

The Restitution Herald

October, November • 1996

Volume 86, Number 1

1996 General Conference



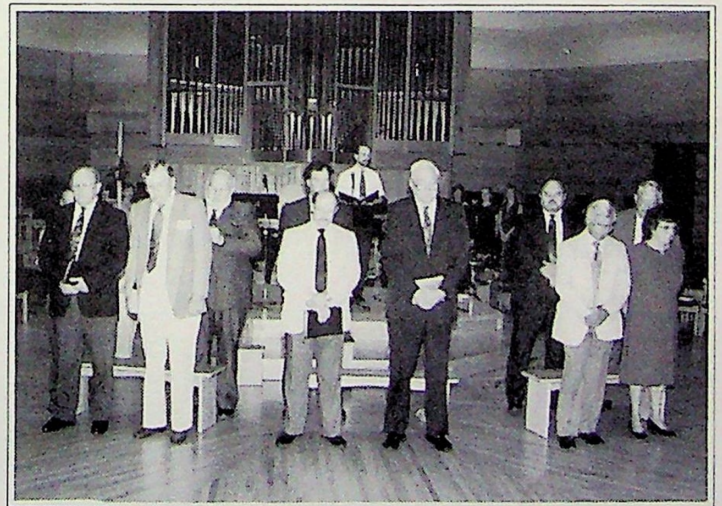
Evening service at summer General Conference.



Tim Spickler, Seth Ross and Greg Shaw were commissioned for pastoral ministry by the Ministerial Recognition Board, family and mentors.



Inspiring worship and special music was evident at each evening service.



Hands were laid on members of the Board of Directors as they were installed by Ministerial Association President Gary Burnham.

Let the Earth Hear His Voice

*In our harried lives, we
often find ourselves too
busy to hear God speak.*

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The God of the universe has been in the practice of communicating with His creation from the beginning of human history until the present time. Because of who He is, it is imperative that the earth hear His voice, and that we respond.

Fanny Crosby, the gospel songwriter, says that our response to His voice should be to praise Him, give Him glory, rejoice, and come to the Father through Jesus the Son.

The 76th annual summer Church of God General Conference focused on the theme "Let the Earth Hear His Voice." In our harried lives, we often find ourselves too busy to hear God speak. I was listening to a tape by Pastor John Ortberg the other day about "hurry sickness." It is characterized by constantly speeding up daily activities (microwaves, speed phone dialers, speeding in our cars); polyphasic living, i.e., doing or thinking about more than one thing at a time; clutter; perfectionism; and over-commitment.

God is squeezed out of such hurried lives. We don't have time to hear His voice, nor do we have time to seek Him, know Him, and establish a love relationship with Him. Our prayer life suffers.

The Board of Directors of Atlanta Bible College/Church of God General

Conference invites each reader to join them during the next twelve months in seeking to know and love God and His Son Jesus in a greater way. The Church of God Ministerial Association joins the Board in providing leadership for this focus, and delegates at the summer Conference affirmed their desire to join in this effort to eagerly seek God and His Son.

This pursuit is so vital because our love for God and Christ results in our obedience (John 14:21). Our obedience is vital because God's commands "are not just idle words for you — they are your life" (Deut. 32:47). Hearing and obeying these commands is vital because "He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God" (John 8:47).

This issue of THE RESTITUTION HERALD is devoted to messages that were presented at the summer General Conference at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It is our prayer that your love for God and Jesus will be increased as you open your heart and mind to the voice of God as He speaks to you through these pages.

David Krogh
President

The Restitution Herald

THE RESTITUTION HERALD

VOLUME 86, NUMBER 1: OCTOBER, NOVEMBER 1996. ©1996.

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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.

A Message from the Editor

Hebrews 10:24, 25 says "let us be concerned for one another to show love and to do good. Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming nearer." GNB

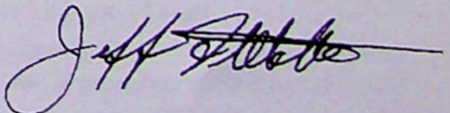
I always look forward to meeting with you, my brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the Church of God. Some of you have been my mentors and teachers in the Lord, some of you learned to minister along with me at our Bible College, and some have worshipped and served with me in our local churches. My life has been largely shaped by members of you, the Church of God. I always look forward to our annual Summer Conferences, because being with you helps to stimulate me to more love and good works.

I missed Conference this past August (we had just added our sixth arrow to our quiver), but I'm delighted to dedicate this issue of THE RESTITUTION HERALD to the

messages that were presented that week. For those of you who also were unable to attend, this will encourage you to join in unity with our conference leaders, pastors and delegates. For those of you who did attend, this will give you a chance to review and perhaps take a closer look at the messages that were offered.

I want to thank David Krogh for serving as our guest editor for this special issue of THE RESTITUTION HERALD. This issue is being made available to all members of the Church of God. For those of you who are not currently subscribers, we invite you to join our family of readers. Please take a moment to fill out the subscription form (on page 20) and mail it in today. We are a bimonthly publication, and we strive to produce articles which will stimulate, challenge and exhort you to more love and good works.

May this issue challenge you to grow in your experience of God.



Pastor Jeffrey Fletcher



God Calls Us to Know Him and His Son

*I have become
overwhelmed with
this thought that God
wants us to love Him,
to seek Him, and to
know Him.*



BY DAVID KROGH

David Krogh is the President of Atlanta Bible College/Church of God General Conference. This message was delivered to the annual Conference at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI on August 12.

Welcome to this 76th annual summer General Conference. Thank you for coming. I realize there are many things you could be doing other than be here this week. But I thank you for your interest in the Lord's work, and specifically the work of Atlanta Bible College and the Church of God General Conference. I believe this is going to be a life-changing conference. I believe this is going to be the best conference we have ever had.

The theme of this summer conference is "Let the Earth Hear His Voice." This theme presupposes that God is speaking. And yes, my friends — the God whom we worship is a God who speaks. "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1). The words of God through those prophets and the words of His Son were written down as 2 Peter 1:21 says — these men spoke from God "as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

In our evening services this week we will examine several aspects of this theme, "Let the Earth Hear His Voice." If He is indeed speaking, we need to hear Him. As you come each evening, I encourage you to listen closely to what God is saying through the speakers. Teams of Church of God people have been praying for our evening speakers for the past four months — praying that God would speak here in this conference;

that God would use this conference in a very special way to advance the cause of the Kingdom and righteousness; that God would touch each of us in a life-changing way. If we truly believe that God is speaking to us today, we dare not close our ears to what He has to say. I will share with you God's voice as He calls us to seek Him, to love Him, and to know Him and His Son.

God desires a close personal relationship with men and women. He experienced that close relationship with Adam and Eve in the Garden, and though that relationship was broken by man's sin, the whole Bible message is a litany of God's efforts to have fellowship with His children.

God loves us and He wants our love and friendship now. When Jesus was asked which is the greatest commandment in the law, His reply was: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment" (Matt. 22:36-38). There are many other things that are important, but He elevated love for God to the very, very top of the list. This is God's desire, that we have a love relationship with Him.

I have become overwhelmed with this thought that God wants us to love Him, to seek Him, and to know Him. These thoughts have been so impressed on my mind that during past months, as I have read the Scriptures, I have been seeing some wonderful things. Sometimes our eyes

are blind to things that are right in front of our eyes. The Psalmist said in Psalm 119:18, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." That is my prayer — that God would open my eyes and your eyes to see wonderful things — to see things that we have not seen before. I wish to share some wonderful things tonight out of my study and life experience. I share these things just for your consideration.

In His prayer to His Father, Jesus said: "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). It is my understanding that the Greek word for "know" not only means "to have knowledge of," but also "to become acquainted with." Jesus is saying that life eternal is more than just knowing about God and Christ, but becoming personally acquainted with them.

This is a good verse to use to defend the Bible truth regarding the separate natures of God and Jesus, but this verse teaches more than that. It teaches that God wants us to know Him and His Son in a personal way. Since we are made in the image of God we can understand the personal need for relationship, for companionship, for friendship, for intimacy.

In a book I am reading by Steve Meeks on *Relational Christianity* he says:

In the context of our western, rational culture we often equate knowledge with experience. When we have a knowledge of something, we tend to think we possess the reality. Knowledge and experience, however, are not the same thing. A young man may read every book there is to read on marriage, know all the principles of communication,

sharing, and intimacy, but until he's married, he doesn't know the half of it. Knowledge and experience are two different things. Psalm 34:8 says "Taste and see that the Lord is good." 1 Peter 2:3 teaches us to long for more "now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." Taste is an experiential word.

Many of us fear spiritual experience because of the abuses and bad models to which we have been exposed. The fakes, frauds, and fanatics will always be with us. Our response has often been to opt for the easy, less risky way which seeks religious knowledge but rejects spiritual experience. But the answer to abuse is correction, not rejection.

I want to make it clear that I am not saying we are to seek experience. I am saying we are to seek God. When you find him, it will be an experience.

These words eloquently express my thoughts.

Another verse that has taken on new meaning for me is Hebrews 11:6: "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." I have preached on this passage many times, emphasizing faith and using the text to stress the importance of believing that God exists. But I have given little thought to the fact that God rewards those who earnestly seek Him. We must stop and ask "Are we earnestly seeking God?" Well, we know a lot about Him; we know a lot about His Word; but are we earnestly seeking Him? Do we truly know Him — do we have an intimate relationship with Him?

I began a word search of other texts that talk about seeking God, loving God, and knowing God, and I found many. One that struck me particularly was in 2 Chronicles 15, a chapter entitled "Asa's Reform." King Asa was a good king who did right in the eyes of the Lord. He relied upon God in time of battle, and God gave him great victory.

But something was missing in his life and in the life of the nation, because it says in 2 Chronicles 15:1 that one day the Spirit of God came upon a man by the name of Azariah. He went to Asa and said: "Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you."

When Asa heard these words he was so moved that, with great courage, he took action against idol worship throughout the whole land. Then he called his people together in the spring of 895 B.C. for a tremendous time of sacrifice. Six hundred head of cattle and 7,000 sheep and goats were offered. Wow, what a sacrifice.

Asa then led the people into a covenant "to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and soul" (v. 12). "They took an oath to the Lord with loud acclamation, with shouting and with trumpets and horns. All Judah rejoiced about the oath because they had sworn it wholeheartedly. They sought God eagerly, and he was found by them. So the Lord gave them rest on every side" (vv. 14, 15). Awesome!!!

Just visualize this gigantic assembly. The gigantic sacrifice of 7,600 cattle, sheep, and goats. Imagine the shouting of the huge assembly, the blowing of trumpets and horns.

What awesome sights and sounds! And why were they doing this? It

was happening all because of their commitment to seek God eagerly and earnestly. There was excitement, enthusiasm and rejoicing as they sought the God of the universe and they found Him!!!!

In the last six months my life and thinking has been revolutionized. Let me tell you four wonderful lessons I have seen in Scripture that are changes in my thinking.

Lesson Number One

During all the years of my ministry I have emphasized the need for outreach in its many facets: personal evangelism, disciple-making, baptisms, numerical growth of our churches, starting of new churches, etc. Frankly, the Church of God today is in basically the same place it was 15 or 25 years ago. There does not seem to be much outreach or growth. I have asked myself over and over why this is so. Why are so many churches dying and why are many declining? Why aren't we excited about reaching the lost and making more disciples?

The answer did not strike me like a bolt of lightning. Actually the realization has come upon me gradually, but eventually with the force of a ton of bricks. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love me, you will obey what I command." And John 14:21: "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." And in 1 John 2:3-6:

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone

obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

So, there we have it — it is just as clear as a bell. Obedience is the result of love. Obedience is the result of knowing God! If we love God and Jesus, we will obey. We will obey. That is what Jesus said — "if you love me, you will obey what I command."

So, I have come to the startling realization that I have had the cart before the horse. Rather than emphasizing evangelism and outreach and church planting — rather than criticizing and complaining about the lack of growth, I should emphasize a greater love relationship with God and Jesus. When we get the love relationship right, we will then get the evangelism and outreach piece right. When we love God and Jesus, we will do what they want us to do.

It is not wrong to talk about the importance of evangelism and outreach. Jason Turner will do this Thursday evening as he speaks on the subject "God Speaks Through Us to the Lost." But we should speak of evangelism and outreach only in the context of loving God and Christ and doing what they want us to do. Our love, our experience of knowing God and Christ in an intimate way, will cause us to be bold and excited witnesses of what we have seen and heard. A witness in a court of law does not have to be taught what to say — he speaks what he has seen, heard, and experienced. When we love God with all of our heart, we will speak out of the abundance of our heart. In fact we will be unable to be silent.

So lesson one is that obedience springs from our love. Evangelism

will result from our love for God and Christ.

Lesson Number Two

This has to do with doing. Henry Blackaby in his book *Experiencing God* says that "God is more interested in our love relationship with him than what we do for him." God is more interested in our love relationship with Him than what we do for Him! And he went on to say "right relationships with God are more important than buildings, budgets, programs, methods, church personnel, size, or anything else." Now James 1 says that we should be doers of the Word and not hearers only. Though it is certainly important to do, is it possible that we become so caught up in doing that we miss the relationship with God and His Son??

Perhaps we could call this the "Martha Syndrome," from Luke 10:38-42. Martha was distracted by all the preparations. "Don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" Have any of us ever said similar words?? How many of us are carrying a heavy load at the church — serving in seven positions — as deacon, board member, Sunday School teacher, youth leader, church custodian, building committee member, and choir member? We are running here and there, attending board meetings and committee meetings every night of the week. The harder we work the further behind we get, and finally we break under the load. Why won't anyone help us??

Mary chose to sit at the Lord's feet listening — having fellowship with Him. Jesus said, "Mary has chosen what is better." Is it possible that our busyness in church work distracts us from our relationship with God? Are

daily devotions—prayer, Bible reading, meditation? Yes, yes, many of us must say yes. We are busy holding the church together and we don't have time for God.

Lesson two is "God is more interested in our love relationship with Him than in what we do for Him."

Lesson Number Three

On the other hand, there may be some who spend much time reading and studying the Bible. They pride themselves on knowing the Word. But in John 5:39, 40 Jesus addressed this: "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." If we know the Word cover to cover, but fail to come to Jesus, what do we have? We do not have life!!!

Referring once again to the writings of Steve Meeks, "The Bible was never meant merely to inform us about God; it was meant to lead us to God. Knowing the Bible is not the same thing as knowing God. It is not our doctrines of God that transform us, it is the God of our doctrines." Does this mean the Bible and knowledge are unimportant? A thousand times no. But we must see them as tools that lead us to know God and Jesus, in whom are life.

So, lesson number three is not to substitute knowing the Word for knowing God and Christ.

Lesson Number Four

At last summer's General Conference I called the membership of the Church of God to revival. I did this as a plea for help and an expression of my frustration and despair over sick

and dying churches. It was an expression of my frustration over the lack of outreach in the Church of God. But during the past year I have read a lot about revival—both scriptural revivals, and revivals in church history. I have come to see that revival is part of a cycle. In the book in your delegate packet by Blackaby and King entitled *Fresh Encounter—God's Pattern for Revival and Spiritual Awakening*, the authors point out a cycle that includes God's call to us to be agents of redemption, the departure of God's people from Him, God's discipline, the people crying out to God, repentance (or destruction), revival, and world redemption/spiritual awakening.

If it is indeed true that we need revival, perhaps we need to back up and ask "Why?" Have we departed from God's will for us? And if we have departed, are we willing to cry out to God for help? Do we recognize our own deficiencies, our inadequacies? Are we ready to fall on our faces before God and repent of our sin?

You see, when I called for revival last year, I did not mention the price that has to be paid or the process that must be followed for revival to come. I didn't even understand the steps that were involved. The steps as I see them now are:

1. We must acknowledge that we have departed from God's ideals, purposes, ways, and commands.

2. We need to acknowledge God's discipline—that the reason things are not going well is that God is disciplining us. In Hebrews 12:11 it says that "no discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." We can take heart, however, that we are being

disciplined, because that same passage says that God disciplines those He loves.

3. We need to cry out to Him for help.

4. We need to repent of going our own way—Dale Bliss will speak of this tomorrow night.

5. In 2 Chronicles 7:14 it says we must humble ourselves, pray, seek God's face, and turn from our wicked way if we expect God to hear and heal.

There we see that phrase again: "seek God's face," which ties back to the other lessons. God wants a relationship with us. He wants us to love Him. He wants us to earnestly seek Him. Eternal life is to know Him and His Son.

And so the message tonight in a nutshell is: God is speaking to us; He is calling us to seek Him, to know Him, to experience Him, and to love Him. We must not have substitutes for God? And we must have a relationship with Him? God is a jealous God—we must put nothing before Him. Of greatest importance is loving Him!

If we get our relationship with Him right, other things will be right in our life.

God calls us to love and know Him and His Son—do you hear His voice as He calls you to love and know Him and Jesus?

"Dear Lord, you know that I love you more than anything else in all the world, and how often I want to lift my voice to sing praise to you; but so many times the busyness of my life makes you seem so far away. But deep within me, I can feel the gentle nudge of your love, and that is when I know that all that really matters is knowing you." □

Loving God

Chairman's Message

Which is the greatest doctrinal truth?



BY PASTOR STEPHEN BOLHOUS

Stephen Bolhous has served on the Board of Directors of Atlanta Bible College/Church of God General Conference for the past four years, the last three as Chairman. This is his message to the delegates during the business session at the 76th annual Conference on August 13.

J. I. Packer in his book *Knowing God* speaks of two aspects of the Bible: 1) declarative truth: i.e., commandment, information, prohibition, promise; and 2) invitation to relationship. In the Church of God we have excelled at knowing the testimony of declarative truth and also its promises, but we have not given sufficient emphasis to the second purpose of Scripture. Packer writes: "He made us with the intention that he and we might walk together forever in a love relationship." The goal of Scripture is that we might know and love God.

In Matthew 22:35, 36 we have the record of a clever lawyer's question to Jesus: "which is the great commandment in the Law?" We can almost imagine a similar debate in our own ranks. Which is the greatest doctrinal truth that needs to be advocated — unity of God, the mortality of soul, the literal second advent of Christ, the earth as the eternal home of the redeemed? What does Jesus say? "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (vv. 37, 38). The sinless Son of God says the most important thing in the Book of Books is to heed the commandment to have a passionate love for the Father — a mind, soul, and heart consuming love; a love that is a driving force; a love that is typified by a rich, sweet communion with God through the Holy Spirit. Jesus was not minimizing the validity of any of the commandments, He was prioritizing them. Loving God is the number one commandment.

Thomas A. Kempis wrote: "The essence of legalism is trusting in religious activity rather than trusting in God. It is putting our confidence in a practice rather than in a person, and without fail, this will lead us to loving the practice more than the Person."

In John 17:3 Jesus said: "And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." The Amplified Version gives this rendering:

And this is eternal life: it means to know (to perceive, recognize, become acquainted with and understand) You, the only true and real God, and likewise to know Him, Jesus as the Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah, whom you have sent.

Again note Jesus' emphasis on a relationship with the Father. John Wesley wrote:

Orthodoxy, or right opinion, is at best, a very slender part of religion. Though right relationships cannot subsist without right opinions, yet right opinions may subsist without right relationship. There may be right opinion of God without either love or a right relationship with Him. Satan is proof of this.

Intellect without relationship is an incomplete God-experience. We need more than an intellectual understanding of God; we need to know and love Him.

Israel was called from bondage in Egypt not to the promised land but to a love relationship with God.

Moses went up the mountain to meet with the Lord God, who told him to say to the people: You saw what I did in Egypt, and you know how I brought you here to me, just as a mighty eagle carries its young. Now if you will faithfully obey me, you will be my very own people. The whole world is mine, but you will be my holy nation and serve me as priests (Exodus 19:3-5, CEV).

Notice how God says "I brought you here to me." God was calling Israel to a love relationship with Him.

In the book of Deuteronomy Israel is repeatedly exhorted to love God. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart . . ." (6:5). "What does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him . . ." (10:12). "You shall therefore love the Lord your God . . . I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God . . . this commandment which I am commanding you, to do it, to love the Lord your God . . ." (11:1, 13, 22). "Carefully observe all this commandment, which I command you today, to love the Lord your God . . ." (19:9).

Israel showed their failure to apply the Word's commandment to love God by the way they responded to the Son of God. Jesus said: "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of me: and you are unwilling to come to me, that you may have life" (John 5:39, 40). The Word told them to love God (note the Deuteronomy passages above). Yet when the Son of God came to them they failed to discern Him as their Messiah. Shouldn't their love for God have led them to an acceptance of God's Son? Why did so many fail to comprehend Jesus' identity? I believe it was because they knew and loved the written Word more than they knew and loved its Author!

At times I believe we have been guilty of doing the same. We have been like the church at Ephesus; we have left our first love (Rev. 2:4). We have not loved the Lord above all else.

There are several among the leadership of our Conference, including me, who feel that we as a people have drifted away from a passionate love for God as the primary force of our faith.

What idols have we created that usurp God's sovereignty? Have we made our doctrine an idol? Have we cared more about an accurate understanding of scriptural theology than we have cared about loving, worshipping and communing with our Heavenly Father? I know I have been guilty of this. God has shown me that loving Him is the most pleasing thing to Him. I have repented of loving His Word and His church more than loving Him. The result has been a joy in the Holy Spirit I never knew before. Paul wrote to the Romans, "the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (14:17). These words have been my experience as I have made loving God the priority of my life.

For the coming year in the Church of God the Board of Directors and the Ministerial Association are encouraging a focus on seeking to know and love God. This is not only a wise move for us as a denomination, it is a biblical priority! Individually and in cell groups we need to seek God (notice 2 Chronicles 15) and grow in a personal love relationship with Him. As we seek Him and grow in giving our love to Him, we will experience a transformation of our lives and our churches to a holier plane and a deeper communion than we have known before.

Some may express a resistance to such an emphasis, thinking it is not a priority item. I believe the real root of any resistance would be a spirit of

control and/or a spirit of fear. We must be wary of these diversionary forces. We are called to neither one of these (2 Tim. 1:7), but rather to a spirit of love! No one is suggesting an "either/or" situation between loving God and the heritage of faith, but rather an "in addition to" scenario where we add to our historic faith an emphasis on seeking to know and love God.

I believe we are called to LOVE GOD first and foremost. This is not a simplistic thing — it's a struggle because many lesser issues step in front of it. I believe we need to repent of our failure to love God first and foremost, and return to Him who is our first love. Solomon prayed:

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Whenever people turn to God in humility and honesty He comes to meet them. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8). When we love God first and foremost the issues of our lives will run more peacefully and smoothly; the issues of congregational life run more peacefully and smoothly; the issues of conference/college life run more peacefully and smoothly.

The lyrics of a contemporary Christian song, "The Mission," say, "To love the Lord our God is the heartbeat of our mission, the source from which our service overflows." Loving God first, above all other issues, must become the hallmark and heartbeat of our identity. Anything less is an incomplete, insufficient, crippled Christianity! □

Repentance: Embracing God's Power to Lead Us

*Repentance is about
asking questions —
the right questions.*



BY PASTOR DALE BLISS

Dale Bliss is the pastor of North Kent Bible Church, Rockford, MI. He also serves on the Youth Advisory Committee for the Church of God General Conference. This message was delivered at the annual Conference on August 13.

This conference has been a real joy to me. It's been quite fun! You know, intimacy with Jesus all over again, which seems to be our theme this week, is meant to be a lot of fun — abundant life, if you will.

It is also a very difficult week. It's certainly a very difficult time for me to stand in this place and speak to you. As I thought about this moment, it became very difficult because I have considered carefully, and God has reminded me, to whom I am speaking tonight. Have you thought about who we are in this place?

We have denominational leaders, some of whom have been leading since before I was born. I commend them for this. I also see individuals here who are stepping up to leadership for the very first time. That's exciting. That's who we are tonight.

I see instructors and professors. I see Bible School teachers and Sunday School teachers. They are discipleship makers who have clearly been used by God, who are respected because God has used them to change and to mold lives for ministry. At the same time, there are some here who are very tired. There are college instructors, Bible School teachers and Sunday School teachers who are tired and maybe seriously wondering about things such as respect and effectiveness, and even the very desire to serve any longer. That's who we are tonight.

There are pastors here tonight who have a rich experience in life and in ministry. And there are pastors here who have the same rich experience just ahead of them. I also know that there are some pastors here tonight who do not lay their heads down at night with-

out wishing they were doing something else with their lives. This, too, is who we are.

I think there are church leaders here tonight, board members, program leaders, superintendents — all kinds of leaders and servants who have made the Kingdom work their most important earthly pursuit, above all other passion, with all manner of humility. Yet there are some here tonight who have turned the Kingdom work into a personal agenda, who may have been armed with the danger of good intentions, who have left a trail of wounded, damaged people. Even this is who we are tonight.

However, what we are most of all are people looking for our tomorrow. We come every year to this conference and we look at our tomorrow. We look at our future. Some, when they look at their denomination or their church, look with excitement. At the same time there are others who, when they look at their church or denomination, are ready to hang their heads low and walk away.

No matter who we are, we all have in common the need to be led. We share a common need to have some one and some vision to follow. Our need for guidance stems from the tremendous number of questions we face every day. Nearly every moment of every day we answer questions, choose our direction. Many become overwhelmed by the constant traffic of choices. Others embrace each one as an opportunity. You see, it is no fault to be in need of answers. It is no weakness to desire to be led. In fact a person who will learn to face important questions, and carefully seek one who knows, is simply brilliant.

I commend David Krogh and the Board of Directors for coming to this conference without all of the answers, but with the willingness to ask the questions and then pursue the answers. We've been to conferences, haven't we, where we've been told all the answers, told what the direction is. This year, that has not happened. We have come and we have been given questions to ask. That is potential for growth. It is powerful and brilliant.

Brilliant people are not the ones who have all the answers. They are the ones who ask all the questions. Brilliant people are not the ones who say, "This is the way it must be," but "How can it be the very best?" Brilliant people are the ones who have directions to choose and know there is a choice. They know they must be decisive. They are ones who have visions to follow, ones who long to be led by a force, by a thrill, a passion, a vision! Because of that desire they ask the right questions.

Tonight I'm going to speak about repentance. Repentance is about asking questions — the right questions. Brilliant people are people who, through repentance, ask questions about themselves. It is great, in my understanding, to hear David Krogh stand before us and not ask questions of me or you, but ask questions of himself. To lead a people one must first be able to lead himself. Brilliant people are those who, through repentance, ask precise questions about themselves, long before they address the lives of others.

Brilliant people are people who, through repentance, choose a direction, choose a vision; they follow a path, they make a choice. They are people who, through repentance, recognize that there is a force, there is a vision, there is a power, there is God who is beyond themselves, who is able to lead them to the top of the world. These are brilliant people. And the key? The key is a searching, repentant heart that is willing to be led by God.

When David first asked me to speak months ago I told him that I would like to pray about it for a few days. He

honored my request and we hung up the phone. I wondered about speaking tonight. (One reason is that I get so incredibly nervous that I can't eat, I can't sleep. I've lost six pounds with this sermon.) To be very honest with you, I was not sure at that time if I was one of those who was excited about our future, or if I was one of those who was ready to hang his head and walk away. As I stared into space, I noticed there in my office the remnants of recent internships — things that the interns who have been at North Kent have left behind. There above the computer Dan Kennedy had posted his favorite verses. I glanced at a piece of paper scotch-taped to my wall and read from Psalm 139, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way of everlasting." I slid all the mess back from my desk and I opened my Bible to dig deeper. There began my quest to understand repentance.

After a time I had not just understood this verse, but I experienced it. I wrote this note to David:

I feel that the oldest and most successful lie that Satan has ever passed is that we can do it ourselves. We can go our own way. We can choose our own direction, we can follow our own wisdom, we can seek our own desires. No matter how we dress it up in religion or in the world, if it is our own leading it is wrong and it leads to death, the death of churches, the death of people. That is where I believe many Christians fall. The basic meaning of repentance is to turn from man's way to God's way. It is not the same as confession, nor is it a matter of apologizing. It is learning to lean continually on the Lord, turning from the flawed way of man to the everlasting thinking of God. My challenge will be for all of us to live before God with an open life, letting Him discover any wicked way and remove it and replace it with any everlasting way that He feels appropriate.

Repentance is trusting in the power of God to lead us — pastors, people,

churches — in the way everlasting. It is to embrace His power to lead us. Repentance is not a reaction to sin. Instead it is a pro-action to walk in the way that God wants us to walk. Consider prayer. Prayer has become a reaction. When we get ourselves deep into trouble, we pray. We react to the problem with prayer. It's been the same with grace. God's grace is given to us that we would be empowered, that we would be equipped in this world with power and authority, and yet we typically view grace as God's reaction to the mess we've made through sin. No. Repentance, prayer, grace are all proactive steps toward righteousness.

