter what we give it has to be given in the proper frame of mind. Again, we can look to Paul's writings in 2 Corinthians 9:7:

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Many Christians have found that a regular plan for giving serves them best. Planning ensures against irregular or unwise giving and also against neglect. In a day when so many demands are made on your time and money, planned giving helps you honor the Lord with your possessions.

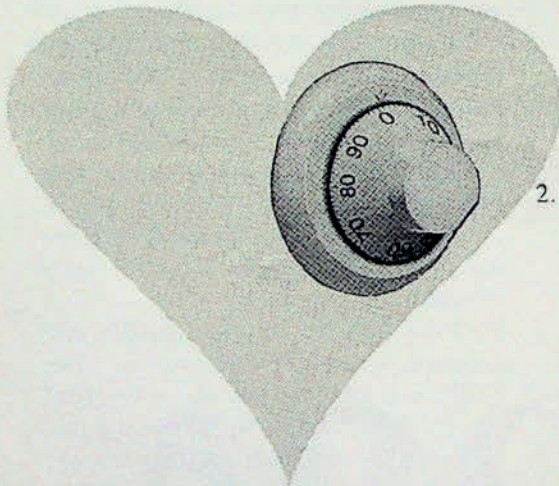
Here are some steps that will help you honor the Lord with your possessions:

1. Thoughtfully decide what percentage of your income you will return to the Lord — a minimum percentage. Start out with a small percentage and work up as the Lord provides. This is better than haphazard giving.
2. Set aside the Lord's portion first whenever you receive money. Put this aside to be used as He leads. Once set aside

it is *His* and should not be used for other purposes.

3. Prayerfully distribute the Lord's money as He directs. It is usually good to do this at a regular time — weekly or monthly.
4. Make extra gifts and increase your giving as God increases your faith, and as He prospers you. As you trust God with your material resources, He will entrust you with His spiritual resources.

Remember: The person who dedicates his money to God is dedicating himself — the fruit of his time, talent, and energy. One who fails to dedicate his money has not fully committed himself to God. □



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