Psalms 139 is a beautiful prayer. As I understand it, David wrote this as a prayer. In fact, he wrote a string of six psalms, Psalms 138 to 143. Psalms 138 and 143 were musical psalms. Psalms 139 to 142 are actually prayers. There is a matter of fact in this, but there is also a bold challenge. Listen very carefully:

O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. You hem me in — behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I

was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you. If only you would slay the wicked, O God! Away from me, you bloodthirsty men! They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name. Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD, and abhor those who rise up against you? I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Here we find David's pure and powerful desire to search his own heart. In the Hebrew understanding to search is to auger down, dig in or mine down into an area, searching for water or perhaps some precious metal. The idea that is formed is that of digging down to something of value, to find something of purpose. It is a matter of digging in deep enough to discover a resource. It's not just information, nor simple curiosity. It is a matter of digging deep enough and researching thoroughly enough that we might find an incredible resource and that life would somehow be different. That's what he says — he says search me. Not just take a glance, but dig down inside.

Now there are two searches that go on here. There are two very great investigations that we must be sure to notice. One is when David says, "O LORD, you have searched me" (v. 1). Here David speaks of how much God has searched his life. We resign to that very easily because we know God is everywhere and sees everything. No matter how hard we try to pretend it's not so, God still is there. David knows that. Not only does he resign to the fact, he rejoices in it. David delights in saying, "He knows my thoughts" (v. 2).

The origin of this word "thoughts" is that of the ideas of his mind, his plans, his thinking. It's as if David is saying, "You know my agenda. You've read my Daytimer." And what a joy it was for David to know that God knew everything about his day. God not only knew what David did, but also how he was made (vv. 13-14). God knew his enemies and the battles David faced (vv. 19-22). You see, there is a search there that David had experienced. He said, "You have searched me, God, and you know me" (v. 1). That much, I think, we are very willing to give up. Who we are on the outside is very much what we are able and willing to acknowledge. The inside is another story.

There is another search that happens in verse 23. David is no longer saying, "Thank you, God, that you have searched me." Now he opens himself up and he invites God to come in and search for what is even more significant. David now prays, "Search me, O God, and know my heart." There is an investigation here that is quite different. The word "thoughts" is not the same as "thoughts" in verse two. This word is not ideas, but motives. It is a matter of imaginations and affections. You see, God was already searching his life. David now opened up and invited God to search his heart. It was an open investigation of his motives — not *what* David was thinking, but *why* he was thinking that way. This search is to discover the reasons that we do what we do and see if there be any wicked way in it all.

I find it fascinating that the word David used for "wicked" is used only twice in the Old Testament. In Psalm 19 it's translated "idol." Here in Psalm 139 it is translated "wicked way." What David was saying to God in this invitation was "Lord, I lay my heart before you. I want you to come in and see if there is any *idol* in me. Is there any form of idolatry sculptured specifically in the image of myself?" And he invited God to search for anything that replaced Him on the throne.

Be very careful now, because "wicked" in this translation is not necessarily "evil." Wicked is not exactly an abomination to God, but a misdirection in life. We all have ideas every day. In fact, we have great ideas every day. We have ways to lead our churches, ways to lead our families, and ways to lead our conference that are, pure and simply, good ideas. They can be very good ideas, but unless they are God's ideas they are not the best, nor are they righteous. As David Krogh said last night, there is nothing wrong with outreach, is there? There is nothing wrong with church growth, or desiring more baptisms, or church planting. With a brilliant heart of repentance, David Krogh challenged us not to just have good ideas, but to have God's ideas. This is true repentance. The question is, "Is it me, my perception, or is it the Lord's that I find here in my heart?"

The Psalmist wanted to know, not because he was in sin. He wanted to know because he stood at a place where a choice was to be made. You see, he was very proactive. The question was not only "what do I do?" but "for whom, and by whom, am I doing it?" David was a repentant man wanting to turn from his way no matter how good or how bad his way was. He wanted to turn from his way and know only the way of the Lord.

Now there is a great contrast between the two searches that David experienced. In one God sees everything that is in and around him and God knows every place that he goes. I don't think that we can ever dethrone God from that knowledge, from that searching. That's why we see the power of God that controlled the whale that swallowed Jonah and sent the storm that taught the disciples to trust in Jesus. God moves freely in life. Yet I think God longs to keep His hands off that, so that we might make the choice. Still there are times when He does act. We can't dethrone God from life.

The only place in the universe where we can ever dethrone our Heavenly

Father is in our own hearts. That's why the second search is so different. It is in our hearts that God can be dethroned. That's why, like Father, like Son, we find Jesus standing at the door and knocking. Jesus doesn't bust right in, meander around, dilly-dally with our lives and wait for us to notice Him. He stands at the door and knocks and says, "If you will open the door, I will come in and I will live with you and you will live with me" (Rev. 3:20). In the second part of Psalm 139 David is opening that door. It requires that you and God look deep into your heart and discover who is really in control.

Having asked all the vital questions, and desiring to be led by God, only then did David get to the place where he was led in the way everlasting. He was a truly brilliant repentant man. He wanted to be led by the direction, by the power, by the vision of God. He asked the questions that would guarantee not a wicked way, not a self-perception, nor a self-actualization, but a way that was holy and everlasting.

Be sure that David was in a very powerful place, and I contend that we are, too. David had just embraced God's power to lead him. Do you see what repentance had accomplished? It was not a reaction to sin. It was a pro-action to righteousness. Repentance is standing at a crossroads and calling out for the leading of God. Repentance is a choice to be searched by God to discover any flawed way of thinking in my vision, to trust God to expose it and remove it, until there's nothing left but the way God desires to go.

I have a very close friend who has demonstrated the holy power of a repentant life. In every choice that he made he stopped, considered his own will and placed it within the Father's vision. His will was exposed, and then he followed the way everlasting perfectly every time. Jesus Christ was the perfect example of a repentant man.

In Matthew 26 we have a very difficult story to talk about, but a powerful one. Our friend, Jesus, now embracing God's power to lead Him, finds Himself in a garden. I have always admired

the story of Jesus' temptation in Matthew chapter four. If I could just do what Jesus did. Yet that temptation does not compare to the one Jesus faced here in the garden before his arrest. "Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled" (Matt. 26:36-37). The condition of sorrow in Jesus' heart was a good indication that there was a battle going on in His soul. Second Corinthians 7 speaks of godly sorrow that leads to repentance. Is it really possible that Jesus was experiencing "godly sorrow" that was leading Him to repentance? Listen to what happened to Him: "Then he said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death' " (v. 38). Why would He be overwhelmed with sorrow? We can be confident that facing the crucifixion was tremendously difficult. But even greater would be the thought that this moment might be the dividing point between Him and the Father. Jesus obviously did not want to endure the cross, thus His request for "the cup" to be taken from Him. But the struggle was more than death. His greatest struggle appears to have been to do the will of the Father and not His own. This struggle is greater than death itself; thus He was overwhelmed with sorrow. And so we hear the words of repentance, "Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will' " (v. 39). Jesus lay before the Father, as did David, and cried, "Search me, O God." If Jesus is a man, as the Bible teaches, who was tempted in every way like you and I, why wouldn't this be a moment of temptation? One can see how Jesus was praying as if to say, "Search me, O God . . . and lead me in the way everlasting."

Again we find a man of God in a very powerful place. He, too, has embraced God's power to lead. As David invited the Lord to try him and remove whatever idol may be formed and lead

him in the way everlasting, Jesus does the same as He surrenders, "Yet not as I will, but as you will" (v. 39).

"Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. 'Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?' he asked Peter. 'Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation' " (vv. 40-41). This was not just a reference to their temptation, but a reflection of His own. It's as if Jesus was trying to say, "Don't fall asleep! Don't give in! Fight with me!" "The spirit is willing, but the body is weak" are words from His own experience. Again we see that ahead of the sin is repentance.

"Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!' " (vv. 45-46). Now, something happened here. Either God didn't answer the prayer of His only begotten Son, or there's more to this prayer than we see. Either God ignored that which Jesus asked for or God searched His heart and removed "any wicked way." What happened to Jesus, as with David, was the result of repentance. He did not confess any sin. He was certainly without sin every moment of His life, but He certainly was searched by God and led in the way everlasting.

If Jesus needed such a moment of brilliant repentance — how much more do you and I? We cannot pretend that God is leading us if our hearts are not continually searched by God Himself. We cannot pretend that we are heading in the everlasting way if we are not always inviting Him to search any self-declared agenda in our hearts. We cannot pretend that we have any future if we are not depending on the deity instead of humanity. It is vitally important.

Let me conclude by reminding you that repentance always comes at a crucial time. Repentance always comes at the precise moment. It came to David, but it didn't come to Saul. It came to Peter but it didn't come to Judas. It came to Jesus. Will it come to us? □

God Speaks to Us Through His Word

*God . . . has revealed
Himself to us in and
through His word.*



BY PASTOR SCOTT DEANE

Scott Deane is pastor at Pleasant Hill, OH. He recently completed his Master of Arts in Theological Studies at United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH. His message was delivered to the Conference on August 14.

God, in the past, as well as in the present, freshly speaks to us through and in His word — the Bible. As disciples of the Lord Jesus we must seek to hear and obey that word.

And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:12-17. All Scripture quoted from the NASB).

The second letter of Paul to his "son in the faith," Timothy, is commonly thought to be one of the last, if not the very last letter of that active apostle. It may have been written near the end of Paul's life. Within the letter are marks of closing and finality. For example, consider 4:7: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." Paul charges

Timothy with carrying on the work of the gospel, the preaching and teaching of the word of God. Paul emphasizes in 4:2, "preach the word, be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction." Paul's concern that Timothy remain faithful to the word is repeated again and again in this letter (1:8, 13, 14; 2:1, 2, 15). Why is Paul so obsessed with Timothy and the ministry of the word, the gospel? The answer, I believe, is found in 3:14-17.

"All Scripture is inspired by God" (that is, "God breathed"). What does that mean? It means that no matter who first penned these words, whether it was Moses, David, Malachi, John, or even Paul, these words find their origin in God Himself. It also means that no matter where they are read or studied, whether on the banks of the Euphrates in the sixth century B.C.E., or in a synagogue during the Roman empire, or during the Reformation, or on the early American frontier, or tonight in Grand Rapids, Michigan, these words are always the words of the Almighty.

All of this assumes a certain "worldview" on our part. A "worldview" is the way in which we understand the basic structure of reality. This will be different for an atheist, or an animist, or a Christian. The biblical worldview may be summarized in this way: God is the creator and sustainer of all that exists.

We did not create ourselves. Our existence is a gift from God. God is sovereign. We are God's subjects. God is judge. We are subject to God's laws. We are in need of salvation and redemption. It is God who saves us and not ourselves. This, if you will notice, reflects a definite hierarchy — God is up there, we are down here. God does not need us, we need God. Our existence is totally dependent upon God's grace and mercy and love for His creation — this is the biblical worldview.

God, in His love for us, for you and I, has revealed Himself to us in and through His word. In 2 Timothy 3:15 Paul writes to Timothy concerning the sacred writings: "[they are] able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ." In the Bible, God reveals to us what we would not know otherwise — namely, the way of salvation, the way of righteousness. That is why the Jews understood God's word not as a burden but as a gift from a loving God. Listen to this! "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of the law" (Deut. 29:29). Paul also writes in Romans 1:16, "for I am not ashamed of the gospel [i.e. word of God] for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes." This is the reason for Paul's "obsession" with the word of God as he wrote to Timothy. It is God's inspired word! It is the word of salvation to those who believe! How would you know that Jesus Christ is coming again to establish the kingdom of God on this very earth unless you have already read it in the Bible? How would you know that there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved unless you had first read it in this book? This is no ordinary book. Did you hear me? THIS

IS NO ORDINARY BOOK! It is God's own word to His lost creatures.

For this reason, Paul writes that the Scripture is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man [and woman] of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." It is the way of life, it is the way of righteousness. As Christians we simply cannot get along without it. To be a faithful hearer and doer of the word is the essential part of being a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ (faith without works is dead). I will go so far as to say this: If I live in opposition to the word, I am also living outside the will of God. Conversely, if I am believing and living according to the Bible, I am living according to God's will. Though God, I believe, speaks to us in other ways — through His Spirit, in answered prayers, through the natural world, through the words and actions of other believers, in that still small voice, and as we worship — I will still insist that the primary and most authoritative way that God speaks to us today is in His word. Oftentimes I tell my church "Don't believe a word this preacher says. Check it out in God's word. Confirm that my words are true." The Bible, in other words, is the standard by which we measure and judge our faith and our practice. Our faith is what we believe. Our practice is the action that our faith dictates.

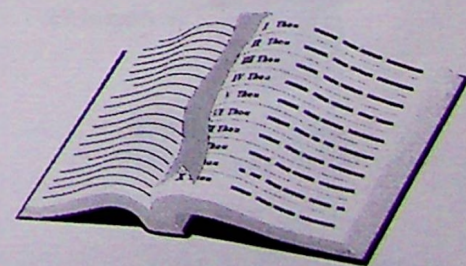
Why, then, do we human beings feel free to manipulate God's word to fit our own biases and agendas? Why are we so tempted to mold God's word rather than be molded by it? Sometimes we do this openly. Other times I don't think that we are even aware of it. The temptation to manipulate God's word to fit our own prejudices, to create our own theology, to establish our own standards of faith and practice is prompted by two contradictory tendencies. On one hand, we are tempted to justify our accommoda-

tion to the larger culture. On the other, we are tempted to blindly hold to tradition.

It has always been a temptation, ever since the days of the early church in the Roman empire, to accommodate ourselves and God's word to the world's standards. Paul even told the Roman Christians in his letter to them, "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." We confront this temptation on moral issues — the rampant materialism and greed of our nation, couples living together out of marriage, divorce and abortion, for examples. The world calls us to condone, justify and bless sin. We must remember that we are in the world, but not of it. It is OK to be different and to march to the beat of a different drummer. Being a nonconformist and a Christian go hand in hand.

Related closely to this temptation to accommodate on moral and ethical concerns is the constant temptation to capitulate on theological issues. We, the Church of God, are a small group. Our numbers are simply a drop in the bucket compared to many of the other denominations. We may feel tempted to conclude that what we do, what we believe, and what we say are not valuable or significant. We may even be tempted to abandon our heritage and to count as nothing those insights that God has given to us concerning the true nature of His word. My experience in seminary has convinced me more than ever that our distinctive doctrines are right on track — they are quite biblical. Just because the rest of the religious world does not agree or

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God Speaks Through Us to the Lost

... I nearly pulled the cord out of the mower, but nothing happened.



BY PASTOR JASON TURNER

Jason Turner is pastor of Beloit New Life Church in Wisconsin. He is the founding pastor of the church. He gave his message on August 15.

As well as being the pastor of Beloit New Life Church, I have another job. I call it my very-part-time job because I only do it for about three hours a week. It's not exactly the most prestigious job in the world; I mow the lawn for a McDonald's restaurant. I often imagine people going through the drive-through telling their children that they had better do well in school or they're going to wind up like the man mowing the lawn.

Recently I went on vacation for a couple of weeks. When I came back to mow the lawn, I got the lawnmower out, and I pulled on the cord. Nothing happened. I pulled on the cord again, and nothing happened. This time when the mower wouldn't start, I had only one thought: "It's not starting because I'm not pulling hard enough." So I pulled harder, and harder. I pulled so hard that I nearly pulled the cord out of the mower, but nothing happened. After I pulled several times, I began to think, and I realized that something was wrong. I looked the mower over, and saw that whoever had mowed while I was on vacation had taken the spark plug wire off of the spark plug.

I could have pulled that cord a thousand times, but that mower would never start without that wire hooked up. I hooked up the wire, and the mower started with one easy pull.

A lot of times when I think about the evangelism I am doing, I don't feel very successful. My first thought is always, "I'm not trying hard

enough. If I just tried harder, I would do more evangelism."

When I think about most of the sermons I've heard about evangelism, and most of the sermons I've preached about evangelism, they really only come back to two themes. The first is the pep talk sermon on evangelism — the "You can do it" evangelism. "You know what to do. You can handle it. Go do it." The second type of evangelism sermon is the guilt evangelism sermon — the "Why aren't you doing any evangelism?" sermon. Both of these sermons come back to the same message: try harder. What I've found is that whether I'm trying to do the evangelism myself, or whether I'm trying to get others to do the evangelism, most of the time I feel like I'm pulling on that cord on that stupid lawnmower. I try as hard as I can and nothing happens. When nothing happens, I just try harder. In fact, I try until I'm worn out.

All this summer I've been thinking about and praying about this message, and at times I've honestly wondered if I should preach at all. At first I was leaning toward the guilt evangelism sermon, and then I was leaning toward the pep-talk evangelism sermon, but then I realized something. Even though they both sound good, both of these sermons have been preached for years and they haven't accomplished much of anything. I thought about how this sermon is supposed to be how God speaks through us to the lost.

I immediately thought about Acts 1 and 2, about how God spoke through the apostles to the lost.

Look with me at Acts 1:1-9. If anyone was ever going to give the pep-talk evangelism sermon, Jesus could have given one here. The disciples had just seen Him come back from the dead. He could have said, "Okay men, go spread the word. You've seen what God can do. You know the truth. Go tell the world about me." And then He could have gone up into heaven. But He didn't do that. Instead He told them to wait until they received the Holy Spirit.

We read in the rest of chapter one that the apostles went back to Jerusalem and they appointed Matthias to take Judas' place. In other words, they had the first church business meeting. In chapter two, something incredible happened. They were baptized or filled with the Holy Spirit. Under the power of the Holy Spirit, lost people heard the message in their own native language. When Peter preached in the power of the Holy Spirit many people were convicted of their sins. We can look at the end of chapter two, in verses 40 and 41, to see what happened.

Now the early church had its share of problems, but making new converts didn't seem to be one of them. Three thousand were baptized. Not because Peter was such a good speaker. Not because the apostles were trying really hard and it happened. Not because the apostles finally found the right program. It all happened because God acted through the Holy Spirit.

When we begin to think that evangelism is up to us, and we leave God's power out of the equation, we will accomplish nothing. We may try and try and work as hard as we can, but just like the spark plug wire, if we're not wired into the power of the Holy

Spirit through prayer, giving God the glory, we're not going to accomplish anything.

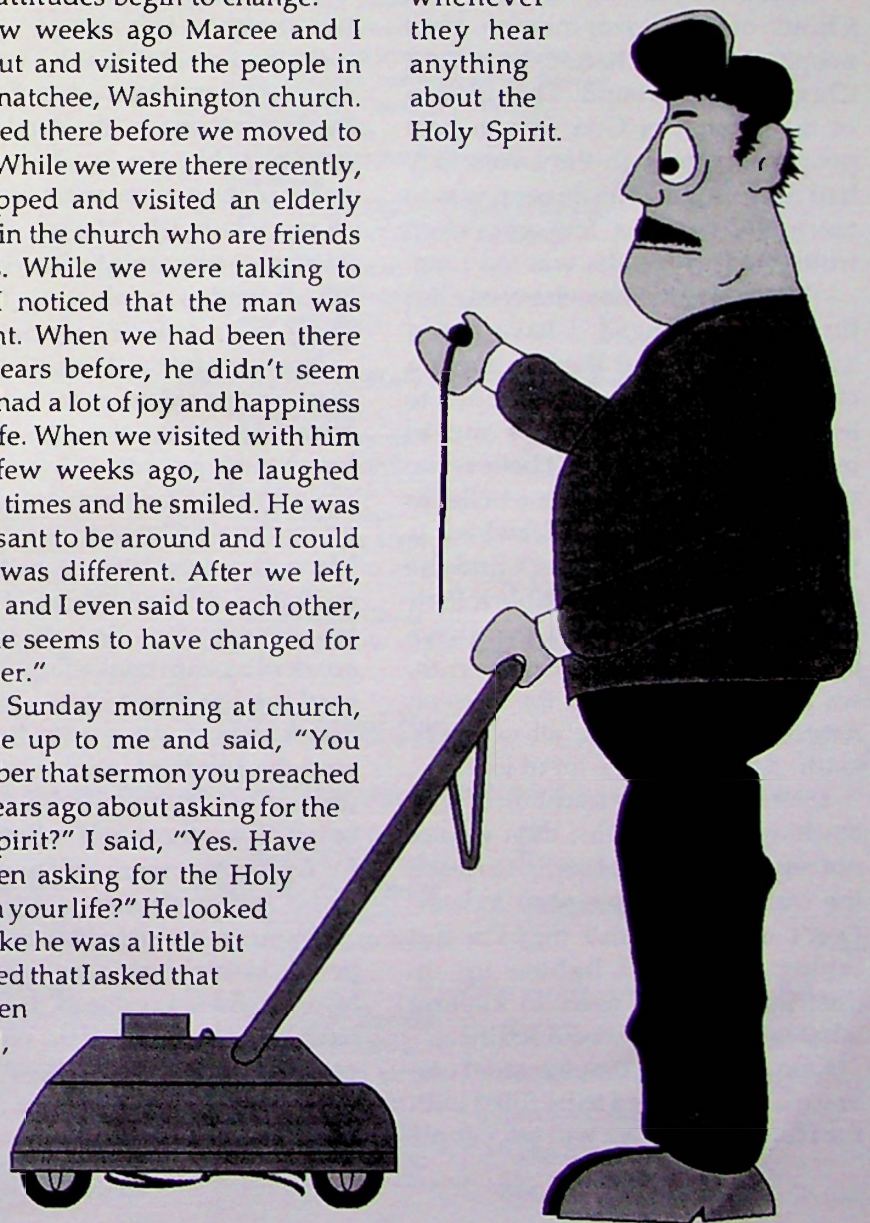
Sometimes it seems like Christian people aren't that concerned about the lost. That's only a symptom of the real problem. If we have God's Spirit in our lives, we will begin to see things as God sees things. When a person begins to have the Holy Spirit working in his or her life, attitudes toward the lost quickly change. But it's not just attitudes toward the lost, but all attitudes begin to change.

A few weeks ago Marcee and I went out and visited the people in the Wenatchee, Washington church. I interned there before we moved to Beloit. While we were there recently, we stopped and visited an elderly couple in the church who are friends of ours. While we were talking to them, I noticed that the man was different. When we had been there three years before, he didn't seem like he had a lot of joy and happiness in his life. When we visited with him just a few weeks ago, he laughed several times and he smiled. He was so pleasant to be around and I could tell he was different. After we left, Marcee and I even said to each other, "Boy, he seems to have changed for the better."

That Sunday morning at church, he came up to me and said, "You remember that sermon you preached three years ago about asking for the Holy Spirit?" I said, "Yes. Have you been asking for the Holy Spirit in your life?" He looked at me like he was a little bit surprised that I asked that and then he said, "Yes."

Rarely in life have I received such clear answers to my questions. I wondered why he was different and I found out. When I knew him a few years ago, he was always a great guy, and I liked him a lot, but I don't know how effective he would have been at evangelism. I can see now how God could use him to speak to the lost. Not just with the right words, but with the right attitude.

Some people are immediately turned off whenever they hear anything about the Holy Spirit.



I know there was a time that whenever I heard anything about the Holy Spirit I went into my "I wonder what's for lunch?" mode. But read through the Bible. You will find a lot of references there to the Holy Spirit.

If we want God to speak through us to the lost, we had better begin by asking Him to fill us with His Holy Spirit. When we begin to live lives under God's power, evangelism is just going to be one of the by-products.

A hundred years ago God gave the Church of God a clear mission. Most people at that time had some sort of a Christian background. The mission of the Church of God was to help people sort through the errors they had been taught. The mission was to teach the world a few important truths that no one else was teaching.

The truth has not changed, but times have changed. I have found that the people out there without a church background are very open to learning about how God is one. In fact, they laugh and don't believe me when I suggest that anyone believes anything different. The drawback is that some of them couldn't find the book of Genesis in their Bible if their life depended on it. While doors have opened for us to teach God's truth, we need to realize that the mission now is to be teaching all of God's truth. And God has a lot of truth.

If we rely on some tradition of only teaching certain truths, then we are not relying on the Holy Spirit to teach the truths that people need to hear. Don't misunderstand me; I'm not saying we should lighten up on doctrine, we just need to expand what we consider to be doctrine.

One great truth that we must embrace is that we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit so we will tell people

what God wants them to hear instead of just what we think is best for them to hear.

Look with me at Luke 11:9-13. These verses are usually used to teach about prayer. But Jesus isn't just talking about prayer in general here. He is talking about praying for the Holy Spirit. Now it's easy to say, "Well, I repented of my sins, I got baptized. I got the Holy Spirit then, so I'm covered on this Spirit deal. Right?" Look at the verse here.

Jesus compares the Holy Spirit to two things: a fish and an egg. Both food. You can tell just by looking at me that I don't miss a lot of meals. If the Holy Spirit is like food, I don't care how big the meal is, I'm not going to live on one meal for the rest of my whole life. Having the Holy Spirit is as important as having food. We all need to be asking for the Holy Spirit on a regular if not a daily basis.

You may be thinking, "Jason, you were supposed to preach to us on how God speaks through us to the lost. You're just preaching about the Holy Spirit." There are a lot of people attempting a Christian life, and that life is about as difficult and unsuccessful as pulling the cord on the lawnmower that doesn't have the spark plug wire hooked up. They are working hard, but nothing is being accomplished. We need to first make sure the spark plug wire is hooked up and we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Then there still will be work for us, but that work will be so much easier and much more satisfying.

There are an incredible number of people in this world who need to find Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We have a big job ahead of us. We cannot even begin that job unless we ask God to fill us with His Holy Spirit. □

(continued from page 15)

even care does not give us justification to abandon what we know to be true.

On the other side of the coin, God's word is also manipulated and twisted when we blindly hold on to tradition. Jesus challenged the Pharisees on many occasions to evaluate their traditions and to see that on many counts those traditions were not biblical. Just because we have "always done it that way" or just because "we have always believed that way" does not necessarily mean that those "ways" are biblical. We can as easily be slaves to tradition as any other denomination can be. We must always be willing to measure and judge our traditions (not just their traditions) by the standard of God's word.

What I am urging is submission to God and submission to His word. We have, in the last few years, called for revival, renewal, and revitalization. That will never happen unless we become faithful hearers and doers of the word of God. We must acknowledge the Bible for what it is — the word of God Almighty. We must remember that we did not create God. God created us. We cannot seek to create God in our own image. Rather, the purpose in hearing and doing His word is so that we will be "re-created" in the image of His Son. I believe Isaiah captures the spirit of this age very well: (God says) "you turn things around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, that what is made should say to its maker, 'He did not make me.' Or what is formed say to Him who formed it, 'He has no understanding'" (Isaiah 29:16). Rather, let us emulate the words of Isaiah 66:2b: (God says) "But to this one will I look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." □

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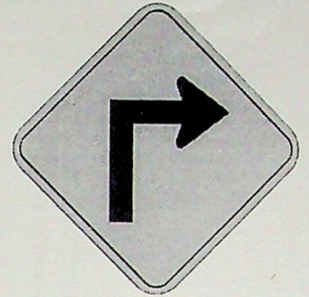
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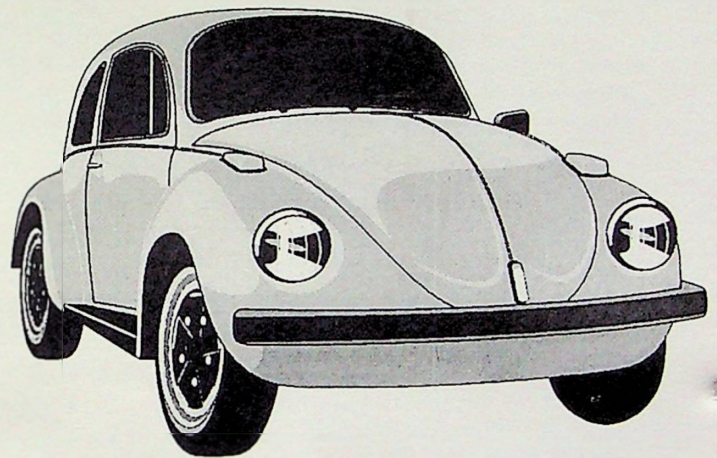
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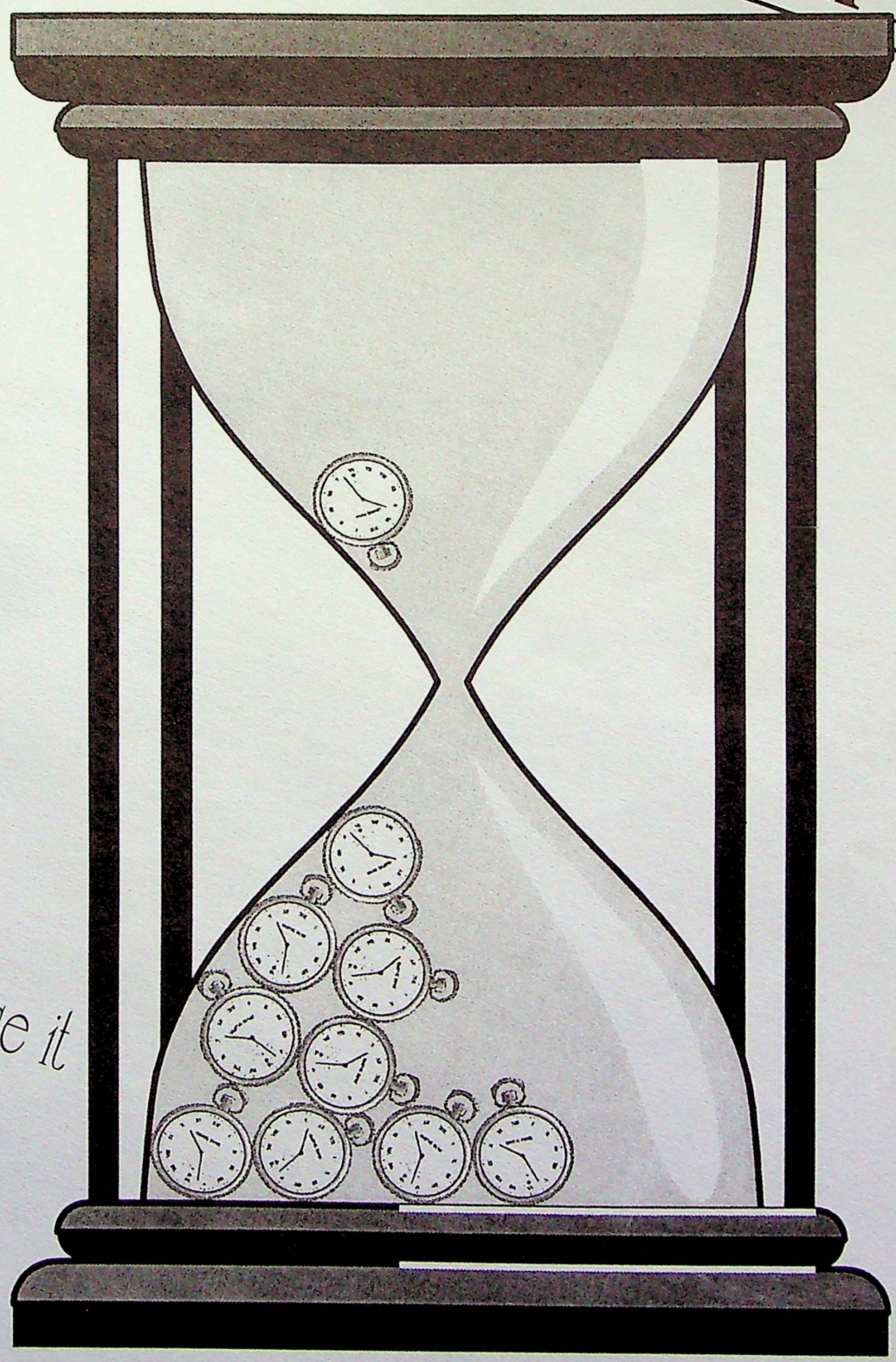
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Volume 86, Number 2



Time
Comes from God. Use it
Wisely

Elections, and the Elect

What's more important — what a person says he or she believes, or what he or she actually does? This is a question that has challenged teachers of religion, moral theologians, and ordinary folks for thousands of years. Nowhere does the contrast between stated beliefs and actions become clearer than in the area of politics. We've just completed yet another year of listening to candidates tell us about what they believe and what they intend to do as a result of those beliefs once they are reelected. Decisions were made, votes were cast, and now it's a done deal.

Of course, now is when the rubber hits the road. Now is the time when we sit back and watch to see if their actions align with their stated beliefs.

I must admit, in most cases I'm a bit skeptical. Like many of you, I'm guessing that things will get back to "business as usual" where our elected officials spend the majority of their time and energy protecting themselves, paying back their constituents, and doing what is expedient, rather than what they've said they believe.

But while I'm pointing a finger at our elected officials, I realize that I'm also pointing several back at myself. We Christians are often guilty of doing the same thing. We gather together for worship and sing songs like "Be not dismayed whate'er betide, God will take care of you," and then we proceed to worry about all manner of things. We say we trust God, but our actions betray us. We pray "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" and yet we hold grudges and refuse to forgive.

Jesus spoke some very hard words against our tendency to say we believe

something but act in just the opposite way. He said:

By their fruit you will recognize them . . . every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit . . . Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire . . . Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord" . . . and I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:16-23).

In a sense, when we come to church we are a bit like those politicians we so love to castigate and criticize. We come presenting our best face before God and before the church. We sing songs, pray prayers and confess creeds stating what we believe and what we intend to do, and then we leave church — and that's when the rubber hits the road. That's when we have a chance to prove whether what we've said in church is merely empty words, or if those words express a deeply felt faith that expresses itself in right action.

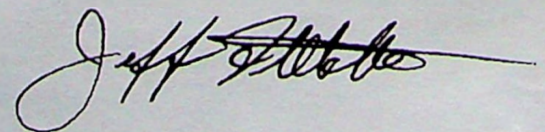
James wrote, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder . . . faith without deeds is useless . . . faith without deeds is dead" (James 2:19-20, 26).

In their book *Christian Foundations*, Kathleen Fischer and Thomas Hart write, "It is clear from the Christian Scriptures that a person's lived response to the challenge and invitation of Jesus is far more important than an orthodox verbal confession concerning his identity." These are welcome words from two Roman Catholic theologians whose church would take the

position that we in the Church of God are not orthodox in our confession of Jesus' identity.

And yet, we in the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith have spent over 150 years trying to be absolutely certain that we believe the correct things about who God is and who Jesus is. We believe that God is One, and that Jesus is God's Son, the Messiah, a human being — not the second person of the triune Godhead. In doing so we have rejected the mainstream "orthodox" creedal statements and definitions handed down by the early church councils (Nicea, Chalcedon, etc.). I'm convinced that we've got our "verbal confession concerning his identity" accurate. What we think and what we say about God and Jesus are, I believe, theologically and technically accurate. But those beliefs alone are not enough. We must respond in the way we live to the "challenge and invitation of Jesus."

I want to urge you to dedicate yourself during this coming year to deepening your personal walk with God through His Son Jesus. I invite you to enter into an "experience of God" that can only come from immersing yourself in His Word and in prayer, listening to His voice, and then adjusting your life to come into full obedience to His will. I challenge you to move beyond intellectual belief and verbal confession to a deeply transformed life. God be with you.



Jeffrey Fletcher

The Restitution Herald

THE RESTITUTION HERALD

VOLUME 86, NUMBER 2: DECEMBER 1996, JANUARY 1997. ©1996.

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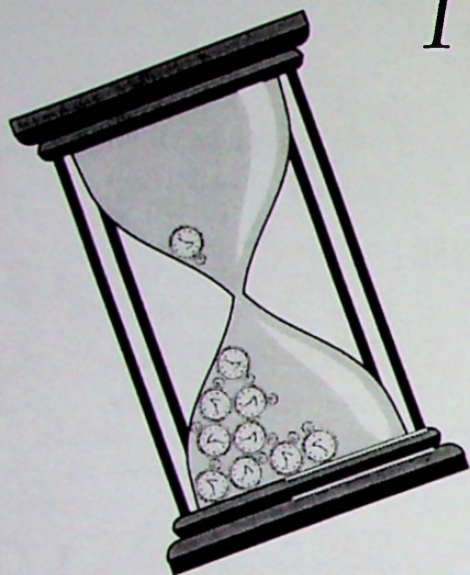
THE RESTITUTION HERALD IS OWNED AND PUBLISHED BY THE CHURCH OF GOD GENERAL CONFERENCE, A NONPROFIT CHRISTIAN CORPORATION LOCATED AT 5823 TRAMMELL ROAD, P.O. BOX 100,000, MORROW, GA 30260. THE HERALD IS MAILED SIX TIMES A YEAR.

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);
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- 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 Gift of Time



One should regard time as a precious gift of life.

The calendar reminds us that another year has nearly passed and the human race stands at the threshold of a new year, proving again that time waits for no man. The days, months, and years move on without ceasing. No man can stop their determined course. For this reason, if for no other, one should regard time as a precious gift of life.

Isaac Watts, the 17th-century theologian and hymnist, speaks of this concept in his great hymn, "O God, Our Help in Ages Past":

Time, like an ever rolling stream
Bears all its sons away,
They fly forgotten as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

Time is not only persistent, it is precious. Time is neither storable nor retrievable. It cannot be lent or borrowed. You must choose how you will spend the time God gives you each day.

Solomon, the wise man and Old Testament writer, reminds us of the use of time. Listen to him.

There is a right time for everything:
A time to be born, a time to die;
A time to plant;
A time to harvest;
A time to kill;
A time to heal;
A time to destroy;
A time to rebuild;
A time to cry;
A time to laugh;
A time to grieve;
A time to dance;
A time for scattering stones;
A time for gathering stones;
A time to hug;
A time not to hug;

A time to find;
A time to lose;
A time for keeping;
A time for throwing away;
A time to tear;
A time to repair;
A time to be quiet;
A time to speak up;
A time for loving;
A time for hating;
A time for war;
A time for peace (Eccl. 3:1-8, LB).

Too often time is spent worrying over what will never come to pass. Jesus has instructed us about the proper use of time. "So don't be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time" (Matt. 6:34, LB). This does not mean that one should not plan for tomorrow or even beyond. Christ is teaching us to recognize our deep dependence upon our heavenly Father.

As 1997 unfolds before us, let's make the new year a friend and an opportunity. Perhaps a good approach is to look at the next twelve hours. The plan for living the next twelve hours is also applicable to the next twelve months. For 1997 live one day at a time and don't tackle all the problems of life at once.

The course of human nature is never smooth or even and 1997 will be no exception. Let's take a long look into the new year. The long look gives us faith in a God big enough to be worthy of our worship. We need to humble ourselves anew before His majesty and power. **OUR GOD WILL PROVIDE! □**



BY HOLLIS PARTLOWE

Spirit of Truth

Is this "Pentecostal Spirit" really the Spirit of Truth which Jesus promised to His disciples?

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲



BY ALLON MAXWELL

In our time there are many who have become disenchanted with formal religion, which offers little more than the traditional Sunday "Four Hymn Sandwich" (to be taken looking at the backs of other people's heads). We have developed a system which relieves us of the necessity of looking each other in the eye while we share "fellowship." By tradition handed down through several generations, our church services have been carefully structured to leave little opportunity for those unwelcome, unusual, unexpected, embarrassing interruptions, which so often disturbed the "worship" in the synagogues where Jesus was present.

I confess, to my shame, that in my earlier years I was present in church services where, when such interruptions did occur, our response was to "preserve the sanctity of the meeting" by removing the "offender" and shutting the doors to keep him or her out! What we were really doing, of course, was shutting out (from ourselves) our lack of power to deal with the problem as Jesus would have done. We simply didn't know what to do!

This sort of religion creates a deep spiritual void which drives many of us to ask what is lacking in us and in our church that makes us so obviously different from the first-century church. We begin to hunger for what we read about in the Gospels. We begin to search for something better. If we are not careful, we may begin to reject the good things we now have.

It doesn't take long for most of us to decide that what is lacking is the power of the Holy Spirit and the gifts through which that power is revealed. At that point we have discovered a wonderful truth. We have also, unwittingly, exposed ourselves to great danger!

In our search for the reality of the Holy Spirit, we shall also discover the reality of the warning given by John, that many false prophets are abroad in the religious world (1 John 4:1). We are not to believe every spirit. We are to test the spirits to see whether they really are from God. There would even be, Jesus warned us, miracles so real in their appearance that even the elect would be in danger of deception (Matt. 24:24).

We shall not travel far in our search for the truth about the Holy Spirit before we encounter the Pentecostals and their bright "happy clappy" meetings.

This same hunger for experiential religion resulted in the emergence of the Pentecostal churches in the first half of the 20th century, and the charismatic movement in the second half. The charismatic movement has been remarkable for the twin streams of Protestant and Roman Catholic followers who have embraced the Pentecostal teaching, while still retaining their separate denominational identities.

For these, the foundation stone of their existence has been the claim that they have experienced the same "baptism with the Holy Spirit" as

TRUTH and the Scriptures

those first-century disciples did in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost. Special emphasis has been placed on the gift of tongues as *the sign* which validates the "baptism" as real. (Some even go so far as to say that no one is saved at all until they have spoken in tongues!)

However, these claims are not without their problems. Many of them present us with impossible confusion and conflict. There are many awkward questions to be answered, questions which we must meet in total honesty of heart, questions which Jesus Himself warned us that we would ignore at our peril. Signs and wonders, in themselves, are not necessarily a proof of truth.

Is this "Pentecostal Spirit" really the Spirit of Truth which Jesus promised to His disciples?

The Pentecostal movement is comprised of an incredibly diverse mixture. Amongst most of them (but certainly not all) it is now common to ignore the uncomfortable fact that the Holy Spirit is not speaking the same "truth" to all of them! Some stay apart still, but there is a vast number who now make the terrible mistake of accepting almost anyone at face value, on the sole ground that they share the same gift of tongues.

There are "Spirit-filled" Calvinists and Arminians and Roman Catholics and Sabbath-keepers, all wedded firmly to their different theologies and claiming that the Holy Spirit has confirmed to them the truth of their own positions.

There are "Spirit-filled" infant baptizers, others who practice "believer's" baptism and yet others who reject the need for baptism altogether.

Large numbers of them embrace false Gospels, such as the "Prosperity Gospel," or the "Gospel of Faith

Without Works," or one of the many other destructive lies which replace faith in the *real* Abrahamic Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Most of them seem to live and die, comfortable with the lie inherent in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, taking false comfort from it in times of bereavement and never finding the truth of conditional immortality.

There are other vital differences between them also. It is significant, I believe, that I have almost never found the true faith of Abraham anywhere amongst them.

All of this is confusion — a confusion which is compounded by one further major problem which we may not ignore. Almost without exception they regard our own "Abrahamic unitarianism" and our rejection of the Trinity (or Oneness or Arianism, as the case may be) as a heresy which places us outside the limits of acceptable Christianity!

But... all of these speak in tongues and they all tell us that their gift is from the same Spirit of Truth, and they all tell us that we also need to speak in tongues, in order to be real Christians... like them!

Why should I accept as real any spirit which labels as heresy what, in all honesty before God, I know to be truth? Why should I accept that anyone who actively rejects important truth has gifts from the Spirit of Truth, given to bear witness to Truth? Why should I believe that Jesus is confirming their dangerous errors through any sign or wonder offered in support of their claims? It is much more likely that such signs and wonders are like those described in Deuteronomy 13:1-4.

The conclusion that I have reached about all this is simple and biblical. I no longer believe every testimony I

hear about gifts of the Holy Spirit, or about signs and wonders.

I will question, prayerfully, the source of any "power," any miracle, and any answer to prayer, until I know whether it is truly from God or not. I will test all such claims by the standard of biblical truth; I will accept only what can withstand the twofold test of harmony with Scripture and confirmation by independent, reliable, honest witnesses.

I will ask for THE TRUTH until it is given to me. I will search for truth until I know I have found it. I will continue to knock until the door of heaven is opened to me and I enter into total harmony with the Son of God who is the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE. I will expect that God will honor my reliance on Him to open my eyes and ears to recognize nothing else and nothing less than His Eternal Truth.

We must never allow ourselves to forget that this promised Holy Spirit is the *Spirit of Truth*, given to guide us into all truth (John 14:17; 16:13-15). We must be careful here. I do not believe that this guarantees instant infallibility. However, it surely must mean that those who are filled with the Spirit of Truth will not be found actively promoting dangerous lies!

The Spirit of Truth is given to call to remembrance the things that Jesus spoke (John 14:26). This has been done already, for those who wrote the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament. It will be repeated for us when the Holy Spirit directs us to those same words, and quickens them to us, calling to remembrance what we also have heard from Jesus.

The Holy Spirit will *never* present as *truth* anything which contradicts the words of Jesus, adds to them, explains them away, or classifies them as non-essential.

THE TRUTH ABOUT WHO JESUS IS

The Holy Spirit will *never* say that Jesus is part of a Triune God, or that Jesus is the "Oneness" God, or that Jesus is the Arian preexistent spirit. The foundation Truth on which the true church of Jesus is built is the *truth* that the Son of Man is also the Son of the Living God (Matt. 16:13-18). While all of those three theologians pay *lip service* to that concept, they, in effect, render it meaningless by making Him into something which can be neither really a Son, nor a man.

Jesus Himself said that His Father is the ONLY TRUE GOD (John 17:3). *That is the truth* which the real Holy Spirit will call to mind!

Indeed, one of the very specific tests for the validity of the Holy Spirit is what it says about this question. The Trinity, the Arian doctrine, and the Oneness doctrine are *all* modern forms of that first-century spirit of Antichrist which said that Jesus was not really a man (1 John 4:1-3).

John says very bluntly that no lie is of the Truth (1 John 2:21), and that any spirit which insists that Jesus is not really a man is *not* the Spirit of Truth, but is instead the spirit of error (1 John 4:6). Should we not be cautious about any Spirit which teaches any form of this lie?

When Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, the promise *was* conditional! The promise was for the truly repentant, who are baptized for remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). It was *not* for those who baptize infants without either belief or repentance. It was not for those who teach that baptism is not essential for salvation. It was not for those who are baptized believing a false gospel. It was not for those whose "repentance" ignores the teaching of Jesus about obedience.

The promise was for those who love Jesus and obey Him (John 14:15-17).

Jesus did not leave us in any doubt about what He meant by "obedience." His commandments are clearly and simply defined in the Gospels, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. They are far more than a new legal code replacing an old one. They actually define the *new nature*, created in those who are born of the Spirit, which finds expression in the fruit of the Spirit. They teach us what we will

vice to Jesus, but actually amounts to *rebellion* against Him.

The personal challenge in this condition of obedience invites us to hunger and thirst after righteousness until we are filled to eternal satisfaction (Matt. 5:6). It invites us to seek that quality of love for Jesus which really does obey.

It is people such as this who are promised the Holy Spirit and no other.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE GIFT OF TONGUES

Nowhere did Jesus ever say that speaking in tongues was *the one essential sign* of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Nor did any New Testament writer!

We need to remember that for all who are baptized into the one true body of Christ, God gives gifts as He chooses, and not as our own fallible human wills demand. Paul said that in 1 Corinthians 12:11-13. Paul also said that *not all speak in tongues!* (1 Cor. 12:27-31).

Thus tongues *cannot* be the infallible sign of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Any so-called Spirit which insists otherwise cannot be the SPIRIT OF TRUTH which Jesus promised!

CONCLUSION

This paper is *not* intended to be a treatise defining *all* Truth! Rather, the intention here is to encourage all of us in our own personal dedication to Truth, so that we can avoid some of the danger inherent in Pentecostalism, and by avoiding the LIE, be more open to the one who is Himself THE TRUTH.

I pray God that this may be so for those who read these words. □



become when we have been transformed into the likeness of God by the indwelling Spirit of God (1 Cor. 3:16-18). They lead us into the *truth* about what we must become in order to know God and receive Eternal Life.

In conversation with those who speak in tongues (and also those who don't!) I have found few who are really interested in costly radical obedience to the Sermon on the Mount, which lies at the very heart of the teaching of Jesus about repentance as a condition of entry into the Kingdom of God. I have met too many who explain away the Sermon on the Mount, whose teaching pays lip ser-

Are You Searching the Scriptures, Bereans?

By G.E. Marsh

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they . . . searched the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11).

Are you searching the Scriptures, Bereans,
As did the Bereans of old?
Do you love to study its precepts
And its glorious beauties unfold?
Are you seeking the Word for instruction
That will point to the pathway of life
Wherein you may walk ever safely
In happiness, sorrow and strife?

Are you searching the Scriptures, Bereans,
With your hearts overflowing with love?
Are you trying to practice its teaching
For the sake of the dear Lord above?
Do you seek for its life-giving treasures
As though you were delving for gold?
Do you praise its great Author in heaven
For each glittering gem you behold?

Are you searching the Scriptures, Bereans,
With a heart that is longing for truth?
Are you willing and glad to receive it
As a light on the pathway of youth?
May Jesus the Master be with you
And teach you His truth day by day;
May He open your hearts to accept it,
For His sake, I earnestly pray. □

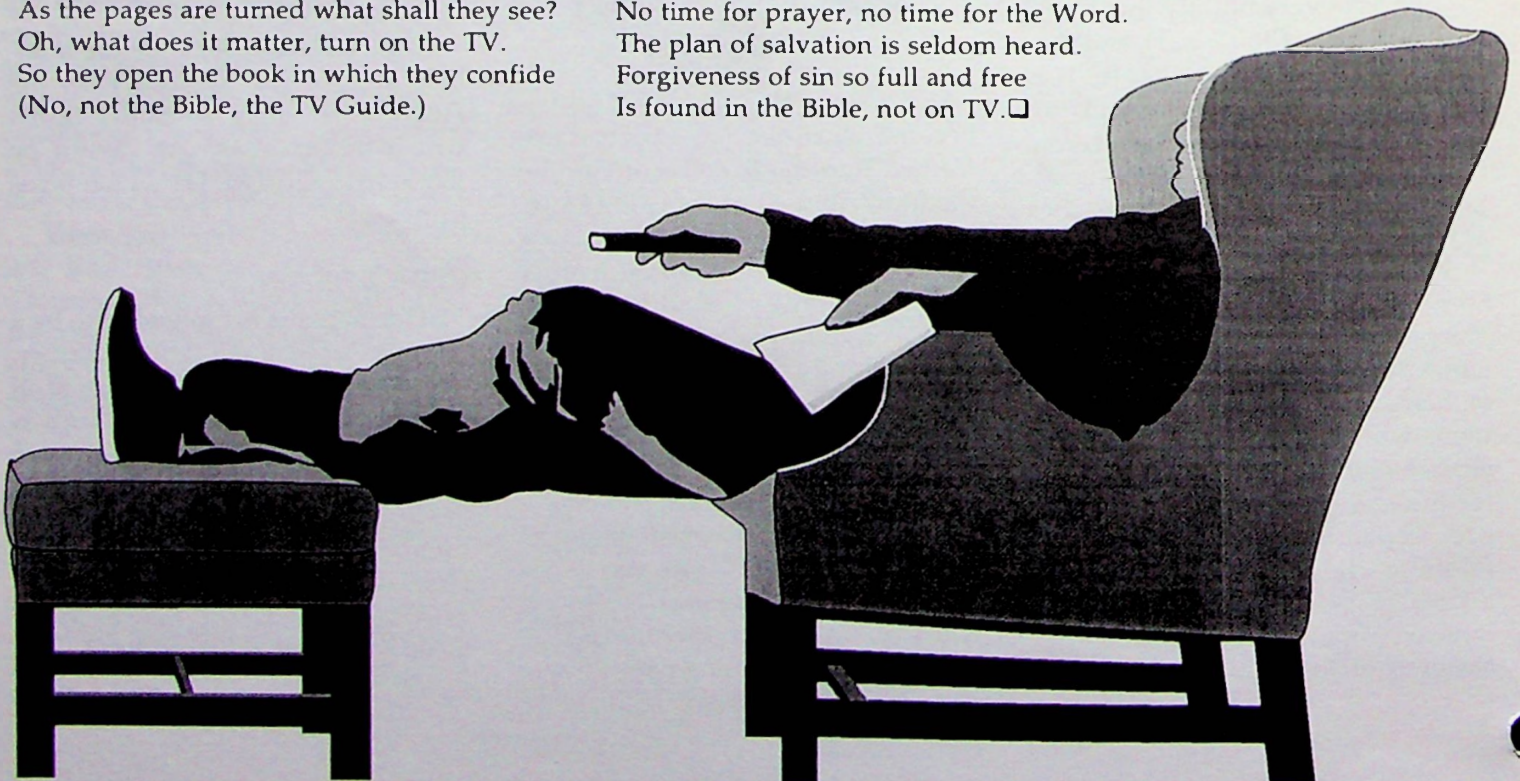
Submitted by Rex Cain

The Bible and the TV Guide

On the table side by side:
The Holy Bible and the TV Guide.
One is well worn but cherished with pride,
(Not the Bible, the TV Guide.)
One is used daily to help folks decide.
No! It isn't the Bible; it's the TV Guide.
As the pages are turned what shall they see?
Oh, what does it matter, turn on the TV.
So they open the book in which they confide
(No, not the Bible, the TV Guide.)

The Word of God is seldom read.
Maybe a verse as they fall into bed.
Exhausted and sleepy and tired as can be,
Not from reading the Bible; from watching TV.
So, then back to the table, side by side,
Is the Holy Bible and the TV Guide.
No time for prayer, no time for the Word.
The plan of salvation is seldom heard.
Forgiveness of sin so full and free
Is found in the Bible, not on TV. □

Submitted by
Marie Walker,
Hammond, LA.
Author unknown.



The Truth About Elohim

A deep and continuing study of the Scriptures will reveal to the discerning student that *Elohim* is "a god or the God" of anyone who worships a god or the true God of the Scriptures. The word is *not* the name of a god but is descriptive of the god one worships. When Ruth clung to Naomi who was returning to Bethlehem, she told Naomi, "Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16), meaning that she would accept whichever "god" Naomi worshipped as the one she would worship. Naomi worshipped the LORD (Jehovah), (the) *Elohim* of Israel.

Strong's Concordance describes *Elohim* as follows: "plural of 433 (Eloah); gods in the ordinary sense; but specially used (in the plural, especially with the article "the") of the supreme God; occasionally applied by way of deference to magistrates; and sometimes as the superlative; angels . . . exceeding God (gods), goddess, godly, (very) great, judges, mighty."

Whilst it is used many times in the plural, *Elohim* is also used in the singular, and we list some instances of both usages:

- Exodus 22:20. "He that sacrificeth unto any god [*Elohim*], save unto the LORD [Jehovah] only shall be utterly destroyed" — plural
- Judges 6:31. "If he be a god [*Elohim*] let him plead for himself" — singular
- 1 Kings 12:28. "Behold thy gods [*Elohim*], O Israel" — two calves, plural
- Judges 16:23. "Dagon, their god" [*Elohim*]— an idol, singular
- 1 Kings 18:21, 24. "If Jehovah be God [*Elohim*], follow him, but if Baal, follow him" — singular

Many writers espousing the dogma of the Trinity claim that the very frequent use of the plural word *Elohim* is strong proof of their claim. However, *if such an*

unsustainable claim is true, then obviously the singular use of the word should never occur. If God, Elohim, is a "plurality" of three persons in number, then He can never be any other than that.

We learn from Exodus 3:14 that the name of the almighty ("I will be whom I will be") declares the purpose of a multitude (see Rev. 7:9, "a multitude no man could number") *and certainly not a Trinity*. (Note: Ex. 3:14 contains the incorrect translation, "I am that I am.") In fact, where *Elohim* refers to Jehovah, *it is almost always in the singular sense*; thus by claiming *Elohim* to be three, the dogma of the Trinity is indeed blasphemous, for it alters the simple truth of the Scriptures.

When we read the expression "God said," we are in fact reading "God (He) said," and thus, if we are inclined to think of *Elohim* in the terms of the "plural of majesty" or "the mighty ones," then the phrase "God (He) said" would have to be read as "God (they, the mighty ones) said," *a phrase which cannot be vindicated from Scripture*.

The Scriptures show that the LORD (Jehovah), who is to be manifested in a multitude, is presently both Father and God (*Elohim*). To all who believe He is the Father, as the following passages of Scripture affirm:

- Genesis 26:24. "I am the God [*Elohim*] of Abraham."
- Genesis 28:13. "I am the Lord [Jehovah] God [*Elohim*] of Abraham."
- Genesis 31:5. "The God [*Elohim*] of my [Jacob's] father."
- Isaiah 64:8. "O LORD [Jehovah], thou art our Father [*Ab*]."
- Malachi 2:10. "Have we not one father [*Ab*] . . . hath not one God [*El*] created us?"
- Psalm 68:5. "Sing to God [*Elohim*] . . . His name is the LORD [*Yah*] . . . father [*Ab*] of the fatherless is God [*Elohim*] in His holy habitation." □

Reprinted from the *Gospel Publicity League Bulletin*.

"Why Do You Call Me Good?"

*The word "good" takes
on an exalted meaning
when applied to God.*

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

BY DAVID CAUDERY

This article is reprinted from *Glad Tidings* magazine.

There are many incidents in the life of Christ which, at first glance, perplex. The Master uttered many things which puzzled both His disciples and His opponents. He did it deliberately. *Jesus wanted His followers to think.* He did not want them to follow Him blindly but to exercise their minds on what they were doing.

In speaking to the Pharisees the Master had observed, "If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit" (Matthew 15:14). They saw the remark as *directed against themselves* and were naturally offended. They could not accept that they were blind or that those who followed them were blind. Many who follow leaders like to have it this way. The leader thinks for them; he controls them, directing their thought processes and dictating their actions. It seems that those who follow *prefer to have it so*; it saves them the responsibility of making decisions. We have seen this in world politics. Hitler was the prime example in the 20th century and men such as Mao Tse Tung rank on a similar level. Such leaders try to capture the allegiance of young impressionable minds. Their strength is founded on those who will blindly follow their dictates. *They do not want followers who think for themselves.*

Sadly the same pattern is observable in religious circles. It is one of the patterns of evidence showing whether an organization is man-made or God-made. But Jesus was different. It is only by studying the Gospels closely that we come to realize how different! We see many "hard

sayings," all designed to make His listeners think for themselves. Jesus never gave "Yes" or "No" answers. *Often He would answer a question with a question to make the questioner think.*

If we study these *hard sayings* we will discover some surprising truths that challenge our thinking and lead us on to deeper perceptions of all that Christ came to reveal to thinking men and women.

GOOD TEACHER . . .

As our first *hard saying*, let us look at the response of the Master to the man who asked Him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" The teacher gave an astonishing answer: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone" (Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19). What did He mean? What lesson was He teaching? What did the word "good" mean? Is this a word we have de-based in general usage like so many others in our language?

Jesus used "good" as the opposite to "evil" and "wicked." He taught, for example, the wonder of the resurrection, when He will call forth from their graves all those dead who have known Him, "*Those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment*" (John 5:29). Yet we know that the "good" are only raised by virtue of God's grace and mercy — no man or woman will *deserve* eternal life; no one will have *earned* it by their works (Ephesians 2:8-10). We strive to do good works to demonstrate our appreciation of the love of Christ towards us. Any other

motive for "good works" will prove, on analysis, in many cases, to be for the praise of men or to ease an uneasy conscience.

ONLY GOD IS GOOD

When the Master says that none is "good" except God, He means that God is the source of total goodness. "O taste and see that the LORD is good," wrote the Psalmist (Psalm 34:8). "The LORD is good, for his steadfast love endures forever" said Jeremiah (Jer. 33:11), quoting the words which were to be sung by those bringing offerings into the house of the LORD.

The word "good" takes on an exalted meaning when applied to God. We forget this. Let us rediscover this rich truth, for it places the Almighty above all else, including even the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son. The Master recognized this, for He could say, "My father is greater than I" (John 14:28).

The apostle Paul recognized this, for he revealed that when Jesus has accomplished the next stage of God's purpose in reigning over the earth and bringing all things into subjection to Him, in the end even abolishing death, *He would then be subject to God*, for it was only through God's power that He would accomplish everything (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

How great is God! Jesus could say to His followers before He left the earth: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John 20:17). The Almighty was not only the Father of our Master — He was also His God! Jesus is great — but how much greater is God, the source of all goodness.

HUMAN PRAISE

What did the man actually say to provoke this reaction from our Lord? He called Him "Good Teacher." Jesus

may have perceived a lack of sincerity in the epithet "Good." Was it a form of flattering praise that Jesus saw in this style of greeting? Jesus recognized that all human leaders love to praise one another.

He had derided Israel's leaders with: "How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" (John 5:44). Probably the rabbis praised each other with various eulogies and greetings and our master sought to dissuade His would-be disciple from this vain habit.

Instead of praising one another with empty phrases let us continually give glory to God. Yet our service to God is not just a matter of words and worship. It is a matter of actions, and the word "good" in the Scripture more frequently applies to actions. The apostle Paul could write, "Hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good . . . Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:9, 21). Since the Almighty is the source of all goodness — and the example of goodness in action — it is clear that we must learn at the feet of Jesus and the apostles how we must put God's "goodness" into action in our lives.

Some do not see God as the example of all goodness; they are perplexed at the evil that comes on man, apparently from God. They forget the point that the apostle Paul made: "Behold the goodness and severity of God: towards them that fell severity, but towards thee God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness" (Romans 11:22, RV). Our God is a just God. He acts with justice towards all men. If men continue to be evil they cannot expect to always enjoy God's goodness. "As a man sows so shall he reap." The world today, and indeed in all generations,

but especially today, has little time for God. They should not complain, then, if God has little time for them.

WAS HIS QUESTION ANSWERED?

Did Jesus answer the question He was asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" It was asked with some urgency and commitment, for the man had run to Him and then knelt before Him (Mark 10:17). Jesus not only knew the man's mind, He knew his way of life. He said, "You know the commandments: Do not kill; Do not commit adultery; Do not steal; Do not bear false witness; Do not defraud; Honor your father and mother."

The man knew the commandments *and practiced them*. Jesus knew this. He drew the man out in his thinking; he did not want to come straight to the point of what the man still lacked. "Teacher," the man said, "all these have I observed from my youth." How many could say this today? Did the man say it boastfully? It does not appear that he did. He had knelt before Jesus, and then Jesus "looking upon him loved him" (verse 21) which would hardly be the case if he had made the remark boastfully. What did he lack? He must have sensed some insufficiency in his way of life to have run so urgently to ask the question.

THE ONE THING LACKING

Jesus tells him. "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (verse 21). *He only lacked one thing!* Giving away this world's goods and following Jesus go hand in hand together. You can't do one without the other. This man had "great possessions" and, because they were great

(continued on page 20)

The Babylon Connection Between Reincarnation and the Immortal Soul

*The idea of an
immortal soul sounds
simple . . . but it raises
a lot of questions.*



BY ELAINE POOLE

When I was growing up, popular religions taught that we have immortal souls which go to heaven or hell at our deaths. Television programs, poets, songwriters, and politicians commonly referred to this belief as an accepted fact.

Each time I asked about the origins of the idea of an "immortal soul" the answer was "Plato." But I wondered where Plato got his ideas. Plato was a pupil of Socrates (470-399 B.C.), who was himself the most famous follower of Pythagoras' teaching.

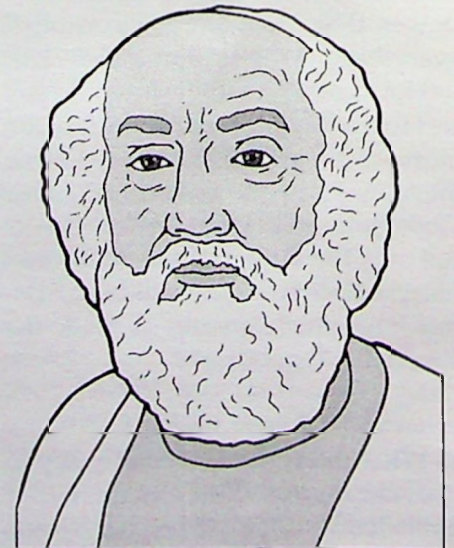
I located a book on the life of Pythagoras translated in 260 A.D. by Iamblichus. As a young Greek Pythagoras left for Egypt where he was initiated for 22 years in the mysteries of the gods of their temples, and he studied astronomy and geometry. He was captured by the soldiers of Cambyses and taken to Babylon, where he spent another 12 years studying music and cosmology. Other Babylonian beliefs involved reading the future from the viscera of birds, fetishes, healing by incantation, magic, and the transmigration of souls. At age 53 Pythagoras returned to Samos, Greece and started his school.

A colorful teacher, Socrates had a pug nose and bulging eyes. He taught the rich young men who hung around the marketplace and attended the spas. One of his pupils, Plato, in his youth wanted to be a playwright. As he grew older, he wrote of Socrates' conversations and social life. As I

read his writings I found that he was very unsure of his future life. Plato wrote so fancifully that Socrates lamented the number of lies written about him. Plato did not even pretend to have written fact.

By 100 A.D. the Roman Empire was in power and a revival of interest in Greek works was on. Roman paganism accepted many gods, and the appearance of "one more god" didn't bother them. But since the common social events included worship of these gods the Jews and Christians chose to meet privately. The Romans became suspicious of them, and some even considered them atheists for their refusal to worship the Roman gods. The persecution of Christians sprang from these roots.

In Alexandria, Egypt, certain students of Greek philosophy were converted to the "new way," while maintaining some of their earlier beliefs —



particularly including the immortality of human souls. They tried to defend their new faith against persecution by writing "apologies." These are the main writings which "wed" pagan beliefs to Christian beliefs, but their authors were philosophers, not theologians.

The idea of an immortal soul sounds simple — go to heaven or hell at death. If you're going to heaven, it's a great idea. But it raises a lot of questions. If immortal beings will live in heaven, why is the New Jerusalem coming down to earth? And why will God renew the earth just before the eternal age begins? Did Jesus go to heaven at His death? Did He go to heaven and return in three days? If He enjoyed heaven, why come back for 40 days? Why did He say He hadn't seen His father in heaven yet?

What happens to the wicked? If God is kind, would He torment someone forever? (If He is all-powerful, He could stop the torture.) How could an insubstantial soul be tortured? Is the life humans receive a gift or a punishment? Why did Jesus speak of throwing body parts into Gehenna?

Just what is Gehenna? It was a gorge southwest of Jerusalem, descending 600 feet, where the bodies of defeated armies were deposited on a gigantic pyre. In Jesus' day the smoldering heat there consumed putrefying garbage, infested with crawling maggots and worms. Those who were crucified were not considered worthy to be buried, and their bodies were thrown into Gehenna.

Practically all Protestant churches teach children: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish [Greek, *apolatai*] but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). What does perish mean? The dictionary says perish means "to die, be destroyed, to become extinct." And "extinct" means "to become as

though it had never been"! "Destroy" comes from the same Greek word as "perish" (*apollumi*). "Unless you reform, you will all in like manner be destroyed [perish, *apoleisthe*]" (Luke 13:3, 5).

Destroy is an active word; it means "to annihilate, crash, demolish, eradicate, exterminate, ruin, smash, shatter, or wreck." In grammatical terms, "perish" is the middle accusative form of the same root word, and means "a motion towards that condition." "Whose end will be destruction (*apoleia*), whose god is the stomach, and their glory in their shame; they who are engrossed with earthly things" (Phil. 3:19, *Emphatic Diaglott*).

"Corruption" refers to the same idea as "destroy" and "perish." Notice how it is translated as several different words:

Flesh and blood can never possess the kingdom of God, and the perishable [*phthora*, corruption] cannot possess immortality [*aphtharoi*, incorruption]... For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will rise immortal [*aphthortoi*, incorruptible], and we shall be changed. This perishable [*phtharton*, corruptible] being must be clothed with the imperishable [*aphtharsian*, incorruptible], and what is mortal must be clothed with immortality [*aphtharsian*, incorruption]... then the saying of Scripture will come true: "Death is swallowed up; victory is won!" (1 Cor. 15:50-54, NEB, *Emphatic Diaglott*).

"Perdition" means "total destruction." "The gate is wide that leads to perdition [*apoleian*, total destruction]" (Matt. 7:13). Jesus even implied that the wicked would be dead before they were thrown into Gehenna. "Do not fear those who kill the body and after that have nothing more they can

do. I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, *after he has killed*, has authority to cast into hell. Believe me, he is the one to fear" (Luke 12:5).

So God is loving and kind and all-powerful, and He does not torment people forever. He is not a monster. One of the reasons Darwin developed his theory of evolution was the problem of pain and eternal torment which he called a "damnable doctrine." He said his father, brother and almost all of his friends would be punished everlastingly. How many others have rejected Christianity because of this terrible concept? Shirley MacLaine is a recent example. In her book *Out on a Limb* she mentions her abhorrence of eternal torment. The New Age movement proclaims that its gods are not "evil." We must reach these people with the news that God is good. □



If you would like to study or reach other people with the truth, you might be interested in my book, *The Babylon Connection*. For one copy send \$12.00 to Emily Productions, Box 27735, Las Vegas, NV 89126. Bulk orders of 32 books (a box) @ \$6 = \$192. Internet address: <http://members.gnn.com/anitaod/emily.html>

A Personal Testimony

*Suffice it to say that
my community has
a strong tendency
toward legalism.*

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

BY TREVOR BRIERLY
The following was presented at the fifth annual Theological Conference, held in May of this year.

There are many good things about the Christadelphians. There are also some not-so-good things about the Christadelphians.

My purpose is not to bash the Christadelphians, nor to air our dirty laundry, nor to generalize, because my community is multifaceted. Suffice it to say that my community has a strong tendency toward legalism.

At a very early age I ran afoul of this legalism. I became a hyperlegalist and carried legalism to its insane extreme. I struggled with that insanity for many years. I had a lot of anger and depression, which is suppressed anger.

When I was about 22 or 23 I reached a crisis point. I decided I wanted to leave the Christadelphians. But there still remained a big question: Where would I go? I had no substantial disagreements with Christadelphian doctrine. But on the other hand, I did not want to go where they would teach what I knew was wrong. Was there some other group where I might feel comfortable both doctrinally and spiritually?

At the time I was blessed to be working at a seminary which was close enough to walk to. So I spent many hours in the seminary library researching my question. I found much that surprised me. Christadelphians told me we were the only ones with the truth. Everyone else was essentially in error. I found many groups that share some of our beliefs, and even some that share many of them.

It was through this search that I found the Church of God General Conference. In some ways I already knew about them, but did not know that I knew. My dad had been preparing exhortations (sermons) from Alva Huffer's *Systematic Theology* for years. When I was younger and we were in isolation in Seymour, Indiana, my mother used Sunday School materials from the CGGC in our "home Sunday School."

I also knew about another group of the Church of God of the Abrahamic faith, sometimes also known as Church of the Blessed Hope, located in Cleveland. I also found other groups: the Advent Christian Church, who share our beliefs in adventism, millennialism and conditional immortality. Many of their members remain still biblically unitarian, and I hope they continue to do so. I also found the Christian Millennial Church in Connecticut, whose statement of faith was remarkably similar to ours, not so much in words, but in beliefs and in length! I found other groups in the Russellite, Sacred Name, and Adventist movements with similar beliefs. Two Adventist groups in particular are interesting, the Church of God Seventh Day and the Second Advent Christian Church.

I also found other formerly Christadelphian groups such as the Wanganui Christian Restoration Center in New Zealand. Originally Christadelphian, they are now charismatic in a low-key way, and unlike Christadelphians, they welcome

Christians who are still just learning truth at the Lord's table. Recently on the Internet I discovered the House of the Lord, started by a former Christadelphian named Allon Maxwell. His group is also influenced by the Anabaptist movement.

I have also heard of other groups of believers, who sprang up spontaneously with seemingly little or no reference to Adventist, Russellite, or Christadelphian or other movements. These groups are located around the world, in Costa Rica, Korea, Guatemala, Malawi, Burma, and other places. They also searched the Scriptures with open minds and teachable hearts.

I began to realize that Christadelphians are part of something much bigger than themselves, something that spans both space and time. We are not the only manifestation of apostolic, biblical faith since the first century. Other Christadelphians such as Alan Eyre have done remarkable work researching the Brethren of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who maintained the faith of Abraham against horrible opposition. I call this the "Faith of Abraham movement." It goes all the way back to Abraham himself. We have his faith, his faith in Yeshua as our Messiah, his faith that believers will inherit the earth.

The various groups in the "Faith of Abraham" movement have their differences, to be sure, and it is important and good to discuss them in a loving Christ-like manner, to strengthen each other. However, I would like to encourage us to focus on the things we have in common.

What are these things? Here is a partial list:

- A love for the Bible. We are people who take the Bible seriously and refuse to dilute it with merely human philosophies and ideas. We believe that it is nothing less than the inspired Word of God, God speaking directly to us.
- We strive to obey God. We stress, or should stress, discipleship.

- We believe that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is not God the Son, or God Incarnate, but the Son of God, our Savior.
- We believe that Jesus will return to the earth as King and Lord. He will establish an everlasting Kingdom on the earth.
- We believe that our fate, as believers, is to inherit the earth, to become beings who do not die and do not sin in the Kingdom.

I am sure I've left out things. But I think these are the important things we have in common, on which we should concentrate. I desire very much to see the various groups in the "Faith of Abraham" movement work together with each other more. I am not so foolish as to believe there could ever be full unity amongst the various parts. But I do believe there are projects on which we can work together. We have much to learn from each other. I have benefitted and grown greatly from my association with the Church of God General Conference.

I would like to encourage you, if you believe yourself to be a member of the Faith of Abraham movement, to consider how you can connect with other Faith of Abraham groups and their members. If you believe these other parts to have brothers and sisters in Christ, then you should seek to meet with and come to know them better. Remember that the burden to reach out falls most heavily on those who are most tolerant and least afraid.

We have a wonderful message to bring to this age. Our message is different from what most people have heard and it is a message that is relevant and important. This planet will become a place of prosperity! This is what the Marxist and other utopian movements have been trying to accomplish by force for decades, if not for centuries. It is the hope of oppressed peoples everywhere.

Evangelism is not just for others, but to encourage us in the Body of Christ as well. When I have found others who

have found biblical truth on important issues, I am encouraged in my own walk. They do things differently and often better. I can learn from them. We have this same encouragement when we learn about those with our faith and hope in the sixteenth and first centuries, as well as our century in other parts of the world. We owe too much to those who have gone before and suffered for their faith to focus for long upon anything other than the great deal we have in common. This debt is owed even more greatly to Jesus Christ Himself, for what He suffered.

To end the story I began earlier: I have not left the Christadelphians. God let it be known to me that it is His will that I stay. They are my tribe, my people, and ultimately I fit in best there, despite my differences. God has made it known to me that it is precisely because of those differences that the Christadelphians need me. What we often find is that when change is needed in a group, it comes from the "rebels," the "loyal opposition." That is what I am: A "professional Christadelphian contrarian."

I am glad I did stay. Not more than a year after my decision to remain, I fell in love with the sister who was to become my beloved wife. We had known each other for more than five years. When I made peace with the Christadelphians, I believe God finally brought us together romantically. She too is the "loyal opposition" in her own quiet loving way, so we are quite well suited for each other!

I have my roots now, but I also have my objectivity. I am able to step back and detach with love when I need to, when things get rough with the Christadelphians. The Christadelphians are not *all* of God's people. We are part of a much larger picture in God's eyes. My relationship is with God first and I depend upon His grace for my salvation, not my doctrinal correctness! □

Malawi for the Third Time

In a country where marital infidelity runs at probably 90 to 95 percent the ethics of Jesus are essential.



BY ANTHONY BUZZARD

Anthony returned from his most recent trip to Africa in September, 1996. The work in Malawi began in 1992 when one of Anthony's *Who is Jesus?* booklets came into the possession of the Sakala family in Blantyre, Malawi.

The last of the four planes back from central Africa was a welcome relief. An almost empty cabin and, for the first time in 38 hours travel time, space to stretch out and sleep, as TWA whisked me back to Atlanta, dotted with western lights and all the civilization that we experience almost without being aware of it.

What a contrast is Malawi. At the end of this third visit (I went first in 1993 and again with Jim and Martha Mattison, my daughters Sarah and Claire in 1994, and now recently with Jim and Martha, and Joe and Rebecca Martin) it is clear that the Abrahamic tradition is firmly planted on African soil. From the records of the history of the Gospel in Africa it appears that not since the first century has the "Jewish" Abrahamic Gospel of Jesus been alive in the great continent of Africa. There have been many missionaries, but none, I venture to think, with a clear message about the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus (Acts 8:12).

This time we concentrated on teaching the teachers. This did not mean that there were not lots of others in attendance, notably the women and children whose infectious excitement for the Bible taught us so much. So did their singing which makes some of our western worship seem dull. Services were held three times a day for some 10 days — two or three hours in the morning, again in the afternoon and another long session in the evening.

A lot can be taught in this intensive setting. The tragic lack of jobs among many Malawians allows for an undivided attention to God's agenda, the affairs of the Kingdom of God. We saw the Message at work. How striking is the observation of Jesus that "when anyone hears the Gospel Message about the Kingdom and does not understand it, the devil comes and snatches the word away from their heart so that they may not believe it and be saved" (Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:12). This is power-packed theology and shows that Jesus did not speak a vague Gospel about "accepting Jesus" but a Kingdom-centered Message originating with the Father. This makes sense to our Malawian friends, surrounded as they are by an affluent Catholic Church and multiple Protestant groups, many Pentecostal.

Gathered in the extreme south in the Nasanje district were six leader/elders representing local congregations. We supplied them with notepads and pens, made sure that Bibles were available, and urged them to follow us through the Old Testament and the New as we gave them the overall sweep of God's Plan. Jim Mattison instilled knowledge of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. He also preached long on the need for the holy life and the importance of pastoral example. In a country where marital infidelity runs at probably 90-95 percent the ethics of Jesus are essential. Joe Martin gave outlines of all the books of the Bible and emphasized also the grace and the

truth of God's revelation in Jesus. Throughout, our stumbling efforts at pronouncing the Chichewa words for God, God's Son and the Kingdom, etc. produced laughter, but, we think, appreciation from our audiences. Communication was possible thanks to the services of three interpreters, Margaret, Steve, and Manex. Without these gifted Malawians the task of teaching would be impossible. In our second location, Mulanje, we directed our efforts towards the 24 leader/elders gathered with pens, notebooks and Bibles. Gatherings consisted of some 180 people.

Life without light and toilets is grueling for us from the West. This time we decided, because the dollar was strong against the Kwacha, to buy supplies of corned beef, tuna fish, bread and biscuits, so that we could spare Margaret Sakala the labor of cooking rice and potatoes for us. This allowed her to continue with the job of coordinating and organizing the roughly 2,500 members of the 40 Abrahamic congregations now spread through southern Malawi and neighboring western Mozambique.

Malawians have very little of the clutter of physical things which we take for granted. This frees them to concentrate on the things of the Kingdom. They joined in the singing of "Seek Ye First" and "From the Rising of the Sun" and delighted in the English words (they have nearly all studied some English at school). They supplied their own choirs to perform small-group special music, accompanied by homemade percussion, tins full of sand. We have captured these and the other highlights of our trip on video which we hope to show in many places.

Satan is active in Malawi. The local witch doctor is still available for consultation. AIDS kills many, from all strata of society. Religion is open

to appalling abuse in some cases. Some daring "Christian" leaders use 1 Corinthians 9:7 ("Who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?") as a pretext for sexually abusing the women of the congregation.

Our people in Malawi are actively engaged in evangelism. A special occasion presents itself for speaking the Truth of the Bible. When funerals are held in the local villages, sermons are preached in the home and at the grave side. Margaret is fearless in her proclamation that the "immortal soul" is a false concept. She announces the sleep of the dead and their resurrection at the future coming of Jesus. Many Catholics and Protestants are intrigued to hear these truths for the first time. Converts have been won this way. Sometimes there is opposition from churches.

Our ongoing plan is to continue to teach the teachers. There are nine young bright English speakers from the roughly 40 congregations with whom we hope to work, educating them in the Bible. Margaret will continue to translate material into Chichewa, adding to our existing list of some 20 items including a set of basic Bible lessons and "Words of Truth" (28 pages).

Jim and Martha Mattison have labored for two years now to build up the people of Malawi in the Abrahamic Faith. Jim has been a tireless correspondent with many Malawians. How grateful I am for their talents and dedication. Joe and Rebecca Martin who joined us on this year's trip were invaluable in so many ways.

Opportunities for speaking about things of God abound in Malawi. At the bus depot a crowd forms easily when the white man appears. Malawians are apparently honored by a visit from missionaries from the West. Matthew 5:5 ("Blessed are the

meek, for they are going to inherit the earth") often provided the opening salvo for presenting the Gospel and Acts 8:12 was enlightening for many. It seems quite natural to preach at bus stations, or anywhere else, in that African setting. Conversations were held with many others, including Jewish tourists, who were intrigued to know that there are Christians who believe in the One God of Israel. Conversation on the plane easily turned to the reason for our visit to Malawi. The idea that Jesus was a Jew and must be understood in His Jewish environment is intriguing to many who have never thought of such a thing.

It is a costly experience to travel to Africa both in terms of airfares (eight planes to get us there and back) and physically, sleeping on a two-inch mattress, purifying every drop of water, defending oneself against the Malaria-carrying mosquito, and visiting the outside "facilities" at night armed with a flashlight.

But it is so worthwhile, when you see excited Africans learning the Truth of the Gospel of the Kingdom, which one day will lead to rulership with Jesus in His coming Kingdom on earth.

Missions in Africa, or missions anywhere, is no mystery. You go. You announce the Kingdom of God. People respond and get baptized. Then begins the "long haul" of continued learning. To the young I would say, prepare yourself now so that you too can take the Message of Jesus to others. It is not that complicated: "Jesus welcomed the people and began talking about the Kingdom of God" (Luke 9:11). Paul did exactly the same: "For two whole years Paul welcomed all who came to him and preached the Kingdom of God and taught them about Jesus" (Acts 28:30, 31).

(continued on page 18)



Aiming Your Child Towards the Kingdom of God

by Margaret Sakala — Milonde, Malawi

Psalm 127:3-4 paints one of the most powerful portraits of parenting as revealed in the Bible. God bestows on parents the immense privilege of fashioning their children into faithful and responsible adults.

God created children to win in the battle of life. They were born to be successful through the energy and spirit of the Word of God — the Gospel of the Kingdom — in their hearts and minds. Tragically, many children have been programmed to lose, some by a form of child abuse, others simply by neglect.

If a parent fails to teach or aim his or her child towards a hunger for the Word of God, the Gospel, the child will seek to fill the gap by tapping into the influences of the world. These are readily available in many forms. To counteract the corrupting power of the present evil age God commanded parents like this:

And these words which I am commanding you today shall be on your heart, and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your houses and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and you rise up (Deut. 6:6-7).

How important it is that we take this command to heart. Keep your child on target by developing in him or her a hunger for the solid food of the Word of God, all the things pertaining to Jesus and the Kingdom (Acts 8:12). Proverbs

22:6 instructs us to train up a child in the way he should go. Don't keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful. Rather bring them up in the loving discipline that God approves. Use suggestion and advice, and discipline when necessary (Eph. 6:4). Let everyday situations become teaching times. Be open to the leading of the Spirit and encourage your child on the race towards the Kingdom of God on earth. Realize that the way to the Kingdom is narrow and few find it! So Jesus said.

Make it your practice to talk of the Message of Jesus at every opportunity. When you take a walk together use the time to appreciate the creation of God, the birds, the flowers, the trees, the clouds and the rivers.

Remember that the media is doing its very best to shape and form the thought of your child. The media is conscientious in its desire to make your child adopt liberal views about drugs, sex and violence. Don't let the video and the TV raise your child. Don't allow your children to spend the majority of their time in someone else's home. Children learn naturally by example. They will do what other children do and say what other children say.

What taste have you developed in your children? Do they have a taste for God's agenda or for the things of the rotten present world? If you aim your child as an archer would aim his arrow, you will not be ashamed. The joy of living in the coming Kingdom will bless them forever when Jesus comes back to rule in His Kingdom on earth. □

Malawi for the Third Time (continued from page 17)

The world, including the churches calling themselves Christian, is surprised when you preach the Gospel as Jesus preached it. Some may take offense. Others like Lydia in Acts 16 respond with enthusiasm and grasp the amazing plan of Restoration (Acts 3:21) which God is bringing about for our planet. The great commission of Matthew 24:14 still has to be accomplished. God must still be made known as the One God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Jesus as the Messiah.

The sleep I enjoyed for the first time in the 24 hours sitting on planes enabled me to appreciate all the more a phone call I received when I got home. A United Airlines pilot and former Catholic from Miami had been wondering for years whether anyone else on earth believed that the God of Jesus alone was the One God of the Bible. He was astonished to find that a Bible College had long been teaching this. I was happy to tell him that this central Truth is also alive and well in Malawi. Thank God for truth-seekers. □



Jesus Wants to Make Your Life Miserable!

by Tracy Savage — St. Petersburg, Russia

Many Christians must think that. Either that or we would give Jesus total Lordship of our lives.

Can you say that Jesus, the Messiah, has free and complete reign in your life? Is He alone Lord? Does He sit on the throne of your heart alone . . . or does He share this place with you? Who lives in you? This is a question we all must consider honestly. Many say, as I did, "Yes, of course Jesus lives in me. I asked Him into my heart when I heard Him knocking at the door. He is even first on the throne. He lives in me."

Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). "I" have been crucified. "I" no longer live. But "Christ" lives in me. When we can understand this, say this, and live this, we will experience unimaginable freedom.

So, what does this mean? We can compare it to the time when Jesus was sleeping in the boat with His disciples and a terrible storm came. They all began to panic, worry and cry out. If Jesus can sleep through the storms without worrying, we certainly can. Or do we think that God would have allowed Jesus to drown?! Jesus is in our boat. "Christ lives in me." If He truly lives in me, do I honestly think that God would allow some storm to capsize Jesus' boat? We then have two choices as to what we can do in the midst of a storm in our life — a storm that we cannot control. We can panic and worry as

the disciples did, not making matters better. Or we can sit back and take a nap as Jesus did, trusting the Father to look out for our best interests. Which option offers us peace? (See Matt. 6:27.)

Back to the question — does Jesus live in you alone, or does He share the house with you? Jesus stands at the door and knocks;

- option one: don't let Him in;
- option two: let Him in, but I still own the house;
- option three: let Him in and give Him first place;
- option four: let Him in and give Him complete ownership.

Which option have you chosen? Which option will you choose today?

It is obvious from seeing much strife in churches, few Christians walking in peace, and few committed to living in obedience to His Word, that few Christians have chosen option four. Not many have chosen the freedom God offers us in Christ. Only the teaching of God's spirit can reveal this freedom to us so that we can really understand its all-encompassing nature. But for God to reveal it to us, we must desire it and seek it.

Why do few people choose option number four? Why are we afraid of giving Jesus total control of our lives? Why do we hesitate to say, "Lord, it is not I who live, but YOU in me"? Why do we fail to say, "Lord, I am yours. What do you want?"? **DO WE HONESTLY THINK THAT JESUS**

WANTS TO MAKE OUR LIVES MISERABLE??? Not only does He want what is best for us, but He knows what is best for us. Do we think that once we give Jesus total reign God will give us all the dirty work that He doesn't like to do? God already gave Jesus the dirty work, so we don't have to worry.

Suppose your child came to you and said: "Dad, I trust you and know you love me. I entrust my life completely to you. What do you want me to do? I'll do whatever you say." How many of you would send him out in the rain without an umbrella? Or how many would send him into the cruelty of the world without proper protection? How many would say, "Finally! Go scrub the toilet, wash the car, shine my shoes!"? A truly loving and trustworthy parent would not throw all the dirty work on their child, and they *would* consider where their child's heart was when sending him to do a task. We can trust and obey because God is a Father of love. He not only loves us, but He loves His Son who lives in us.

When we give Jesus our "house," it is no longer ours. It is His responsibility. We can sit back and nap through the storms. We can trust Him that the house will not be destroyed. He most certainly is a better master than we could ever hope to be. Or do we think otherwise?

Experience the true freedom we can have in Christ. Get out of the house! □

Choice?

by Arthur Fletcher

The late-term abortion is the most atrocious example of liberal mean-spiritedness. It is a process which 80% of Americans abhor as infanticide. I wonder when in the biological process a woman chose to be a woman? Or when did she begin to alone create the miracle growing inside her? When did she consult with the new human being as to whether he/she wanted to be born? Is not freedom of choice really license of choice, since freedom involves responsibility? In reality then, freedom of choice is a specious concept.

I wonder why each Israelite woman looked forward eagerly to being the mother of the promised Messiah? Further, what if Mary had

refused to be the mother of the Savior? What choice did she have? Only one — the moral choice of bringing a new life into being. Like the Messiah, each one of us is the plan of God. The Lord told Jeremiah the prophet, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. Before you were born I set you apart. I appointed you as prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5).

The Psalmist declared, "For you created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, I know full well. My frame was not hidden from you. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed

body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (Ps. 139:13-16).

The Master called His followers "little children." "Little children, love one another" is a beautiful picture of human relations. I recall that when He was speaking, the disciples tried to restrain mothers from bringing their little ones to Him. He mildly rebuked them, saying, "Suffer [allow] little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven [God]" (Matt. 19:14). Is not abortion the worst rejection of a child, and is it not also forbidding them to enter the kingdom of humanity, and ultimately the Kingdom of God? □

Why Do You Call Me Good? (continued from page 11)

possessions and evidently a source of strength to him, "his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful" (verse 22).

He evidently trusted entirely in his riches; they were a barrier between himself and God. This barrier had to be removed. It has often been pointed out that when Paul wrote, "the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10) he did not say that *money itself* was the root of evil, only *the love of it*. While this is true, we must beware of deceiving ourselves. We must recognize the need to search our consciences as to whether there are material things we trust in and love that are a barrier to our total commitment to Christ. If

there are, we must thrust them out of our lives.

THIS IS LIFE ETERNAL

The man had asked, "What must I do?" We must not confuse this with "What must I believe?" Jesus had taught, "This is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). To know God, in the sense of comprehending His character, plan and purpose, and to know His Son, our Lord and Master, in the same way, is an essential basis of life eternal. It is a basis which helps to inspire us to *do* those things which are pleasing in His sight. Knowledge is power.

This brief study of this hard saying of Jesus has led us to uncover many important truths. The blind leaders of the blind do not perceive these truths. Even today we see their modern counterparts whose man-made creeds are totally inadequate to express Divine Truths. Indeed, in some cases they seem to run directly counter to the words of the Master we have been studying. We must all get back to the words of Scripture and let the voice of our Teacher challenge us today as it challenged those who first heard it. □

All quotations from the RSV unless otherwise noted.

Welcome to Church

by Susan Hogan/Albach, Knight-Ridder Newspapers

If you haven't been to worship lately, you may be in for a surprise. Many congregations are changing the ways they welcome visitors, adopting marketing techniques usually not associated with churches.

In some cases, they follow-up with candlelight dinners or home-delivered bread baskets. Or some may reserve the best parking spots for non-members attending worship.

Then there are the Wal-Mart-style greeters who stand at church doors welcoming Sunday "guests."

Why the changes?

Because newcomers generally size up churches in the first 30 seconds they walk in the door. If congregations can get them to return a second time, 85 percent usually become members.

That's according to Gary McIntosh, a California theologian who encourages churches to embrace customer service techniques used by businesses such as Wal-Mart.

"People no longer come to church simply because it's the right thing to do," said McIntosh, author of *The Exodus Principle*, a new book on church hospitality.

"Even when they do visit, well-worn methods of follow-up are not as effective in getting people to return, let alone become regular worshippers."

Katy and Mark Thielke were surprised by the steak dinner invitation they received after visiting the Church of the Harvest near Lexington, SC.

Within a week after attending the Church of the Harvest, they received a welcome letter and a phone call from the pastor. A few weeks later, the dinner invitation came.

"We try not to be pushy," said the Rev. Ken Jumper, the church's 42-year-old pastor. "Mainly, we're trying to create an atmosphere where people can explore their faith and build relationships."

McIntosh, who teaches the Talbot School of Theology in La Mirada, Calif., said churches across the country began offering dinners and bread baskets about

two years ago. He expects nearly half to be doing it in the next 10 years.

In the 1970s, visitors expected a pastor to stop by their homes after they'd attended Sunday worship, McIntosh said. But because of changing lifestyles, today they prefer a phone call or letter.

Church hospitality usually includes two phases: What happens on Sunday morning and the follow-up afterward.

Most churches now have greeters in place to welcome visitors. But some, such as First Baptist Church in Columbia, SC, have visitor centers where newcomers can pick up pamphlets but still remain anonymous.

"If there's a cardinal rule today, it's don't embarrass your guests," McIntosh said.

That means old methods of tracking visitors, such as pew registries and name tags, aren't usually as effective today. □

Submitted by Betty Ackels, Raymore, Missouri.

The Importance of Truth: What Did Jesus Say?

The word "truth" is found in the Gospels 105 times. Eighty of those times it is Jesus saying, "I tell you the truth." This is a pretty good indicator that truth is important to Jesus. He made this clear in His teachings. Following are some of these teachings, and a few comments.

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (Matthew 7:15).

"At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold" (Matthew 24:10-12).

"For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect — if that were possible. So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time" (Mark 13:22, 23).

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6).

"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free'" (John 8:31, 32).

What makes you a disciple of Jesus? What does it mean to hold to His teachings? What is it that sets you free? How important is truth to Jesus? We live in an

age when many proclaim the name of Jesus. The teachings are often varied and frequently contrast with one another. Following are four questions to be used in determining if a teacher or teaching is true or false:

1. Is there a *biblical* basis for the teaching?
2. Is the teaching based on just one or a few *unclear* passages?
3. Is the interpretation *consistent* with the rest of Scripture?
4. Does the teaching go *against* reason or logic? □

By Pastor John Railton
South Bend, Indiana

The Gift of the Magi

by O. Henry

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, the letters of "Dillingham" looked blurred, as though they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above

he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling — something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier glass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had

been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the Queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window someday to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her, rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mme. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade. "Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practiced hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della. Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed

metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation — as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value — the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends — a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what

could I do — oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for a moment. She had a habit of saying little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two — and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stepped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold it because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again — you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas!'

Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice — what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labor.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you — sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs on my head were numbered," she went on with a sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year — what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less.

(continued on page 24)

A STORY for Christmas

The Gift of the Magi (continued from page 23)

But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs — the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped for long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoiseshell, with jeweled rims — just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use

just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men — wonderfully wise men — who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of the house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi. □

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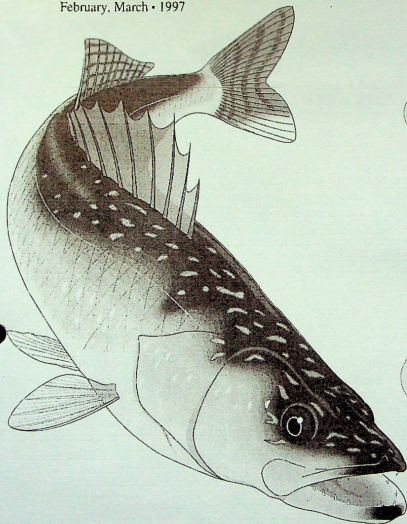
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The Restitution Herald

February, March • 1997

Volume 86, Number 3



"From now on
you'll be fishing for
men and women"

Luke 5:10, *The Message*, by Eugene Peterson



TRUTH



Keep on Feeding the Foolish Ox

Last Sunday I was feeling pretty good about myself. When I got up to preach I was "In the Zone," which means that everything was working. I even managed to keep the attention of the members of the junior high class (my toughest critics). I felt like what I did was really important, really relevant, really significant . . . for one brief moment I felt extremely good about myself and my preaching.

Well, the good Lord decided that it was time, once again, to make sure that the preacher got a good dose of humility to keep him from being "puffed up." The next night, we went out to dinner with our good friends, who also happen to be members of our church. After dinner we were visiting over a piece of king cake (a New Orleans tradition). Suddenly, their precocious nine-year-old daughter asked me, "Brother Jeff, do you have a job?" Now, as I recalled, she had been sitting in church the previous day when I "wowed" everyone with my dazzling sermon. I smiled and reminded her, "Why, yes, I'm the preacher." She got a puzzled look on her face. "You mean you get paid for preaching?" That left me a little flustered as I tried to explain the value of my job.

I spent the next few hours trying to think of all the clever things I should

have said and all of the biblical arguments I could use to justify my preacher's salary. As it turns out, I could only come up with two. In 1 Corinthians 1:21 Paul writes: "God decided, through the foolishness of our preaching, to save those who believe." Well, if Marshall McLuhan was correct and "the medium is the message," what does that say about the messengers? When it comes to preaching, in the eyes of the world, and those of children, what we preachers do seems pretty foolish.

Why should people pay us just to stand up for 30 minutes a week and talk about God, faith, hope, crucifixions and resurrections? It doesn't make a lot of sense. Perhaps that's why the apostle Paul felt the need to justify paying us preachers when he wrote in 1 Timothy 5:17-18 that those "elders who labor at preaching and teaching" are worthy of "double honor" (honor meaning financial support). He then gives a scriptural justification by quoting Deuteronomy 25:4: "Don't muzzle an ox while it is threshing." Now, an ox is a mindless, hard-working beast of burden, an emasculated bull. To thresh means "to beat the stems and husks of (grain or cereal plants) with a machine or flail to separate the grains or seeds from the straw." According to the Law, the ox was allowed to eat those

pieces of grain which fell to the ground while he was doing his work. Speaking as a preacher I must say that this is not a very flattering comparison, and I think it proves that despite evidence which might appear to the contrary, the apostle Paul did have a sense of humor.

Well, after my little study the best I can say is "We preachers may appear to be pretty foolish, but even a dumb ox needs to eat." I guess that's why churches go on paying us.

Humility is a requirement for an effective preacher, and as long as nine-year-olds continue to ask such penetrating questions, God will keep us humble. Thanks, Emily, for helping me put things in perspective.

This issue of THE RESTITUTION HERALD is filled with many excellent articles written by preachers, teachers and other honorable men and women engaged in the pursuit of truth and in helping you to deepen your relationship with God. And there's not a single ox among them. Enjoy and may God bless you as you sample the grain of their efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Fletcher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeff Fletcher

The Restitution Herald

THE RESTITUTION HERALD

VOLUME 86, NUMBER 3: FEBRUARY, MARCH 1997. ©1997.

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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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Loving God Is Hard

BY HARRY LLOYD

For most of my life, I haven't loved God. I accepted God. I prayed to God. I worshipped God. I wondered at God. I feared God. I thanked God. But loved God? No, I personally didn't truly love God. After acquiring a life-threatening cancer, I wanted desperately to have an intimate and personal love with God and His Son, as I perceived many other people did. I knew my soul was secure, but I wanted more.

My quest and search continues. I've found that a loving relationship with God is a journey and a process, not an arrival at a destination. In this search I've found some truths myself, and received help from others who seem to have a closer relationship to God than I do.

I'm convinced that God loves us with a passion we can't understand. It's beyond our ability to comprehend.

When we accept that we are valued and loved individually by God, regardless of what we have done, we begin to be able to reflect this love back to God and to others.

God's basic nature is love. I am able to accept His love, but because of my nature, I'm also unable to return it. I must learn to love, and I can only do this by asking Him to help me make it happen. God loves me just as I am, in spite of what I am.

It's easy to believe that God loves everyone, but it's hard to accept that He personally loves me.

▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

How can we feel God's love? We must seek it with a passion from the bottom of our hearts. Then it will be given to us as a gift, not as something we've earned.

It's easy to believe that God loves everyone, but it's hard to accept that He personally loves me — wretched me — with all my faults! How could He?

Loving sometimes isn't hard, but accepting that God loves us personally is hard.

God finds something in me to love. He loves me in spite of my weakness and sin. His love is unconditional.

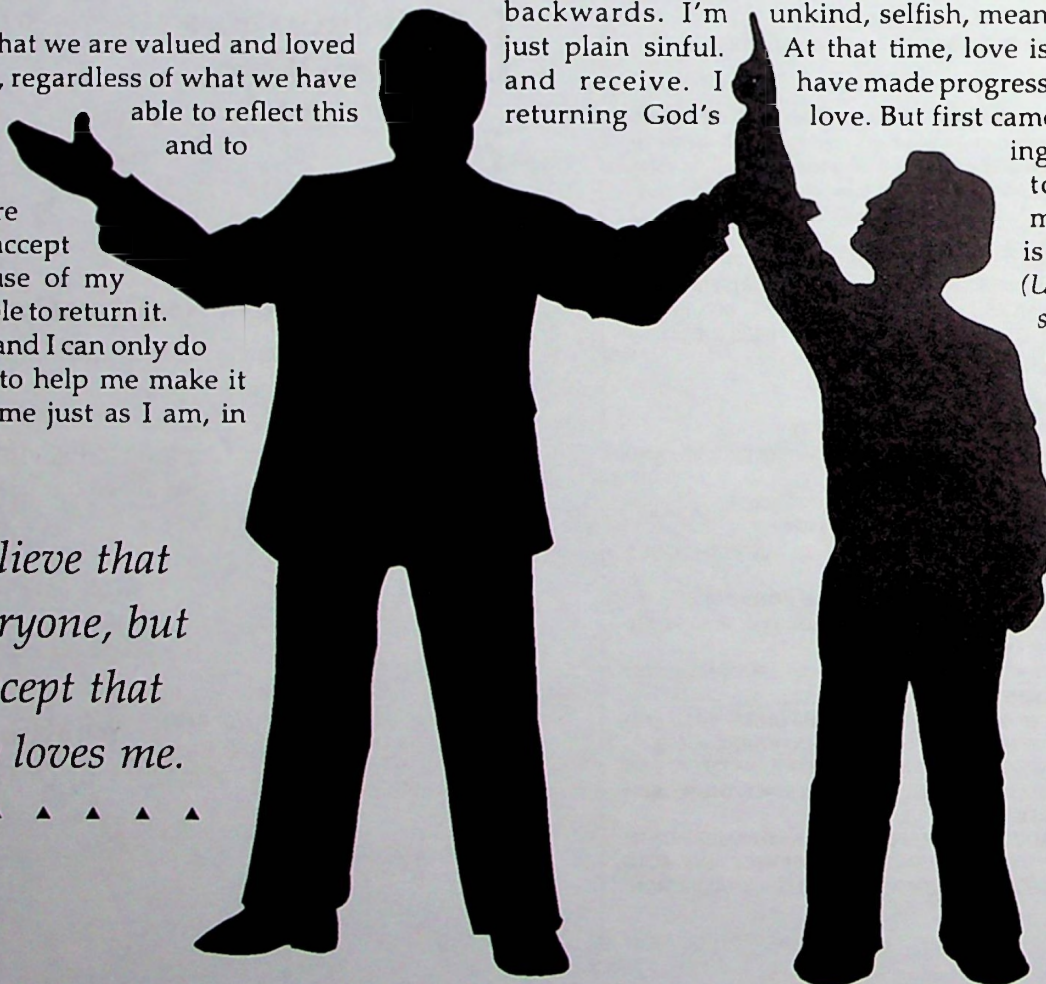
During my very best times, I can hear God's assurance — "I love you, I love you, I love you, and I always will."

Nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate us from God's love.

Sometimes in my feeble journey I stumble and go backwards. I'm unkind, selfish, mean-spirited, and just plain sinful. At that time, love is hard to give and receive. I have made progress in feeling and returning God's love. But first came my awaken-

ing and a desire to love. This man's journey is not over. □

(Used by permission from the author.)



Faith in the Living Water

BY HOLLIS PARTLOWE

In John 4 we find Jesus leaving Jerusalem, going northward to Galilee. On the way He passed through Samaria He came to a town called Sychar where Jacob's well was. There at the well He met a woman. Jesus asked her for a drink. She was shocked right down to her sandals. "You are a Jew," she said, "and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus replied, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." She responded: "Where can you get this living water?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water (in Jacob's well) will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst."

Water is used in Scripture to represent eternal life. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! . . . Come, without money and without cost" (Isa. 55:1). A thirsty man does not drain this river by quenching his thirst. There is an adequate supply for all who choose to drink.

Someone said: "Some Christians drink deeply at the fountain of God. Others just gargle." Perhaps the latter is more often true than we care to admit.

On the basis of God's limitless grace and Christ's sacrifice, sinners are urged to accept God's benefits. Christ's provision satisfies the needs

of the believer's heart. We accept it by faith.

Faith is a concept more easily demonstrated than defined. You are exercising faith when you fly in an airplane, visit a doctor, or drink from a fountain. Chances are you can't land the plane or diagnose your illness or analyze what you are swallowing. Yet you are confident in the strength and skill of someone who can. How much more reasonable to trust God who has infinite power and loves us with an everlasting love!

Faith never judges God by circumstances. If you get your theology from circumstances, you won't know from one day to another what is going on. Faith is the ability to accept from God whatever He gives us.

It is often supposed that when people stop believing in God, they believe in nothing. Alas, it is worse than that! When they stop believing in God, they believe in anything.

Four times Scripture says: "The just shall live by faith" (Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38; Rom. 1:17; Hab. 2:4). What is faith? "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Faith is the absence of sight. Moreover, without faith we cannot please God (v. 6). Then of course the next obvious question is, how does faith come? "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).

A prayer of an old mountain man might apply to all of us: "Lord, I don't pray for a faith that

would move yonder mountain. I can take enough dynamite and move it, if it needs moving. I pray, Lord, for enough faith to move me." That gets right down to where the rubber meets the road.

Real faith is not bringing God around to our way, but coming around to His way. Reach up as far as you can by faith and God will reach down the rest of the way. God does not say that we must be successful, but we must be faithful. Let's work on that. God sees tomorrow more clearly than we see yesterday. Let Him lead. Christ can satisfy us as He did the woman at the well. "Our Lord knows the way through the wilderness; all we have to do is follow." □



Ten Questions to Ask When Your Prayers Are Unanswered

BY HELEN GRACE LESCHEID

"I've prayed for several months that your husband would be healed, and you're telling me he's no better. What's going on?" The caller's voice sounded exasperated.

During the next four years I often wondered, myself, what was going on. Despite much earnest prayer from a great many people, my husband's depression deepened. Treatment after treatment failed. Everything that could go wrong, did. He was transferred from our local psychiatric hospital to the university hospital and then to the locked ward in our state mental hospital. The psychiatrist gave me very little hope for his recovery. "It could be another twenty years," he said.

During this difficult time, a lot of heart-searching led me to ask some serious questions about prayer and its purpose in our lives. Here are some of the answers I've received.

1. Is God listening?

When David, the poet-king, found himself in great difficulties that would not go away, he would ask, "Why, O LORD, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" (Ps. 10:1). It seemed to him that God wasn't doing anything on his behalf. "Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them [his enemies]!" (Ps. 74:11).

At other times, David saw life in a different way: "Does he who im-

planted the ear not hear?" (Ps. 94:9). How absurd! The One who created ears also understands our need to be heard. Then with faith renewed, he cried to the LORD afresh: "In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation" (Ps. 5:3). No matter how turbulent his emotions or circumstances, David knew one thing for certain: "The LORD will hear when I call to him" (Ps. 4:3).

How could David be so sure? He knew that it is the nature of a loving God to give full attention to the one He loves — at all times (Ps. 89:33).

2. Does God care?

Did David always feel positive about God's love for him? No. Crushed in spirit and in great anguish of soul, he blurted out, "Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? Has his unflinching love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?" (Ps. 77:7-9). During these unnerving times, David found a way of silencing his doubts: "I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago" (Ps. 77:11).

Likewise, when I've found it difficult to get a handle on God's love for me, my emotional equilibrium has often been restored by the act of remembering. I recount in prayer how God has worked in our family in times past. Sometimes, reading an

old journal helps me remember. Then I read some of His affirmations of love in the Bible and personalize them. For instance, Zephaniah 3:17 has become: "The LORD my God is with me, he is mighty to save. He takes great delight in me, he quiets me with his love, he rejoices over me with singing." As I remember God's love in the past and, by faith, affirm it for the present, my spirits are lifted.

3. Am I praying in God's will?

Often I have wondered how I should pray for my husband. Some people were so sure that healing was God's will for Bill, but I didn't have that assurance. In Hebrews 11 I read that "[some] women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured . . . stoned . . . sawed in two . . . put to death." But no matter what the outcome of their prayers, all "were commended for their faith" (Heb. 11:35-40).

So I looked to Scripture for guidance. I learned that God has called us to peace (Col. 3:15), freedom (Gal. 5:1, 13), holiness (1 Thess. 5:23), and to joy and thanksgiving (1 Thess. 5:16-18). Therefore, I could pray with confidence that God would drive out the fear, despair, and anger I saw in my husband and make his heart "a house of prayer" again.

4. How is timing involved in the answer?

Imagine with what urgency Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, sent these words to Jesus: "Lord, the

one whom you love is sick." Again and again Martha left Lazarus' sickbed for a glimpse of the little dust cloud that would signal Jesus was on the way. Of course He would hurry. She was that confident of His love for them.

But when Jesus "heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days" (Jn. 11:6). He purposely delayed. Was He callous toward their pain? Hardly. About a week later, Jesus stood at Lazarus' closed tomb. "When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled" (v. 33).

Jesus wept because He deeply identified with their grief.

Why then did He delay His coming? Because He wanted God's glory and the highest possible good for His friends. He had a far greater purpose in mind than to heal Lazarus of an illness: He wanted to raise him from the dead!

5. Is God answering this prayer in a different form than I would expect?

Four men brought their paralytic friend to Jesus to be healed (Mk. 2:1-12). Because of the crowds, they had to lower him through an opening in the roof. As Jesus turns to the paralytic lying on the mat, four eager faces peer down to see how Jesus will bring about this miracle. But to their surprise Jesus seems to ignore the obvious. "Son, your sins are forgiven," He says to the paralytic man (v. 5). I can almost hear one of the friends whisper, "We didn't carry him all these miles for that. Why doesn't Jesus just heal him?" But Jesus desired to heal the total man, who needed spiritual forgiveness as well as physical healing.

Many faithful people have carried my husband in prayer to Jesus every day. Could it be that God has been working on deeper needs than the obvious one for emotional healing?

In my memory I could still hear my husband, then robust and full of enthusiasm for life, praying, "Lord, make me a man of God." I, too, had prayed similar prayers. But developing godly character takes time. Since God allows freedom of choice, we often run into detours of self-will. Faulty thought patterns have to be torn down before we are ready to make decisions that lead to health and holiness. Was our suffering, then, this waiting upon God, a necessary ingredient in God's answer to our prayer for holiness? It was comforting to remember that even Jesus' experience on earth was made perfect (mature) through suffering (Heb. 2:10).

6. What does God want to accomplish in me?

For many years I thought prayer was a transaction between me and God: I'd go to Him with a specific need — financial help, or healing — and He'd give me what I asked for. Of course, each time God answered a specific prayer request, my faith in Him was strengthened.

But then I began to see another dimension to prayer: Prayer is not merely a transaction between God and man; prayer is an *interaction* between God and man.

How well David understood this! To him God was not just a Banker who cashes promissory notes, but a Father who wants to share the life of His child. "I pour out my complaint before him; before him I tell my trouble" (Ps. 142:2). Anger, revenge, disappointment, fear, confusion, wonder — whatever feelings sur-

— David felt free to express them to His Father in prayer. And as he did, a deep healing process began in Him: "When I said, 'My foot is slipping,' your love, O LORD, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul" (Ps. 94:18-19).

This has also been my experience. As I've repeatedly poured out my heart to God I've felt understood and loved. In a curious way, even though my prayers for my husband's deliverance and healing were not answered, my faith in God's character was strengthened.

7. Is there anything hindering my prayer?

Besides God's answer not coming within a definite time frame, there may be other reasons for delay. "Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear," Isaiah grieves for Israel. "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Is. 59:1-2). Paul exhorts husbands to respect their wives and treat them well, "so that nothing will hinder your prayers" (1 Pet. 3:7).

Sin hinders God's answers to prayer. We do well to examine our hearts and confess any wrongdoing or wrong way of thinking, repent of it, and make it right.

Satan himself can delay an answer to prayer. How grateful I am for each of our friends who have enlisted in spiritual warfare on our behalf. Repeatedly some friend has told me that our names have been mentioned in their prayer group. One of my friends has fasted every Monday noon for us, and at different times other women have joined her.

8. How is God working right now?

When we are engaged in earnest, specific prayer our focus tends to be narrow. We know what we want God to do — and the sooner the better. Of course, my husband's healing was uppermost in all of our minds. But when we saw no change, could we rightfully conclude that God wasn't doing anything for us? Of course not.

Often I have had to recount audibly or in writing what I saw God doing in our family. He has raised up faithful pray-ers on our behalf — often people I least expected, people who didn't even know us. He makes Himself known in practical ways — help when the car breaks down, when the plumbing leaks, or when the roof needs to be fixed.

When I prayed for a special friend for Bill in the hospital, God sent along a chaplain-in-training who was about his age and had children the same ages as ours.

God sees to it that my own needs are met. Just the fact that I'm sleeping soundly each night is a special gift of His goodness.

He's raised up good listeners who make themselves available to me. When I've needed a reprieve, He's nudged people to welcome me into their homes. But even when I'm not able to go away, He's let me feel His comforting presence. My Bible is full of dated verses, signifying the exact time when God used those words to comfort me.

It seems that acute suffering has made me more sensitive to joy. A special flower unfolding in my garden, seeing the wind caress the grass on our lawn stirs within me a deep joy that momentarily eclipses the pain.

And I see God working in our five children — deeply, specifically. For a parent, there is no greater joy.

9. Is God asking me to do something to answer this prayer?

When the Israelites, camped by the Red Sea, saw the Egyptian army in hot pursuit, they blamed Moses bitterly. Moses, in turn, cried to the Lord. "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground'" (Ex. 14:15-16).

Mental illness brings with it much conflicting advice from those who want to help, and sinister innuendoes from those who don't understand. It was easy for me to identify with Moses standing at the brink of the Red Sea with an army after him. As I'd cry out, "Save me, Lord. Save our family!" He'd answer me with these words: "Commit [yourself] to [your] faithful Creator and continue to do good" (1 Pet. 4:19). In other words, "Raise up the staff of your faith and move on with your life. Make life as normal as possible for your family: Keep your part-time job; don't sell the house; include your husband in family affairs; encourage the children to pursue their goals."

Later, when my husband was able to return home, it was immensely comforting to him to find our home in good order and the family functioning normally.

10. Can I trust God with the outcome?

That depends on what kind of a God He is. Does He have my best interests at heart? About a year into my husband's depression I was deeply troubled. So many things were going wrong. It seemed that Satan was determined to destroy our family.

"What's happening to us?" I asked a Christian counselor.

He didn't know, but then he asked, "Helen, do you ever wonder if God loves you?"

Surprised, I hesitated for a moment. Then I smiled, "No. God has convinced me that He loves me — even now."

"Then you're okay," he said. "You'll cope."

But what if my husband never gets well? What if he's moved to the long-term care unit of the state mental hospital? What if the doctor is right and it takes another twenty years before there's a significant change?

As these questions surfaced, I felt a quiet assurance. Either way, we would be cared for. It's impossible for God to be negligent or unkind: "The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in Him" (Ps. 92:15). "Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life" (Ps. 23:6).

Four years ago, when our friend called and wanted some concrete evidence that God was answering his prayers for us, I couldn't give him any real assurance. There were no definite signs of healing then. But now God's appointed time to show favor has come (Ps. 102:13). Despite the doctor's gloomy prognosis, my husband was discharged from the state mental hospital on July 10, 1990. By God's grace, each one of my family has been able to make the necessary adjustments, and today my husband functions well in our family and in a full-time job.

What's going on when prayers are unanswered? So much more than we could ever imagine. □

"Absent from the Body"?

A Study of 2 Corinthians 5:6

BY DONALD BUMGARNER

"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8).

The above quoted passage of Scripture is one of the most popular proof-texts used by orthodox Christianity in support of the heaven-when-you-die doctrine. To be "absent from the body" is thought to mean that the "soul" part of man separates from the body at death, and carries on a conscious existence elsewhere. But is this the idea the apostle Paul was attempting to convey here?

Today, the most popular method of Bible interpretation is called "proof-texting." This, it has been said, is the act of picking out small, isolated, and, at times, obscure passages of Scripture and stringing them together as evidence of the doctrine they supposedly teach. However, proof-texting has never been a very healthy way to substantiate biblical truth because the context is rarely, if at all, considered. It appears that orthodox Christianity's haphazard attempt to prove its doctrine of heaven at death has forced the use of the proof-texting method. When the *context* of 2 Corinthians 5:8 is read and considered, we will see that the traditional interpretation of this verse is quite different from what Paul is *really* writing about!

Was Paul writing about disembodied souls here? Hardly so. Rather, he was writing about the *resurrection* and *glorification* of believers! Throughout his writings we see that Paul's ultimate desire and hope was either resurrection (if he were to die) or transformation from mortal to immortal at *Christ's second coming*. For example, we read in Philippians 3:11-12, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." And in Titus 2:13 Paul writes that he was "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Clearly, Paul looked forward to Christ's return!

Let us now examine 2 Corinthians 5:8 in the light of its *context*. We start at 2 Corinthians 5:1:

For we know that if our *earthly house* of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that *mortality might be swallowed up of life*. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

There are several things that must be pointed out in these verses (it would be more beneficial for the reader if he or she were to turn to 2 Corinthians 5:1-8 while going through this article). First of all, Paul speaks of "our earthly house" in verse one. This is, no doubt, symbolic of the mortal, human body. Paul says, "If our house of this tabernacle [that is, our mortal body] were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Paul here contrasts the earthly, mortal body with the heavenly, immortal body, *which will be given at Christ's return*.

In verse four we see a very important link with 1 Corinthians chapter 15, that chapter in the Bible which has commonly been called the "Resurrection Chapter." Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:4, "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that *mortality might be swallowed up of life*." We now read in 1 Corinthians

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15:54, where Paul is speaking of Christ's return and the resurrection:

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, *death is swallowed up in victory.*

It is obvious that Paul is writing about the same thing in these two verses: *resurrection!* So then, what did Paul mean in 2 Corinthians 5:8? In the seven verses just preceding this one verse, he wrote of the immortal body, the body every believer will receive when Jesus comes from heaven to the earth, and mortality being swallowed up of life. He must, therefore, be speaking of the self-same thing in verse eight!

Paul desired to be "absent from the body," that is, the *mortal body* — and be "present with the Lord," that is, in his *immortal body*. He wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:6, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." What "body" is he speaking of here? The mortal body, which will be exchanged for the immortal body at Christ's return, of course. It will be at this time, *and not before*, when every believer shall be "present with the Lord."

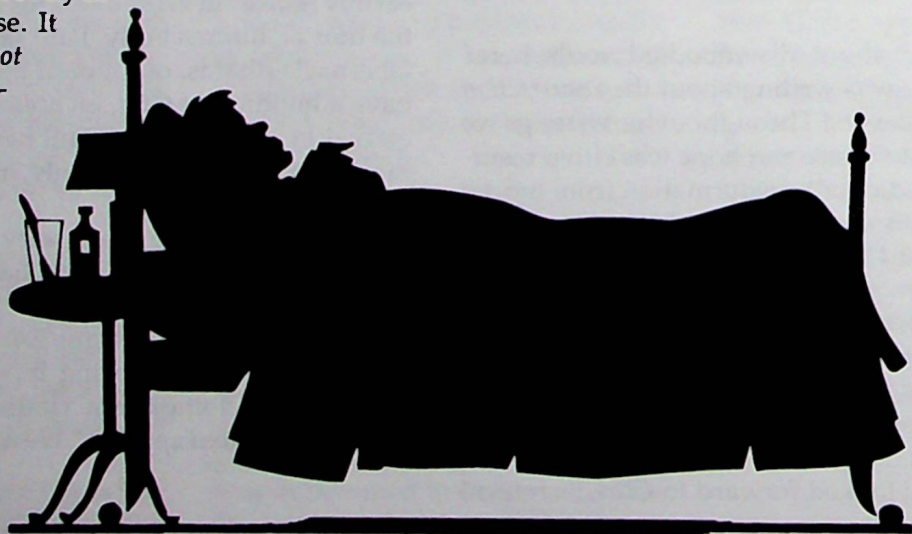
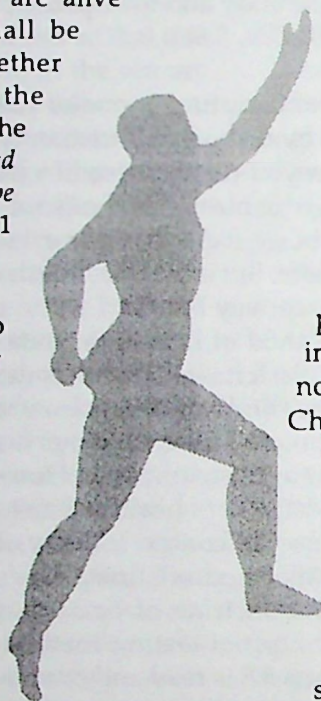
For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall 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* (1 Thess. 4:15-17).

In Paul's view, no believer, dead or alive, will be present with the Lord until His second coming and the mortal body's subsequent change to immortal. In fact, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 would make no sense at

all unless this were the case; for, if the believer goes to heaven immediately at death, what sense can we make of Paul's statement that, upon Christ's return, "so shall we ever be with the Lord"? The Greek word that is translated as "so" in this passage literally means "by such means." Therefore, "by such means" of the second coming shall we ever be with the Lord. This blatantly contradicts the idea that, by the means of *death*, we shall be with the Lord!

A thorough examination of the context of 2 Corinthians 5:8 shows that Paul desired to be "absent" from the mortal body and present with the Lord in the immortal body. Paul's hope was not disembodiment at death but Christ's return! Orthodox Christianity has obscured this wonderful truth and hope for many thousands of churchgoers by its doctrine of heaven-going at death. We who know the truth ought daily to strive more to show others the truth of the

"power of [Jesus'] resurrection" (Phil. 3:10). When we obscure this point we obscure all hope for life in the future Kingdom of God on earth. □



God Is One Person

The word "good" takes on an exalted meaning when applied to God.



BY MARK MATTISON

According to the Bible, there is only one God. The Old Testament frequently affirms that God is one (cf. Deut. 6:4). I believe the one God of the Old Testament is identified in the New Testament as the Father and the Father alone. No passage of Scripture teaches that the one God is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are co-equal, co-eternal persons in one God. In fact, this theory is refuted by the very language of the New Testament itself.

God and Jesus are Distinct

Paul prefaced each of his letters with a formula that carefully distinguishes between "God the Father" and "our Lord Jesus Christ."¹ Not only is the Father God (Phil. 4:20); the Father is the *only* God ("one God and Father of all," Eph. 4:6). This Father is the God of Jesus Christ. "We always thank God," Paul writes, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Col. 1:3; cp. Eph. 1:17). There is one God, the Father, and this God is distinct from Jesus, His Son.

This observation is not new. In 1531, Michael Servetus wrote: "For that only the Father is called God by nature is plainly enough shown by Scripture, which says, God and Christ, Christ and God. It so joins them as though Christ were a being distinct from God."²

Servetus went on to quote (among other verses) 1 Corinthians 8:6, which states that "there is but one God, the Father . . . and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ." Similarly, 1 Timothy

2:5 states that "there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." God and Jesus are two separate beings.

Jesus Himself referred to the Father as His God. In John 20:17, He instructed Mary Magdalene to tell His disciples that "I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." In John 17:3, Jesus said in prayer to God: "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the *only true God*, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." Jesus carefully distinguished between the only true God and Himself.

This distinction is clear on nearly every page of Scripture. The most famous verse of the Bible proclaims it: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16). Notice what that verse does *not* say. It does *not* say that "God so loved the world that he went down into it"; nor does it say that "God so loved the world that he sent himself." It does not even say that "God the Father sent God the Son" or that "the Father, who is God, sent the Son, who is also God." There are two persons in this verse: God and Jesus. God is the one who sends, and Jesus is the one who is sent. God is one person; Jesus is another.

Not only is God distinct from Jesus; He is superior to Jesus in rank. Jesus said "the Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). Paul wrote: "For he 'has put everything under his feet.' Now when it says that 'everything' has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, (continued on page 12)

who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:27, 28). Can these verses be reconciled with the teaching that the Son is co-equal with the Father? I do not believe they can.

Jesus' human experience differentiates Him from God. "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). God, on the other hand, possessed wisdom already (Prov. 8). Jesus "learned obedience from what he suffered" and was "made perfect" (Heb. 5:8, 9);³ God was already perfect (Matt. 5:48). Jesus was tempted in the wilderness and died on the cross; God cannot be tempted (Jas. 1:13) and cannot die (1 Tim. 6:16). Jesus "became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs" (Heb. 1:4); God was superior to the angels already and has "inherited" nothing. The Father, and the Father alone, is God.

The Son of God

If only one person is God — and that one person is the Father — then who is Jesus? Again the answer is clear from Scripture. Jesus is God's Messiah, the Son of God. This was Peter's confession of faith (Matt. 16:16). The Gospel of John was "written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31). Jesus everywhere claimed to be the Son of God, but neither He nor the writers of the New Testament proclaimed Him to be God Almighty. "If the New Testament writers believed it vital that the faithful should confess Jesus as 'God,'" G. H. Boobyer asks, "is the almost complete absence of just this form of confession in the New Testament explicable?"⁴

On rare occasions Jesus is called "God" in a secondary sense as a rep-

resentative of God, such as in John's Gospel (20:28). But "it is a misunderstanding to believe that the Gospel of John makes Jesus into God, or identical with God," writes Jacob Jervell. "Jesus is not God but God's representative, and, as such, so completely and totally acts on God's behalf that he stands in God's stead before the world."⁵

This is what Jesus meant when He stated that "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). He meant that He and the Father were united in purpose (cp. 17:11). His enemies prepared to stone Him, accusing Him of "blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God" (10:33). Many Bible students stop at that verse and assert that Jesus' enemies were correct. If we read on, however, we see that Jesus defined His ministry rather in terms of Sonship and divine representation: "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'?"⁶ If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came — and the Scripture cannot be broken — what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?" (10:34-36). Astonished at Jesus' skillful handling of the Scriptures and enmeshed in unbelief, Jesus' enemies were outraged (v. 39). As God's agent, Jesus functions as God, but He is not God Himself.

Nor is the Son "eternal" as is commonly taught. He has risen from the dead and conquered death (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20-26, 57); He is now immortal. But that immortality was given to Him at His resurrection. His existence does not extend into eternity past; He was created at a particular point in time.

Luke 1:35 explains the origin of the Son: "The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will over-

shadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'" Notice the cause-and-effect relationship here: Mary's child is the Son of God because of the descent of the Spirit, not because His Sonship extends into eternity past. Raymond Brown writes that "the child is totally God's work—a new creation."⁷ James D. G. Dunn adds that "it is a begetting, a becoming which is in view, the coming into existence of one who will be called, and will in fact be the Son of God, not the transition of a preexistent being to become the soul of a human baby or the metamorphosis of a divine being into a human fetus."⁸

The doctrines of the preexistence and deity of Christ are conspicuously absent from the early church's sermons as recorded in Acts. The apostles' biographical sketches of Christ's life (as in Matthew, Mark, and Luke) begin with His earthly ministry. "Jesus of Nazareth was a man" through whom God worked miracles and whom God raised from the dead (Acts 2:22ff; cf. also 10:36-43). Luke recorded no apostolic sermon which began "God came down from heaven and was born as man."

The Holy Spirit

What of the Holy Spirit, the alleged "third person" of the Trinity? The New Testament nowhere implies that the Spirit is a divine person distinct from God and Jesus.

Unlike God and Jesus, the Spirit has no name. Nor does the Spirit get "equal time" on the pages of Scripture (cf. note 1), which is strange if the Spirit is a separate, co-equal person.

Matthew 11:27 states that "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son

(continued on page 15)

Faith, Works and Doctrine

The whole Bible is a teaching and therefore a doctrinal book.

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BY ANTHONY BUZZARD

My purpose in this short article is to bring some clarity to the popular discussion about how we are to be saved. The use of certain "buzzwords" tends to cloud otherwise simple issues. "Doctrine" is often thought of today as a bad word. But the word really means nothing else than "teaching." If "teaching" is a bad thing, then Jesus was at fault when He told the church to go and "teach" (Matt. 28:19, 20). "Doctrine" is therefore a most biblical concept. The whole Bible is a teaching and therefore a doctrinal book. One has only to look up the scores of references to "preaching and teaching" (these two words are not clearly distinguished in meaning in the NT) to see that without such doctrinal activities there would be no Christian faith.

"Heresy" in the NT is simply false teaching, which causes a division in the united church. Peter says "There will be *false teachers* among you who bring in destructive *heresies*" (2 Pet. 2:1). When Jesus said "Beware of false prophets" (Matt. 7:15), He could just as well have said, "Beware of those who teach falsehood or heresy."

It is popular today to decry "proof-texting." Usually this actually means, "I don't like the way you are using the texts of Scripture to prove your point." Anyone who teaches from the Bible uses texts to prove his assertions. The Bible writers did it all the time. Look for example at Hebrews 1 where a whole lot of "proof-texts" are used to support an argument about the role of Christ.

It is also popular today to say that the early Christians had very little systematized doctrine. Scholars recognize this to be untrue. Paul speaks about "the outline" of sound words which Timothy was to retain. This word "outline" means "standard," "form" or "shape." It suggests a system. It is hard to see how any unified system of teaching can proceed if there is no recognized standard. When the Bible writers speak of "knowing the truth," or "coming to a knowledge of the truth," they obviously have a certain corpus of Christian information and teaching in mind.

We sometimes hear today that "propositional" theology is a bad thing. The cry is for "heart knowledge," not "head knowledge." The distinction between head and heart reflects the vocabulary of our western world, but not that of the Bible, where the heart is often a synonym for what we call the mind. All propositions in the Bible are addressed to the whole person. Belief and faith are inevitably based on some propositions to be believed. Believing propositions inevitably involves the intellect (often another "dirty" word in the contemporary discussion). But Jesus' purpose was to bring us "an *understanding*" so that we may know God (1 John 5:20). No wonder Jesus rejoiced that the disciples were those to whom "the *knowledge* of the open secrets of the Kingdom of God" had been given (Matt. 13:11).

We often hear that "works" play no part in salvation. This statement

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contradicts what James said: "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone" (James 2:24). James was an immensely important person in the early church. Having known Jesus as his half-brother he was well placed to speak for the Lord. Jesus taught that failure to use one's talent for Christ results in exclusion from salvation (Matt. 25:25-30). Notice that it was Christian talent which went unused. Insofar as the use of talent is "work," it follows that without such work you cannot be saved. Paul also said that failure to measure up to certain standards results in exclusion from salvation (1 Cor. 6:9; Eph. 5:5; Gal. 5:21). It is by "patient continuance in well-doing" that we will enter the Kingdom of God (Rom. 2:7). Doing well certainly implies work. It is by grace that we are empowered to do work for God.

I suspect that a lot of the confusion in the contemporary debate stems from a confusion of biblical dogmas and post-biblical dogmas. By dogma I mean a firm basic creedal statement. The Bible is full of dogma in this sense. When Peter confessed Jesus as the Messiah, it was on this confessional, doctrinal statement that Jesus said He would found His church (Matt. 16:16).

In post-biblical times a lot of false dogmas were introduced which were not based on the Bible. "The doctrine of the Trinity," says the *Oxford Companion to the Bible* (1993) "cannot be clearly detected in the canon of Scripture." The idea that man is immortal and survives as a disembodied soul at death is another unbiblical dogma, often thought to be Christian, while it is actually Platonic and philosophical in origin. The teaching that the church is to be led by a single "monarchical" bishop/pastor, rather than a plurality of experienced "elders/"

pastors" is also not found in Scripture. It dates, along with many other "dogmas," from the second century.

Christians cannot shirk the responsibility of believing the right "doctrines." The alternative to believing true teachings is believing false ones. The mind cannot be a vacuum. Paul knew well that creed leads to conduct. Creed is very important and is integrally related to the right Christian walk. Paul believed that failure to believe Truth was the same as unrighteousness and wickedness (2 Thess. 2:12). How important, then, is Truth?

A good place to start in the quest for Truth and true teaching is the teaching of Jesus Himself. The "constitution" of the New Testament church goes back to Jesus and the traditions inherited from Him (Heb. 2:3; 1 Tim. 6:3). Jesus has the final word in the debate about what we should do to be true disciples. He began by commanding repentance and belief in the Gospel about the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14, 15). This was an urgent call for a wholehearted response to a proposition which demanded intelligent belief and action. Jesus did not call for a vague change of heart in regard to certain sins. He called for belief in a specific Gospel Message about the Kingdom of God.

This pattern of preaching was carefully followed by the New Testament church. They had a well-recognized pattern of instruction (not steamrollered into a written code which had to be followed like a rule book). The basis of New Testament teaching is summarized in a form which some scholars recognize as an early creed. "When they believed Philip as he proclaimed the Gospel about the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, both men and women"

(Acts 8:12). Baptism in water was of course an essential part of the pattern of apostolic teaching. It was commanded by Jesus and, following Him, by Peter (Matt. 28:19; Acts 10:48). After the Gentiles received the gift of the spirit no one was able to stand in God's way, so Peter proceeded to baptize them as a sign of their membership in the body of Christ (Acts 11:17).

It is well for us to remember that evangelism as done by Paul involved a lot of "proof-texting," the use of Scripture to explain, even argue the faith. Note a typical example of what Paul did in Rome for two years. Paul "solemnly testified about the Kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and the Prophets from morning till evening. And some were won over to his point of view, but others *would not believe*" (Acts 28:23, 24). This tells us what it means to believe: to be won over to the teaching of Jesus and the apostles about the Kingdom of God.

Notice what an excellent model of service Paul presents. He followed his master the Lord Jesus: "Jesus welcomed them and began speaking about the Kingdom of God" (Luke 9:11). "Paul welcomed all who came to him, preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 28:31).

Faith and obedience are closely linked in the Bible. The church's marching orders are quite clear. We are to take "everything that Jesus taught" the disciples and, like them, go into all the world "teaching and baptizing" (Matt. 28:19, 20). This is how a relationship of intimacy is built with Jesus. It is by doing what He commands. Sometimes it seems that Christians are looking for a problem-solving revival when what is really

needed is believing and doing what God has already commanded. Do we have to be constantly looking for what God desires to be done, when He has already told us what to do? "Go and make disciples." This implies a major orientation outwards from the church, not just maintaining the status quo within the church.

We are living in times when the "Word of the gospel" as a direct statement from God is being questioned

just as the "Word of God" was questioned in the Garden of Eden. People sometimes intimate that they would rather have an experience than hear about the Word. But hearing and doing the Word of God is still the will of Jesus as it always was. Genuine relationship with Jesus is built on careful listening to His Word and performing it. The rewards are great: "If you abide in me and my teachings [=doctrines, summarized under the gospel

about the Kingdom] abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it will be done for you" (John 15:7).

Who can say that "doctrine" is unimportant? The teachings of Jesus are the lifeline of the Christian, the only means of relating to Jesus. The question is, are we faithfully teaching the right teachings, those which originated with Jesus and His preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom (Luke 4:43, etc.)? □

God Is One Person (continued from page 12)

chooses to reveal him." Some Polish Christians in the seventeenth century asked a very good question: Where does this leave the Holy Spirit? "If the Holy Spirit were a divine person, the Father would not alone know the Son and the Son alone know the Father. The Holy Spirit also, without a revelation from anyone, would know both."⁹

The Holy Spirit is God, but it is not a person separate from God. It is the presence and power of God Himself. "Where can I go from your Spirit?" the psalmist asks. "Where can I flee from your presence?" (Psalm 139:7). Clearly God's Spirit is synonymous with His presence.

The Spirit is also the presence of Christ after His resurrection. In John 14:16,17, Jesus told His disciples He would ask the Father to send "another Counselor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth." Then He said that "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (v. 18; cp. Matt. 28:20). Lastly, He said that "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (v. 23). The

indwelling of God's Spirit is the indwelling of the Father and the Son.

The Father, the Son, and the Spirit

This brings us to an important point. The Bible does talk about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 28:19). I very much believe in them. I believe that God, the Father, is fully revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ, and that they dwell in us through the Spirit. There is clearly a "threeness" here. However, the Bible does not say that these three are one God, or that the one God includes these three as co-equal, co-eternal persons. □

¹ Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:1, 3; Eph. 1:2, 3; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1, 2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Philem. 1:3. Notice also the conspicuous absence of the Holy Spirit.

² *On the Errors of the Trinity*, p. 12.

³ Although He was sinless (Heb. 4:15), Jesus had to be tested and tried and had to reach a state of completion so He could "become the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (5:9; cf. 2:10).

⁴ "Jesus as 'Theos' in the New Testament," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. 50, p. 253.

⁵ *Jesus in the Gospel of John*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984, p. 21.

⁶ Psalm 82:6. The reference is to the judges of Israel. They were "gods" in the sense that "the word of God came" to them and they spoke as God's representatives. If a ruler of Israel could be called "god," how much more may we say this of Jesus, the supernaturally conceived Messiah of God?

⁷ *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke*, Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1977, p. 314; cf. also pp. 290, 291.

⁸ *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980, p. 51.

⁹ Quoted in "The Racovian Catechism and the Holy Spirit," *Wisdom & Power*, November/December 1993, Vol. 7, No. 3, p. 7.

Ten Reasons We Need Those Great Hymns

BY BILL O'CONNOR

In recent years worship and praise choruses seem to be replacing old hymns. The idea isn't all bad. Many worship services need greater spontaneity, depth of emotion, and congregational involvement. Praise and worship choruses help to meet this need. But should this entirely displace the singing of traditional hymns? I think not. Here are 10 reasons to keep singing hymns even as we sing contemporary songs.

1. *The great hymns keep us in touch with our Christian heritage.* "A Mighty Fortress" takes us back to the Reformation and allows us to hear the words of Martin Luther. "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" exposes us to the music of Beethoven and lets us revel in the melodic mastery of one of the great composers of church history. The hymns of Charles Wesley immerse us in the spirit of the Wesleyan revival. Depending on our denominational heritage, the hymns we sing remind us of our founders, our history, and our doctrinal distinctives. Without the great hymns we would lose touch with our past.

2. *The great hymns expose us to some of the greatest music ever written.* "How Great Thou Art" comes from a Swedish folk melody. "Be Still, My Soul" is Jean Sibelius' "Finlandia." Our hymns set before us music from the centuries. Some go back as many as 800 or more years, while others date from the turn of the century, and still others (in the newest hymnals) come

from the present decade. With all their advantages, many choruses lack that rich, broad musical variety and heritage.

3. *The great hymns expose us to superb poetry, with the most beautiful words ever penned.* Consider the words of Katharina von Schlegel from "Be Still, My Soul":

*Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side.
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to thy God to order and provide.
In every change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: the best thy heav'nly
Friend
Thro' thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*

*Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as He has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing
shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at
last.*

*Be still, my soul: the waves and winds
still know
His voice who ruled them while He
dwelt below.*

*Be still, my soul: the hour is hast'ning
on
When we shall be forever with the Lord,
When disappointment, grief, and fear
are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys re-
stored.*

*Be still, my soul: when change and tears
are past,
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.*

4. *The great hymns give our worship a sense of majesty and beauty.* The great cathedrals were built to convey a sense of the greatness and majesty of God. Their vaulted ceilings were designed to direct our attention upward. Often their acoustics gave one the feeling of being part of a heavenly choir. Many of the early hymns were written to complement the sublime sense inspired by those cathedrals.

Though we seldom build cathedrals anymore, and though our worship has become more personal and intimate, there is still a place for being deeply moved by our Creator's majesty. Though some choruses achieve this goal admirably — most notably Jack Hayford's "Majesty" — the hymns usually do it better. Who can ever forget, having sung it even once, the sense of God's greatness evoked by such hymns as "How Great Thou Art," or the deep appreciation summoned by "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"?

5. *The great hymns embed Christian truths in our minds and hearts.* Some say they can't memorize; as a result they seldom attempt to commit God's Word in their hearts. Without our even realizing it, the hymns do that committing for us. Christians who couldn't quote 10 verses of Scripture could easily sing dozens of hymns that are based on or directly drawn out of Scripture. There are any number of Christian concepts tucked away in our minds ready to be pulled out when we need them, and they were

put there by the repeated singing of the great hymns. Thanks to our hymns we know that God is faithful, that He provides a firm foundation for our lives, that we should "Take Time to Be Holy," and that God's love will not let us go. Our hymns teach new truth every time we sing them.

6. *Singing great hymns is one of the most effective ways the church has of teaching Christian doctrine.* Systematic theology is often communicated in a dull, dry way. If you announce that you're going to preach a series of sermons on the attributes of God, most people will yawn and quietly slip into a silent ho-hum mode. If you conceive and build a well-implemented thematic service around each of the attributes of God and let the great hymns do the teaching, people will learn about God without knowing they're being exposed to systematic theology. Just think of the theology that would be taught by a course of hymns such as these:

"God the Omnipotent!"

"Holy God, We Praise Thy Name"

"O Love That Will Not Let Me Go"

"O Splendor of God's Glory Bright"

"Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise"

Who could sing such hymns without gaining a deeper appreciation and understanding of our heavenly Father?

7. *The great hymns contribute to the depth of our Christian experience.* Choruses tend to appeal to the emotional side of the worshiper. The hymns excite our emotions as well as our minds; as a result, even our emotional response is deeper. You can't reach much deeper into eternal truth

than when you understand the God found in Walter C. Smith's "Immortal, Invisible."

*Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise*

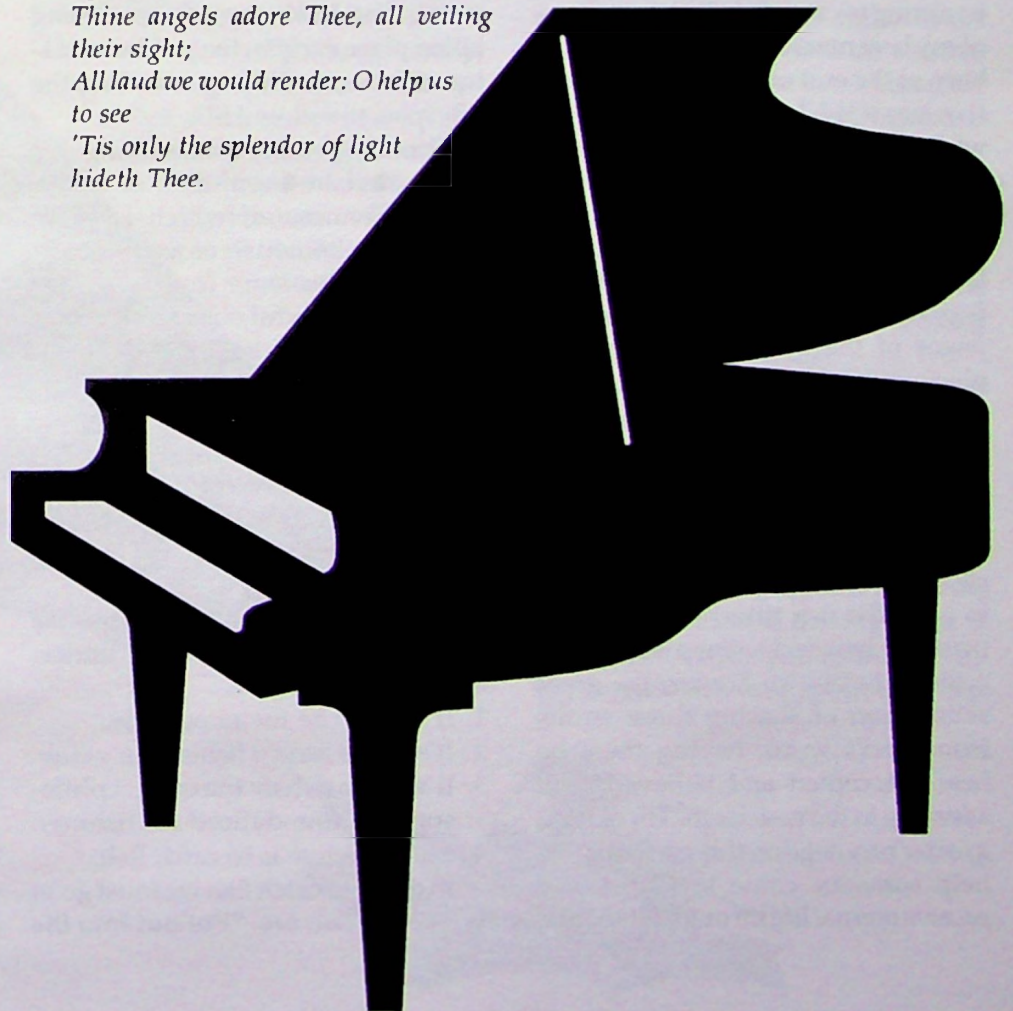
*Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.*

*Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All laud we would render: O help us to see
'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee.*

8. *The great hymns help us to lift our hearts to God.* No thinking Christian could sing the hymn just quoted and not be moved toward the Lord. Such hymns take us out of ourselves, out of our problems, out of the pressures of the present moment, and into the throne room of God's majesty. There, along with Isaiah the prophet, we cry out, "My eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty" (Isa. 6:5, NIV).

9. *The great hymns exalt and magnify the Lord Jesus Christ.* The hymnwriters had an experience with Christ that had to be explained, an encounter with Him that had to be shared. They put the very heart of their experience and encounter into their hymns.

(continued on page 21)



Learning to Fish from the Master

BY JEFFREY FLETCHER

I must admit I've never been a particularly effective fisherman. In fact, it's safe to say that at times I've been downright pitiful. In fact, in past years on our family fishing expeditions to Canada, about all I accomplished was to provide a bit of comic relief to the other fishermen, as on more than one occasion I managed to drop my fishing rod into the lake. Yes, some of my greatest personal frustrations have come in attempting to catch fish, but then, some of my best memories in life have also been at the end of a fishing pole, as a five-year-old boy catching a fish while sitting on grandpa's knee.

The same has been true when it comes to fishing for men and women — what the Bible calls evangelism. I have known times of tremendous frustration as I have opened up the pages of the Bible and shared the glorious truths of Jesus Christ and His salvation, of the hope of God's kingdom on earth to begin at the coming of Christ, of the blessings of having one's sins forgiven and emerging from the waters of baptism cleaned from the stains of sin — only to have the fish turn his nose away from the bait and swim away.

But I have also known the great satisfaction of sharing those truths from God's word, having them be heard, accepted and believed, and assisting in the new birth. There is no greater privilege on this earth than to help someone come to Christ and receive eternal life through His name.

If that is true, and I believe it is, why haven't we in the church been more successful at it? Why haven't more people come into the faith? Why don't more of our church members actively share their faith and witness to others?

Evangelism is kind of like the weather — everybody talks about it, but no one ever does anything about it.

In Luke 5:1-11 we read about an event that Luke records as having taken place early in the public ministry of Jesus, as He began calling the disciples to follow Him.

The story takes place along the shores and in the middle of a lake called Gennesaret, which is more commonly known to us as the Sea of Galilee. In this story Jesus provides us with a powerful object lesson that shows us how to go about the business of doing evangelism.

If we pay careful attention to the leadership of Jesus, and follow His leading instead of our own ideas, we will learn how to be more successful in winning men and women into the kingdom of God.

The first important principle we learn from Jesus is very basic: understand your objective.

1. It's not to go for a boat ride.
2. It's not to form a fisherman's club.
3. It's not to debate the correct philosophical foundations for fishing.
4. The objective is to catch fish.

In order to catch fish we must go to where the fish are. "Put out into the

deep" (v. 4). Too often the church has made the mistake of expecting the fish to come to us. We build an aquarium which is called a church. We fill it full of fish (church members) and then we sit back and wait for other fish to jump into our fish tank. What's happening in American churches is not very encouraging. When one church experiences growth it's usually because another church is experiencing decline.

The fish in one tank get tired of the fish food they're being offered, or they don't like the color of the rocks at the bottom of the tank, or they don't get along with some of the other fish in the tank. So they go off swimming around for another aquarium. Then when they've found what, for them, is a more suitable aquarium, they jump in.

Many times the fish are leaving small aquariums in favor of larger ones that have a larger variety of fish and more types of fish food to eat.

This is all well and good for the larger aquariums — who celebrate their increasing numbers of fish in their tank. But have they really been catching fish, or simply transferring fish from one tank to the next?

Let there be no mistake: if the water is polluted in another tank, or if the fish aren't being given the proper food, then we should welcome those fish to come into our tank — but let's not kid ourselves by thinking that we've been fishing.

The fact is that when Jesus went to the aquariums of His day and offered them fish food, most of them didn't like it. When Jesus preached His radical message of salvation in the synagogues, some folks wanted to kill Him. When Jesus went to reli-

gious places, like the temple in Jerusalem, trouble soon followed. Those fish didn't want His food. They didn't want Him disrupting the balance in their aquariums.

Jesus spent most of His time fishing out among the common folks. He went into the small towns and villages. He went to where the people were. He talked to people at weddings and funerals, He went to people's homes, He talked to ostracized prostitutes who had to draw their water from wells outside the city gates. He visited with the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame. He rescued the fish that had washed up onto shore. He went out into the deep, murky, unknown waters far out from shore. He reached out to the demon-possessed man, the half-breed Samaritans.

His message to Simon Peter and the others was simple: "How

on earth do you think you're going to catch any fish just standing around here along the shore, cleaning your nets and drinking coffee? If you want to catch fish you have to get into your boat and go out into the deep water where the fish are — then you will catch some fish."

Once you get out to where the fish are you've made a good start, but you're far from finished. Next, you have to use the right bait.

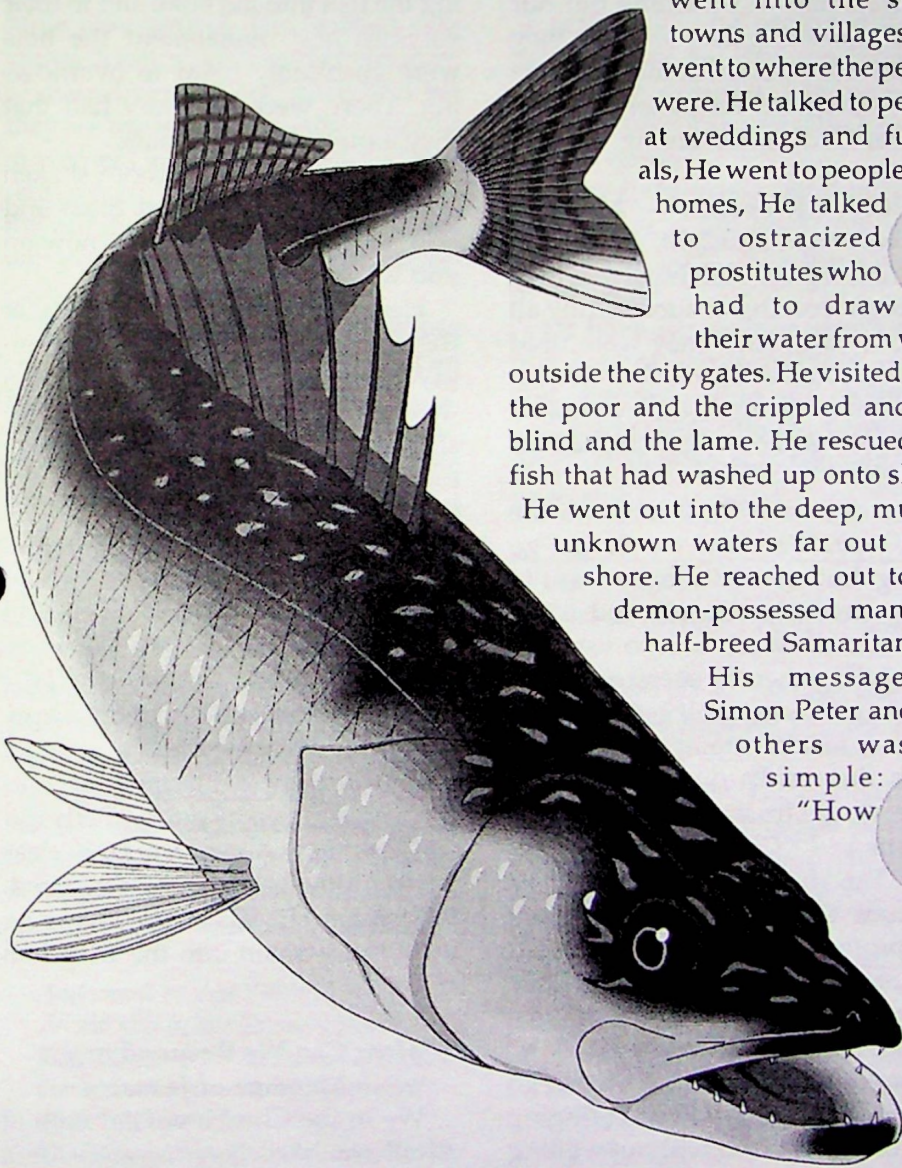
Use the Right Bait — "Let down your nets for a catch" (v. 4)

The fish aren't just gonna jump up into your boat just because you've shown up. You have to let down your nets; you have to minister to people at their point of need. You have to come to them right where they are and offer them an alternative to the life they are currently living—in the midst of their hurts and hopes.

Jesus knew very well a principle of human nature that it took psychologists nearly 2000 years to discover. This principle was clearly laid out by the psychologist Abraham Maslow earlier in this century.

Abraham Maslow recognized that human beings have a basic hierarchy of needs. He illustrated these needs in the form of a pyramid.

At the base of the pyramid are physiological needs—hunger, thirst, pain. When those needs are not being met they become a driving force in man's life. When you're tired, hungry or sick you care about little else



than meeting those needs. Once they are met, then you can go on to other needs: safety/security needs — insecurity, anxiety and fear. Next are love/affection needs — loneliness, rejection, isolation. Next are self-esteem needs — guilt, failure, inadequacy, embarrassment, lack of recognition.

Finally, at the top are what Maslow called self-actualization needs — frustration, emptiness, uselessness, boredom.

Self-actualized people are those who have found true satisfaction in their lives. They feel complete and useful; they sense their lives have purpose and meaning and fulfillment. But people are not likely to arrive at this level until they have first been able to meet their physiological, security, love and self-esteem needs.

Jesus had keen insight into human nature and knew this to be true, so His ministry reflected this understanding. Jesus came to the hungry and fed them. Jesus came to the sick and healed them. Jesus came to the fearful and offered them assurance. Jesus came to the lonely and rejected and offered them companionship and acceptance. Jesus went to the guilty and offered them forgiveness. Jesus went to those who were empty and offered them wholeness, to the bored and offered them meaning and purpose in life. Jesus used the appropriate bait and He taught His disciples to do the same.

Jesus well understood the modern-day theory of evangelism that "People won't care how much you know until they first know how much you care." All of our attempts to self-actualize people with the message of the Gospel aimed at a person's intel-

lects won't matter a hill of beans to them if they feel hungry, afraid, lonely and inadequate.

Jesus taught the importance of understanding the objective: to catch fish; of going to where the fish are: in the deep water; and of using the appropriate bait — by letting out our nets and meeting people where they are. But He stressed something further — the need for patience as we wait for God's good timing.

Wait for a Response — "Master, we toiled all night" (v. 5)

Simon argued with Jesus that they had been working unsuccessfully all night to catch fish. They were tired and frustrated at their lack of results. They had given up. All they wanted to do was go home, get cleaned up and rest.

Too often we Christians are the same way. We know we should go fishing, but we don't really want to go to where the fish are and we're uncertain of which bait to use. But eventually, when the pressure of others or our internal guilt gets to us, we make a feeble attempt at fishing. When the results don't come right away, we get frustrated and give up.

Jesus said, "Come on, let's go fishing." The difference between their previous fishing trip and this one was profound — this time, they had the Lord in the boat with them. They trusted Him to provide the results, and they were willing to wait for it.

How often have I attempted to go fishing on my own, without bringing the Lord along, and without waiting long enough for the fish to swim into the net? How much has impatience cost me? I wonder how many times I have given up fishing just before the fish was about to take the bait.

Once the fish are in the net, however, the job isn't quite finished. They have to be pulled into the boat.

Pull the Fish in — "They came and filled both the boats" (v. 7)

Simon and the others began pulling the fish into the boat, and to their surprise and amazement the nets were absolutely filled to overflowing. There were so many fish that they almost sank the boats.

Once they got back to shore, shaken and afraid, Jesus calmed them and said, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

Here Jesus offered them all that they needed: fish to feed their hungry bellies, safety and security to calm their fears, acceptance, companionship and inclusion — "come, be my disciple; be a part of this group; we want you."

He offered them self-esteem, achievement, confidence and success. He had shown them that they could do it. Finally, He was offering them self-actualization — He was giving them a purpose in life beyond simply surviving. He was offering them an opportunity of a lifetime. He was inviting a group of poor, smelly old Galilean fishermen, working class people, unlettered and uncultured, to become His assistants in calling men and women into the Kingdom of God.

How Can We Respond to the Message of Jesus?

We in the Church of God faith of Abraham have been around for a long time, since the middle of the 19th century. And yet our efforts at growing our denomination have been less than satisfactory. Our numbers today aren't much more than they were 50 years ago. Why? Is it because

of our doctrinal beliefs? Are they so counter to mainstream Christianity that people simply won't accept them? No — groups like the Mormon Church and the Jehovah's Witnesses are far more radical than we are, yet their numbers have swelled in that same time period. The Muslim religion is drastically different from most of mainstream Christianity, and yet they are the fastest growing religious movement in America. In fact, at current growth rates it's estimated that the number of Muslims in America will exceed the number of Presbyterians by the year 2000.

If it's not our doctrinal beliefs that are keeping us from growing, then what is it?

Could it be that we are afraid to go out into the deep water where the fish are? Are we too content to stand

along the shore and watch the other fishing boats go out — while we criticize them for using the wrong kind of fish food?

Could it be that we have failed to use the appropriate bait? Are we so focused on changing people's minds — self-actualizing people with correct doctrine — that we have neglected to minister adequately to people's physical, security, love and esteem needs?

Have we been impatient and failed to wait for a response? Or worse, have we failed to bring Jesus with us in the boat?

Or have we become afraid at the numbers of fish swimming around and simply failed to pull on the nets and bring them into the boat out of fear that all these new fish will cause us to sink?

As we approach the 21st century we must remember that we have been given a mandate by Jesus Christ to go into all the world and create disciples. Jesus told us that if we would simply listen to His voice and follow His example as recorded in the Gospels we would become fishers of men.

It's time for us in the Church of God to stop standing around the shore washing our nets. It's time for us to climb into the boats, to head into the deep and murky waters of our communities where the fish live, to let down our nets into their messy lives and offer to meet their needs for food and health, for security and peace of mind, for companionship and acceptance, for forgiveness and recognition, and for the purpose and fulfillment in life that can come through faith in Jesus Christ. □

Ten Reasons We Need Those Great Hymns (continued from page 17)

Many of Charles Wesley's hymns once had several more verses than we sing today. Some of the stanzas were so personal to the writer himself that they can hardly be sung by anyone else. Listen to the intensely personal nature of the first and last stanzas of Wesley's "And Can It Be?"

*And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Savior's blood!
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eyes diffused a quick'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;*

*My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.*

There is another verse to that hymn that is even more personal and more exalting of the Lord and His saving work.

*No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th' eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ
my own.*

10. *The great hymns do more than other resources to help us actually worship God.* If you have entered into the poetry of the verse quoted in this article, you have worshiped as you've

read. The power of the great hymns is such that you can't be exposed to them with an open heart without worship taking place. The hymns, carefully planned and scheduled in worship, pave the way for great preaching, giving the message a better chance of making a lasting impact. Without the hymns where would some of us poor preachers be?

We need the choruses of worship and praise. They excite the emotions, lift our spirits, and help release us to glorify the Lord. We also need the great hymns. They expand the mind, illuminate the understanding, and excite the soul. □

From *Ministry*, Sept. 1996. Used with permission.

A Reader's Response

To The Editor:

I would like to respond to the article "Where Will We Be?" by Hazel Cramer in the June, July, 1996 issue. It appears that she has set up her own scenario and then seeks to refute it. The article reeks with sarcasm. I'm convinced that no student of any stature holds the view that she is trying to refute. She is fighting a straw man.

She is right in pointing out that the dead and living in Christ "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" (1 Thess. 4:14-17, emphasis mine). "Where will we be?" We'll be forever with the Lord. There doesn't seem to be any suggestion in the passage that the church suddenly

changes direction and zips back to earth at that moment, although some are emphatic that that is the case. Probably we all need to be reminded: "Do not go beyond what is written. Then you will not take pride in one man over against another" (1 Cor. 4:6, NIV).

After going off on a tangent about what "many Bible students believe," Hazel concludes: "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." DOES ANYONE OUT THERE BELIEVE THAT? That seems absurd to me. Why spend time, effort

and money trying to refute a viewpoint that does not exist? Sometimes when evidence is lacking, one resorts to a smear campaign of the opposing viewpoint. This approach solves nothing and enlightens no one. Let's hope that Hazel's article does not confuse and mislead our readers. I fear that that may be the case here.

Certainly all views should be represented fairly. Nothing is gained for one's viewpoint by running down the opposition, promoting inaccuracies and misinformation. Straw men are easy to create, but the huff and puff it takes to create them are only huff and puff.

Hollis Partlowe
Oregon, Illinois

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Give and It Shall Be Given unto You

Church of the Open Bible
201 S. Henry, Farmington MO, 63640

January 2, 1997

I just wanted to share an experience we had over the Christmas holiday.

Friday evening, December 20th, as I was going home after work, I noticed some confusion on Henry Street — at first I thought it was in front of the church, but in trying to get around the police, fire trucks, etc, I discovered that a house just past the church was on fire. I later discovered that the lady of the house was a waitress at Ryans whom we had known casually for some time. She is a great worker — holding down two jobs to support her three children (her husband doesn't work).

I called Ryans to see if this truly was Kim's house, and to see if there was anything we could do. I asked the assistant manager to call me with this information.

Saturday afternoon, as we were practicing for the Christmas program, a lady came in the door of the church with an envelope that she had intended to tape on our door. This letter informed us of the fire, and told us that she listened to our radio station every day, and since we were in the neighborhood, she thought maybe we could help Kim.

I again called Ryans for more information. We as a church decided to

write her a check for \$50, and to keep in touch so we could help on a more regular basis, rather than one larger contribution.

When practice was over, Loyd and I decided to go to the Venture store in Festus and buy some Christmas gifts for the children.

We had our basket rounding over, and as we approached the registers, I remembered the store Christmas policy — every 50th customer receives their purchase free.

I turned to Loyd, and told him about it, but he didn't think it was likely to happen. I asked God to lead me to the right lane, and got in line. Loyd told me that the next lane was shorter, but I chose to remain where I was. He said he was going to go get the car. And I remember thinking that he was going to miss the excitement.

I continued my thought conversation with God, and as I approached the register, I got this strange "up-tight-tingly" feeling, like I get before I get up in front of an audience. Just then a lady came up to me and said she'd like to ask me a few questions. I readily agreed. She asked if I had any family members working for Venture — I don't — and then told me that my entire purchase was FREE. All \$87 in gifts was FREE.

I started crying, and proceeded to tell her about my prayer, and the family that had lost all of their Christmas presents. Everyone in the imme-

diate vicinity was listening as I was able to witness about God and the way He answers prayer.

Loyd was of course amazed that it had really happened. We were able to witness everywhere we went that evening.

When we got home, we picked up the check from the church and took it and the gifts to Ryans for Kim. We were able to witness again to the employees at Ryans.

Kim had come in to work that evening — as she needed the money. When we gave her the check and the church card, along with the presents, she was almost in tears. She said she had received one of our cards (with our tip) the previous week, remembered our church from that, and would see us in church.

We look forward to seeing her and her three children in church and will keep in contact with her on a regular basis. And we will keep handing out church cards with every tip we give — and every chance we get.

This experience really made our Christmas joyous. Christmas is for giving — giving Christ. Miracles still happen — when we pray and believe and wait on the Lord.

Now if He would just send us a pastor . . . I know . . . In His Time!

In His Service,

Donna Cooper
Secretary

in life

"You Make Me So Mad!"

Mean What You Say

BY DR. G. CLELL FRANCE



There are very often two parts or two meanings to what we say. There is usually an intent and a content — particularly when we are upset. A man may say to his wife "You really make me mad when you do that!" Content — you make me mad. Intent — I want you to stop doing that!

In this case, the content is not true. He, by a default or habitual decision, allows or chooses to make his angry response. He is totally responsible for his anger —

she is not. But he tries to transfer that responsibility to her. She resents and resists and maybe retorts.

The intent is true, and he needs to address that intent directly and mean what he says: "I would really appreciate it if you didn't do that." She then has a much better opportunity to consider and perhaps discuss the issue with him without the resentment and resistance generated by his inappropriate attempt to make her (feel) responsible for his anger. □

Dear RESTITUTION HERALD,

I am writing for the following reason:

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The Restitution Herald

April, May • 1997

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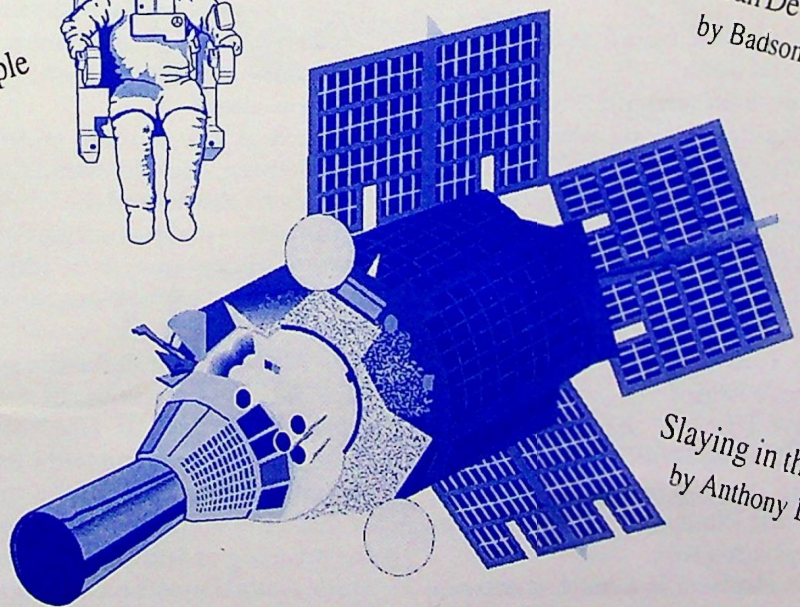
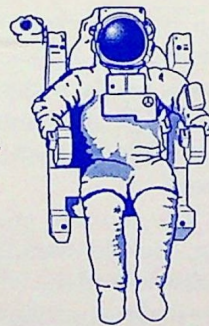
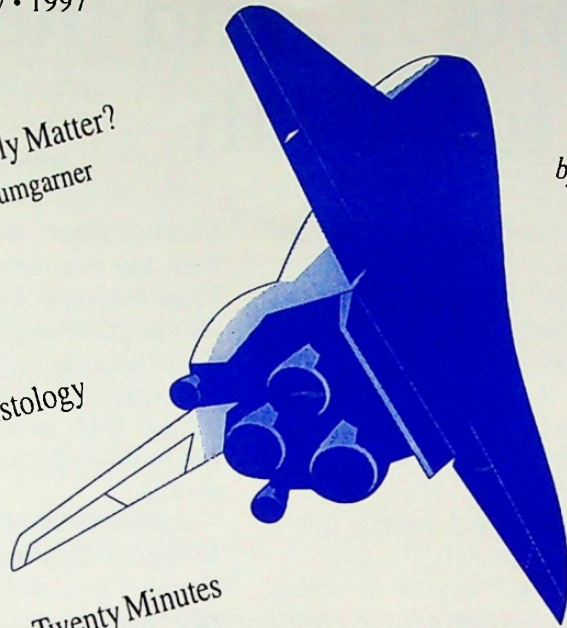
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by Anthony Buzzard





Elephants . . . and the Search for Truth

I recently ran across the following story . . .

There lived in India six friends who were all blind.

Now India, of course, is a land of that greatest of land beasts, the elephant. But, naturally, since these friends were all blind, they did not know what an elephant looks like.

One day they were sitting together talking when they heard a great roar.

"I believe that is an elephant in the street," one said.

"Now is our chance to find out what kind of creature the elephant is," said another.

So they all went into the street.

The first blind man reached out and touched the elephant's ear.

"Ah," he said to himself, "the elephant is a rough, wide thing. It is like a rug."

The second blind man felt the elephant's trunk.

"Now I understand," he thought. "The elephant is a long, round thing. It is like a giant snake."

The third blind man touched the elephant's leg.

"Well, I wouldn't have guessed it," he said. "The elephant is tall and firm, just like a tree."

The fourth blind man felt the elephant's side.

"Now I know," he thought, "the elephant is wide and smooth, like a wall."

The fifth blind man put his hands on the elephant's tusk.

"The elephant is a hard, sharp animal, like a spear," he decided.

The sixth blind man touched the elephant's tail.

"Well, well," he said, "it gives a mighty roar, but the elephant is just a thing like a long, thin rope."

Afterward the six blind friends sat down again to talk about the elephant.

"It is rough and wide, like a rug," said the first.

"No, it is long and round, like a snake," said the second.

"Don't be silly," laughed the third. "It is tall and firm, like a tree."

"No, it is not," growled the fourth. "It is wide and smooth, like a wall."

"Hard and sharp, like a spear!" shouted the fifth.

"Long and thin, like a rope!" yelled the sixth.

And so a fight started. Each one insisted he was right. He had touched it with his own hands, hadn't he?

The owner of the elephant heard all the shouting and came to see what the fuss was about.

"Each of you is right, and each of you is wrong," he told them. "One man may not be able to find the whole truth by himself — just a small part of it. But if we work together, each adding our own piece to the whole, we can find the truth."

In his book *The Dynamics of Faith*,¹ Paul Tillich cautions us, in a chapter titled "What Faith Is Not," to avoid three distortions of the faith: the intellectualistic distortion of the meaning of faith, the voluntaristic distortion of the meaning of faith, and the emotionalistic distortion of the meaning of faith.

Like blind men struggling to describe an elephant, we do God a great

injustice when we view our faith in Him too narrowly. Faith must challenge the mind, but true faith is more than just thinking the right things about God. Faith must rally the will to action, but faith is more than doing the right things. Faith must stir the emotions, but faith is much more than simply a feeling.

As we attempt to come to a fuller understanding of faith in God as it is revealed to us in the Bible, it is important that we approach with a sense of great humility. We are pondering the mysteries of the eternal. Who among us can say with honesty that we are fully capable of understanding and describing the fullness of God? As Paul said, "Now we see through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12).

It is my prayer that this issue of THE RESTITUTION HERALD will challenge your intellect, stir your emotions, and call you to action on behalf of the faith. Each of the writers has written on some aspect of faith. In some instances the writers support and affirm each other; in other instances we challenge and question one another. The final action is up to you. You must enter into the dialogue and determine for yourself how God is calling you to respond. Will you do your part? □

Jeff Fletcher

¹ New York: Harper and Row, 1957, pp. 30-40.

The Restitution Herald

THE RESTITUTION HERALD

VOLUME 86, NUMBER 4: APRIL, MAY 1997. ©1997.

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atlbc@mindspring.com).

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD IS OWNED AND PUBLISHED BY THE CHURCH OF GOD GENERAL CONFERENCE, A NONPROFIT CHRISTIAN CORPORATION LOCATED AT 5823 TRAMMELL ROAD, P.O. BOX 100,000, MORROW, GA 30260. THE HERALD IS MAILED SIX TIMES A YEAR.

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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Does It Really Matter?

BY DONALD BUMGARNER, LIBBY, MT

For most churchgoers today, hearing the word "argue" or "debate" conjures up bad thoughts. Most churchgoers endeavor to "keep the peace" with other Christians who may not agree with their theological views by just saying, "It doesn't matter what we believe, so long as we're sincere." But nothing could be further from the truth.

Jude wrote something in his short letter which gives us an idea of what our attitude should be towards the many unbiblical doctrines which are out there: "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (v. 3). *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* says the Greek word for "contend" (*epagonizomai*) "signifies to contend about a thing, as a combatant . . . to contend earnestly . . . The word 'earnestly' is added to convey the intensive force of the preposition."

Apparently in Jude's day many of the Christians were showing the signs of apathy; so much so that he had to postpone his writing about the glorious salvation offered

to us in order to admonish his readers to *contend for the original faith!*

Now it seems a very strange thing that neither Jesus nor the apostles ever took the passive road in their own lives, nor did they teach others to do so. Rather, as Jude so admirably shows us, the attitude of the first Christians was one of intolerance to unbiblical and foreign teachings. But today we think of it as only a trivial matter that there are hundreds of different denominations and groups,

each teaching something different from the other! And what is even more startling is that there are people sitting in these churches who disagree on many points with other members of the *same church!* What has happened to the great zeal and enthusiasm Christians are supposed to have towards firstly learning the truth and then contending earnestly for it? Why have we grown

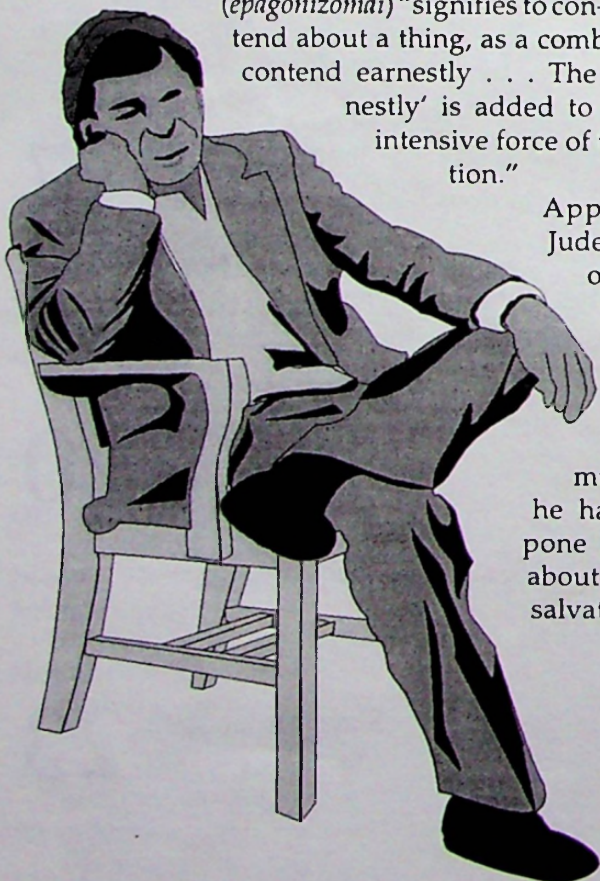
into people who simply lie back and say, "Well, everybody believes differently, that's just how it is"?

Satan has capitalized on apathy in the past. The doctrine of the Trinity and "heaven-going" are two fine examples of how unbiblical teachings can be slipped in when there are only a few, if any, zealous Christians out there working to preserve the original faith of Jesus and the apostles.

The Abrahamic Faith movement began with the zeal for contending for the original faith. I fear, however, that the "apathy disease" is beginning to creep into our ranks. I suppose that, being a small group which is often persecuted by the larger denominations for our beliefs, we often feel that we should simply try to get along — keep the peace. However, it has always been that only a few find the truth (Matt. 7:14); and it has always been that these people are the ones who receive the hard lashes of persecution by the majority. Certainly, Jesus didn't use

(continued on page 6)

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What will you
do with the
truth?
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Two Gods?

BY JUAN BAIXERAS, MIAMI, FL

From the start of Judaism and later Christianity, the most famous aspect and unique characteristic of the two religions was the fact that they were and still are monotheistic. Christianity is really the continuation of Judaism.

Both religions believe in one, and only one, unbegotten God, creator of the universe. There are no other gods in these two faiths.

Isaiah 44:6 — Thus says the LORD . . . there is no God but me.

Isaiah 45:5 — I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides me.

Isaiah 45:6 — Men may know that there is none besides me. I am the LORD, there is no other.

No one will contest that to a Jew or a Christian, there is only one God. Anything else would be considered polytheism.

The majority of Christianity believes in one God, but a God that is plural in makeup. There are three persons that constitute this one God. They are three, but they are still all the one God. There is: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

In this article we will be concerned primarily with Trinitarian Christianity's view of God, specifically God the Son.

We all know that God the Son has a Father (God the Father). But the question that must be asked and an-

swered is: Can God the Son *have* a God? Every pastor I have ever asked this question has always said "Of course not!" But is that the answer given in Scripture? No!

As you will see, the prophesied Messiah in the Old Testament is *said* to have a God. Then you will see that Jesus the Messiah fulfills those prophecies because he most definitely *has* a

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God. If you come to the conclusion that Jesus has a God, then it might be time to rethink and research the doctrine of the Trinity. Because if *God the Son* has a *God*, then there are TWO GODS!

To make this as simple as possible, I am not going to list the huge number of Scriptures which have God (not "Father") and Jesus in the same sentence, or Scriptures that have God speaking to Jesus, or Jesus speaking to God. We will only be concerned with Scriptures that prove that Jesus *has a God*.

OLD TESTAMENT MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

Psalm 89:27-28 — He shall say of me, "You are my father, my God, my rock, my savior." And I will make him the firstborn.

Micah 5:4 — He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the LORD, in the Majestic name of the LORD, his God.

Psalm 22:10 — To you I was committed at birth. From my mother's womb you are my God.

NEW TESTAMENT

Jesus speaking:

John 20:17 — "I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

Matthew 27:46 — My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

Revelation 3:12 — Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God.

Paul speaking:

Ephesians 1:3 — Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:17 — I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father . . .

2 Corinthians 1:3 — Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter speaking:

1 Peter 1:3 — Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When one reads the preceding verses, one notices this fact: Jesus Christ *has* a God. Jesus speaks of His God; Peter and Paul mention the God of Jesus Christ. Are they all mistaken? Are we to believe that all these verses are misprints? Are we to suppose that theologians several centuries after Christ knew more about Jesus than Jesus and His apostles? There is no way around it. Everyone in Jesus' day knew that Jesus had a God. Even later, people in Rome who did not believe in Jesus knew that He had a God.

THE ALEXAMENOS GRAFFITI FROM PALATINE HILL IN ROME

The first pictorial representation of Jesus on record is actually a derisive graffiti on the wall of a house on the Palatine Hill in Rome. It pictured the body of a man being crucified but with the head of an ass.

The inscription reads: "Alexamenos worships *his* God."

This individual was obviously ridiculing Alexamenos for being a Christian. But a crucial point to be made is the fact that it says that Alexamenos worships *his* (Jesus') God. Even the pagans in Rome knew about Jesus' God.

So why do we never hear a sermon or anything else on the God of Jesus Christ? The reason is that people who believe in the Trinity cannot explain

this obvious fact. They have absolutely no explanation for it. They claim that God the Son cannot have a God because that would mean that there are two Gods. But there it is in black and white. Jesus has a God. Are you going to take man's word over God's word? Hopefully not.

So does that make Trinitarians and anyone else who thinks that Jesus is God polytheists? It sure does! One God plus one God equals TWO GODS.

Jesus' own words: "Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ" (John 17:3).

God bless you. □

Does It Really Matter? (continued from page 4)

the word "overcome" in Revelation 3:12 for nothing — we must literally endure and overcome all the hardships that come with having and proclaiming the truth.

We read a parable given by Jesus in Matthew 25:14-30 about the three servants and the talents. The first two servants, when their master entrusted them with their talents, went out and gained more talents with those they had already. Thus, when the master returned from his journey, they were able to present him with the original number of talents they had received and more. These servants were commended and rewarded for their faithfulness and wise handling of that with which they had been entrusted.

The third servant did something else with that which he had received. No, he didn't go out like the first two and try to increase the one talent he had; instead, he buried it. Here is what this servant said to his master about the matter: "Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground; see, you have what is yours" (vv. 24-25). Here is what the master had to say to his servant: "You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my

money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the talents . . . [And the worthless slave was] cast out . . . into outer darkness" (vv. 26-28, 30a).

What will you do with the truth? Will you simply say that "It doesn't matter what we believe, as long as we're sincere," and thus bury that glorious truth we have been given by our Master? Or will we take the truth to the world, earnestly contend for it, and, if need be, die for it? □

Musings on Christology

BY GREG DEMMITT, TEMPE, AZ

At the most recent Church of God ministerial conference the question was raised as to whether folks who identify Jesus as the second person of the Trinity, God the Son, are thinking of the same Jesus as are those who give Jesus a distinct, unique identity as the Son of God.

I wrote the following to explain why I believe that we should consider as Christian brothers and sisters all those who call upon Jesus as Savior and offer Him lordship over their lives, regardless of which side they take in the above debate.

What follows would better be described as my suppositions than as a developed Christology. It's not intended to be viewed as a complete Christology. I'm simply identifying five key issues which I think lead to confusion in creating a comprehensive, truly biblical Christology.

As my first point will state, I hold all my theological musings as vastly incomplete in comparison to the objective existential reality of Jesus as He is. Nothing I say will change who Jesus is; therefore I'll attempt to be bold and far-reaching in my thinking. Maybe I'll hit on something of value.

Five points I will develop:

1. What I say about Jesus does not change who He is because Jesus is not a creation of my theology.
2. The nature of Jesus is secondary to the person of Jesus.
3. Jesus has been placed in the position of supremacy by God the Father.

4. The ministry of Jesus is incarnational.

5. Paul's concept of Jesus as the second Adam is inadequately developed in most Christological efforts.

1. What I say about Jesus does not change who He is because Jesus is not a creation of my theology. While my perception affects my interaction dramatically, Jesus does not change. My goal in ministry is to encourage folks in their relationship with Jesus. They are affected by my teaching, but



*I think any rush
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the living Jesus enters into a dynamic relationship with the believer that goes far beyond what I teach.

I think this objective reality of Jesus was very important to John in his writings. When he said "These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God," I place John's emphasis on Jesus. He begins his first epistle with the same emphasis — "what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands."

I think that John saw the danger of the reality of Jesus as Messiah being conceptualized, turned into a theological or philosophical statement. That accounts for his warning that the spirit of antichrist is to deny that Jesus came in the flesh. The Gnostic heresy which was already incubating was that very kind of intellectualizing of the dynamics of a personal relationship with Jesus.

Holding to the above principle, I think any rush to label differing Christological views as the teaching of "another Jesus" is wrong. When we do so, I think we are setting up our Church of God theology as the standard — consequently we are open to greater judgment if our Christology is incomplete, inadequate or mistaken in some points.

A couple additional arguments:

a. Looking at 2 Corinthians 11, I'm not sure who Paul's opponents are. They could be early Gnostics, because he did deal with them in 1 Corinthians, but his most common opponents were the Judaizers. Verse 20 talks about being enslaved; verse 22 emphasizes Paul's Jewish bloodlines. Also, in Galatians 1:8 Paul refers to "another gospel" when writing against those who would put Christians under the law.

I assume these are Judaizers. Because of that, I don't think Paul was thinking Christology when he used the phrase "another Jesus" because their Christological statements would be the same as Paul's. They would say there is only one God. They would

describe Jesus as the Son of God. But they were perverting that message by making it "believe in Jesus and follow the law."

b. Paul refers to opponents in Philippians 1:15-18. We don't know that these were the same people, but they are described as doing the same things. Yet Paul's conclusion is, "What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true: and in that I rejoice."

I think that Paul would say the living Christ has the ability to touch those who seek Him in spite of bad theology or impure motives upon the part of the messengers.

2. The nature of Jesus is secondary to the person of Jesus. The debate at Nicea was about the nature of Christ, whether He was of the same nature as the Father or of a similar nature. We hear the same argument today. "If Jesus isn't God, how could His sacrifice be sufficient to cover all sin?" or "If Jesus wasn't a man, how could He have really been tempted?"

A worldview influenced by Plato says that nature is the most important aspect of identity, yet I don't think that is the case. Consider the beautiful passage of Philippians 2:5-11: the nature of Christ is transient; it is the person of Christ which is constant. Though He was in nature God He took the nature of a servant. The constant is the person Jesus. The doctrine of the Trinity places the emphasis on the one essence (nature) of God, with personhood being subsidiary. I think the uniqueness is in the personhood of Jesus.

We in the Church of God have to realize that we are often at cross pur-

poses when arguing over the doctrine of the Trinity. It comes out of a worldview that says that the "nature" of a being is its essential identity, therefore to have only one God, those two or three persons (Father and Son, with Holy Spirit after Chalcedon) must have only one essential nature. We say that "person" is the essential identity, therefore only one person, the Father, can be God.

When we use terms like deity and divinity, we are talking about the nature of a being, not his personhood. If I were to talk about the nature of Jesus (and I don't think that I have to), I have to say that He has both what we call the nature of God and the nature of man. That's why I can say, even though it goes against my grain, that I believe in the Deity of Christ.

I would qualify this by saying it is all derived from God the Father, both before and after the cross. Colossians 1:19, "For in him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell," refers to Jesus' earthly ministry, while Philippians 2:9-11, "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 should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," refers to His present exaltation.

3. Jesus has been placed in the position of supremacy by God the Father. The proclamation of the church is to be Jesus as Lord and Savior. That is the present tense of the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, because the presence of the Kingdom is found in the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

I find myself getting hung up on wanting to present the Jewish/biblical view of God instead of proclaiming Jesus as Lord. Or by always qualifying Jesus as Lord, emphasizing that there is only one true God, the Father.

I can't apologize for that but I think I obscure what is supposed to be my message, i.e. the Lordship of Christ, by always going back to the oneness of God.

There's a place for teaching the oneness of God. Paul takes time for it in 1 Corinthians 15:27-28. He notes that when all things have been placed under Jesus it doesn't mean that God has, but instead at the end the Son will hand over the kingdom and subject Himself that God may be all in all.

But even there the force of the message is the present supremacy of Jesus. Paul told the Corinthians that he had decided to know "nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

Paul's mission wasn't to teach unitarianism. Consider Mars Hill. Paul had a receptive audience as he taught that there was only God, but was rejected when he said that one God has now spoken through the man Christ Jesus, whom He proved by raising Him from the dead. At that the philosophers scoffed. Do you think Paul thought they had received the most important part of his message?

James says, "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe — and shudder."

Like I said, I have that hang-up. But I think it is unfounded. I love my heritage, but I know that God is glorified in the exaltation of Jesus. Let me reprint an insight I had at a PromiseKeepers convention which I recently shared in my newsletter.

"Let's hear it for our sons!"

Those words sparked the high point of my experience at the 1996 PromiseKeepers gathering in Los Angeles last April. I had heard many outstanding speakers the previous evening and that Saturday morning but nothing moved me like what followed that simple command.

In 1995, we pastors had been invited to come to the front of the Coliseum to receive the appreciation of the men of our churches. I enjoyed receiving that ovation, especially while thinking about the Olympians who had stood where we stood, but it was really no big deal in the context of the entire event. I much more enjoyed being with the men from our church.

This year I brought my son Daniel to the convention and the teenagers had a separate program on Saturday morning. When they returned to join us for lunch, we welcomed them back to the Coliseum with a standing ovation.

More than 70,000 men cheered wildly as nearly 8,000 kids came streaming through the tunnel and onto the field. We united our hearts in giving our kids our approval and acceptance. I was overwhelmed by emotion knowing that my son was on the receiving end of that outpouring of support.

I used to wonder if God our Father could be jealous of the praise we offer Jesus. Now that I'm a father, I know that isn't possible. A father exalts in the honoring of his son.

4. The ministry of Jesus is incarnational. That's not a word the Church of God uses with favor but it is simply a transliteration of the Latin for "the Word of God became flesh."

When I say that the ministry of Jesus is incarnational, I mean that God was uniquely at work in Jesus' ministry, to the point that we can say that the ministry of Jesus is the work of God the Father upon this earth. From God's perspective, He is the one doing the work. That's how I read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.

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5. Paul's concept of Jesus as the second Adam is inadequately developed in most Christological efforts. I get the impression that many theologians through the ages have looked at Paul's theologizing as primitive or simplistic but I think it is better rooted in a biblical mind-set than the later theologies which were so heavily influenced by Plato.

My thinking on Jesus as the second Adam was sparked in a Sunday School class several years ago when I was told that a highly revered teacher from that church had said that Adam

had done a brave thing in sharing the forbidden fruit because he had not left Eve alone in her punishment. Right — Adam sure looked brave when he said, "the woman you gave me made me do it."

Instead of just saying how stupid I thought that was, I said let's explore Adam's options. When he discovered what Eve had done, he could have killed her himself, thus showing God he would not tolerate sin either. But what if, when God came calling in the evening, Adam had said, "The woman you gave me has sinned against you, but I love her and will take her punishment for her."

Isn't that what Jesus has done? He was born on this earth as God's Son, heir of everything, yet He gave it all up to save His people. Think of His words on the Mount of Olives, "All those you have given me I have protected in your name." Also consider Hebrews 2:11-13:

For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you." And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Here am I and the children whom God has given me."

Conclusion

I hope I've stimulated your thinking. Even more so, I hope that we can get beyond this debate to focus on the all-important issue of knowing God through His Son, Jesus Christ. □

True Abrahamic Faith

BY JEFFREY FLETCHER

More often than not, truth is more amazing than fiction. Especially when we're talking about human beings. Consider the following true stories:

In the news recently I saw a story about a couple in California who, like many families today, got married for a second time each having children from their previous marriages, *a la* the Brady Bunch. Between them they had 10 children. However, they decided that they wanted to have one child together. So the woman began taking fertility drugs. She was able to conceive and she gave birth to, not one, not two, not three . . . but four children. What's even more amazing? She is FIFTY years old.

A second story I heard from my mother-in-law who lives in a retirement community in central Florida. It seems that one of her neighbors has been taking estrogen, which is a hormone given to post-menopausal women — and is, in fact, the most commonly prescribed medication in America today. But it can have some unusual side effects. In this instance, her neighbor has resumed her monthly cycle — a pretty remarkable thing when you consider that she is SEVENTY years old.

And now for a really amazing story. This week, I read about a couple from the Middle East who were childless. They had been trying for years to have a child. They had tried everything including adoption and even surrogacy — but still the woman was

not completely fulfilled. She wanted to give birth to her very own baby. After years of trying, she had given up all hope of ever being able to conceive . . . until one day, amazingly, she learned she was pregnant. It turns out that she carried the child to full term and was able to give birth to a healthy son — get this — when she was NINETY years old.

The most amazing thing about this story is not the birth of a child to a 90-year-old woman. Even more amazing than that is the fact that her husband, who was 100 years old, had never abandoned hope that she would give birth.

That man was Abraham.

As members of the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith, I think it is critical that from time to time we return to the story of Abraham and remind ourselves what Abrahamic Faith is all about.

What is Abrahamic Faith? What does that mean? Sometimes, I'm afraid, we're tempted to think that Abrahamic Faith is simply a set of intellectual beliefs. In every issue of THE RESTITUTION HERALD we include a summary of doctrines which we advocate (see page 3):

The Oneness of God; the Holy Spirit is God's power; Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son and is our Mediator; the Bible is the inspired word of God; the mortality of man; the near return of Christ and life only through Him;

the literal resurrection of the dead; the immortalization of those in Christ; the destruction of the wicked; the final restoration of Israel as the Kingdom of God under the kingship of Christ; the church to be joint heirs with him and Israel to be made head over Gentile nations; the restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. It also firmly advocates repentance and immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and a consecrated life as essential to salvation.

These are all cognitive beliefs. They have to do with propositional truth. The only portion of that summary that says anything about what we are to do is the very last phrase — repent, get immersed and then live a holy and pure life. These phrases form the basis of our creed, a summary of our beliefs. But is that what Abrahamic faith is — a set of intellectual propositions about the nature of God and man with a ritual and exhortation tacked on at the end?

If we say we have the faith of Abraham, shouldn't we understand what that really means? The fact of the matter is . . . when we study the life of Abraham we find very little spoken about what he actually believed in a structured, systematic way. Abraham left behind no creed or statement of belief about God. So

to understand what faith meant to Abraham, we have to look at what he did by way of response to God.

First, we see in Genesis 12 that Abraham took his wife, his nephew and his servants, left Haran and went down to the land of Canaan where he pitched his tent and built an altar to the LORD who had appeared to him. From this we discover three things about the faith of Abraham:

1. He had a personal relationship with God — Abraham believed that God was a personal God.

Abraham was not an **atheist** — who don't believe in God.

He wasn't an **agnostic** — who won't say one way or another if there's a God.

He wasn't a **deist** — who believe that God is a kind of higher power who simply wound up the universe at the beginning and then pretty much left us on our own to do as we please.

He wasn't an **animist** — who believe that an immaterial force called nature — Mother nature, Gaia etc. — inhabits the universe and occupies all living things (had he believed that he never would have killed an animal and offered up a sacrifice in the altar). If you want to know more about animism just watch the Disney film *Pocahontas* — which reflects a prevalent 90s animistic belief that things like trees have spirits.

He was not a **pantheist** — who believe in and worship all gods. This popular belief holds that all religious truth is equally valid. All gods are equally valid and can justly be worshipped — whether they be called Buddha, Lord Krishna, or YHWH.

Abraham believed in God and God alone as the true God. Not a **higher power** — which is a kind of politi-

cally correct term for God among many 12-step groups. Yes, God is a higher power — but He is more than pure power or energy or even impersonal spirit. God is a personal being with whom we can enter into a real, personal relationship.

We know these things about Abraham not because of what he said to others about God, but because of the way he responded to God.

2. He made worship a priority — notice that wherever Abraham settled he built an altar. He came to Shechem; he built an altar to worship God. He went to Bethel; he built an altar to worship God. Later, he moved to Hebron; guess what he did — he built an altar to God. Everywhere he settled he built an altar to God. Worship was a priority to him. And remember too — this was not because of some religious law or empty ritual Abraham was following. The laws of Moses which prescribed the type and frequency of offerings to God were not given until over 400 years after the time of Abraham. Abraham selected animals from his flocks as a way of recognizing that everything he had was from God and really belonged to God. Abraham was willing to offer up his best as an act of worship to God.

This priority of worship was demonstrated when Abraham, after being victorious in battle against the confederacy of kings from Sodom and Gomorrah, as an act of worship brought to Melchizedek, a priest of God, a tenth of the spoils of war. The very first tithe in the Bible does not come as a result of an ecclesiastical law — but as an offering of worship and display of faith on the part of Abraham. Abraham's faith makes

worship a priority and demonstrates it through sacrificial giving and tithing.

3. He believed God — he packed up his tents and moved based on a promise that God had given him. He believed God and demonstrated that belief by his actions. Had Abraham stayed in Haran would he have had true faith? What if he had said to everyone in Haran, "Listen, I believe in God, I believe God keeps His promises, I believe that God will give me the land of Canaan and make a great nation out of me" and then never packed up his tents, never loaded up his camels and donkeys, never tightened his sandals, never pulled out his walking stick and never journeyed south to Canaan? Would that have been true faith?

You see, so much of what passes for "faith" these days isn't really faith at all. Part of the problem is that faith in the English language is a noun.

Listen to the Dictionary
faith (fĕth) n.

1. Confident belief in the truth, value, or trustworthiness of a person, an idea, or a thing.
2. Belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence.
3. Loyalty to a person or thing; allegiance.
4. The theological virtue defined as secure belief in God and a trusting acceptance of God's will.
5. The body of dogma of a religion.
6. A set of principles or beliefs.

A noun is a person, place or thing whereas a verb is an action. English is one of the only languages that has the word "faith" as a noun. In other

languages it is a verb. Why is that significant? Because Abrahamic Faith is a verb. Abrahamic Faith requires action. There's no room for couch potatoes in Abrahamic faith. Abrahamic Faith is not a spectator sport.

One of the problems with American religion today is illustrated by the weekly football game — where we have 22 exhausted men who desperately need some rest being observed by thousands of spectators sitting around eating junk food and drinking beer and desperately needing some exercise.

Abraham set down his beer, put down the remote control, packed up his stuff, and began a journey that would last for the rest of his life. He didn't know how many stops, how many detours, how many frustrations, how many disappointments, how many battles, how much pain there would be on the journey — but then again, none of us on this journey of faith knows what we will encounter along the way. We travel out on faith, trusting that the God who has called us to the promised land will never abandon us on that journey, and that the land that awaits us is truly a good land.

So Abraham had a relationship with God, he made worship a priority, and he believed God, not as an intellectual pursuit, but as an active faith.

Do you want to have Abrahamic Faith? I hope you do. I hope you are willing to make your faith more than just a spectator sport.

For those of you who just want your religion to be passive, I invite

you to turn your brain off now, or better yet, quit reading — you won't be interested in what I have to say, anyway.

Now, for those of you who are still reading — congratulations! You want to have the faith of Abraham. Let me share with you three helpful hints that will strengthen your Abrahamic Faith. These come straight out of Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter four.

1. Abrahamic Faith is unwavering in its trust in God.

Paul wrote in verse 20, "No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God." Even though his wife had been barren for 90 years, he still believed. Now, Abraham wasn't naive. He knew that from a human perspective what God had promised was impossible. But Abrahamic Faith isn't limited by seeing everything exclusively from a human perspective. Abrahamic Faith is able to see things from God's perspective. When all human hope is gone, Abrahamic Faith continues to be unwavering in its trust in God.

Jesus had Abrahamic Faith. It was Abrahamic Faith that enabled Him to go to the cross, to be crucified, to die a cruel death — in the unwavering hope that he would rise again, the unwavering hope that by making this supreme sacrifice, the sins of mankind would be atoned for.

Paul had Abrahamic Faith. It was Abrahamic Faith that motivated him to go to the cities of the Gentiles and preach the death and resurrection of Jesus. It was Abrahamic Faith that enabled him to suffer countless beat-

ings, stonings and other attempts on his life. Shipwrecks and imprisonments didn't cause his faith to waiver.

We need Abrahamic Faith to help us overcome the despair and loss of confidence that paralyzes most of us into apathy or inactivity.

You see, an ordinary person in 1860 might have said, "It's impossible to end slavery in America without completely destroying the unity of the United States of America."

And an ordinary person in 1960 might have said, "It's impossible to desegregate the South. It's foolish to even try."

And an ordinary person looking at Calcutta might have said, "There are just too many poor people here; what difference can one person possibly make?"

And an ordinary person looking at the problem of poverty in America in the 1990s might say, "There's nothing we can do about the living conditions of the working poor, so why bother?"

But someone with Abrahamic Faith sees things differently.

It was Abrahamic Faith which enabled President Abraham Lincoln to risk his popularity and personal safety in an effort to liberate those who were enslaved and to reunite our nation.

It was Abrahamic Faith which enabled Martin Luther King Jr. to give up his life in order to pave the way for greater equality for his fellow countrymen.

It was Abrahamic Faith which enabled Mother Theresa of Calcutta to devote her life to serving the poorest of the poor in India.

It was Abrahamic Faith which enabled multi-millionaire Millard Fuller to divest himself of his personal wealth and use it to help build adequate, affordable housing for hundreds of thousands of working poor through Habitat for Humanity.

Abrahamic Faith is strong because it doesn't limit itself to what human beings are able to do on their own — Abrahamic Faith listens to the Word of God and obeys. It doesn't rationalize and it doesn't offer excuses for why it can't do what God has called it to do. Abrahamic Faith hears the voice of God, and believes. It keeps on believing even when all hope seems gone.

Do you need some Abrahamic Faith in your life?

Perhaps your marriage could use a good dose of Abrahamic Faith. You say, "Everyone around me seems to be bailing out on their marriages, and when things get tough it can be tempting to just give up," but Abrahamic Faith believes God. God says, "Do not forsake the wife of your youth." God's word says, "Husbands love your wives as Christ loves the church." Abrahamic Faith keeps on loving, even when from a human standpoint all reason to love is gone.

Maybe your parenting needs a dose of Abrahamic Faith. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." That's what God says; Abrahamic Faith believes that—even when you're wondering if it's worth all of the effort to bring your kids to church, teach them about God, and model a godly lifestyle. Even when it

seems impossible to overcome the pressures of peers, violence, drugs, MTV, and promiscuity, Abrahamic Faith believes God and keeps doing what God says. Abrahamic Faith is unwavering in its faith in God.

2. Abrahamic Faith is strengthened by giving God glory.

"Abraham grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God." Does your faith need to grow stronger? What's the secret? Praise God, worship God, give Him glory. You see, there was something very important about all those altars Abraham built. They were built to the glory of God. The sacrifices offered were to the glory of God. When you come to a rough place in the road and you feel your faith wavering, that's the time when you really need to build an altar to God. That's the time when you need to give Him glory. That's why we worship God regularly. We don't worship God only when it's convenient, only when there's nothing more important going on. The only reason anyone should miss corporate worship is illness.

If your job is more important than worshipping God, then you don't have Abrahamic Faith, and without worship it won't get any stronger. If some hobby — be it golf, hunting, fishing, or sleeping late on Sunday — is more important than worshipping God, then you don't have Abrahamic Faith, and without worship your faith won't get any stronger. If your family is more important than worshipping God, then you don't have Abrahamic

Faith, and without worship your faith won't get any stronger.

Do you want to have the Faith of Abraham, a strong faith that stands up to the tests and temptations, trials and struggles of life? Then you need to strengthen that faith by glorifying God in worship.

3. Abrahamic Faith is fully convinced that God is able to keep His promises.

Abrahamic Faith enabled Abraham to climb the mountain with his teenaged son Isaac, raise the knife and prepare to kill the child of promise — the same child through whom God promised to make him a great nation. The writer of Hebrews tells us that "Abraham reasoned that God was able to raise him from the dead." In others words, Abraham didn't believe that it was his job to second-guess God's word; it is our job to obey and let God be God.

Abraham was unwavering in his trust in God; he was strengthened by giving God glory and was fully convinced that God was able to keep His promises. Abraham had Abrahamic Faith — not a set of creeds or propositional truths, but a life of faithful obedience to God's word.

What we in the Church of God Abrahamic Faith need is more people with Abrahamic Faith. We need people who have a personal relationship with God, who make the worship of God a priority, and who believe God even when He asks us to do the humanly impossible. Do YOU have the Faith of Abraham? □

Every Twenty Minutes

BY MARK M. MATTISON

I magine that you're a child again. You're out playing in a field when you notice the glint of something shiny in the ground. You bend down to investigate. What could this new toy be? You reach down and carefully scrub the dirt away from it, dislodge it from the earth and begin to pick it up. Suddenly there's a blinding flash, searing pain — and you're catapulted into unconsciousness.

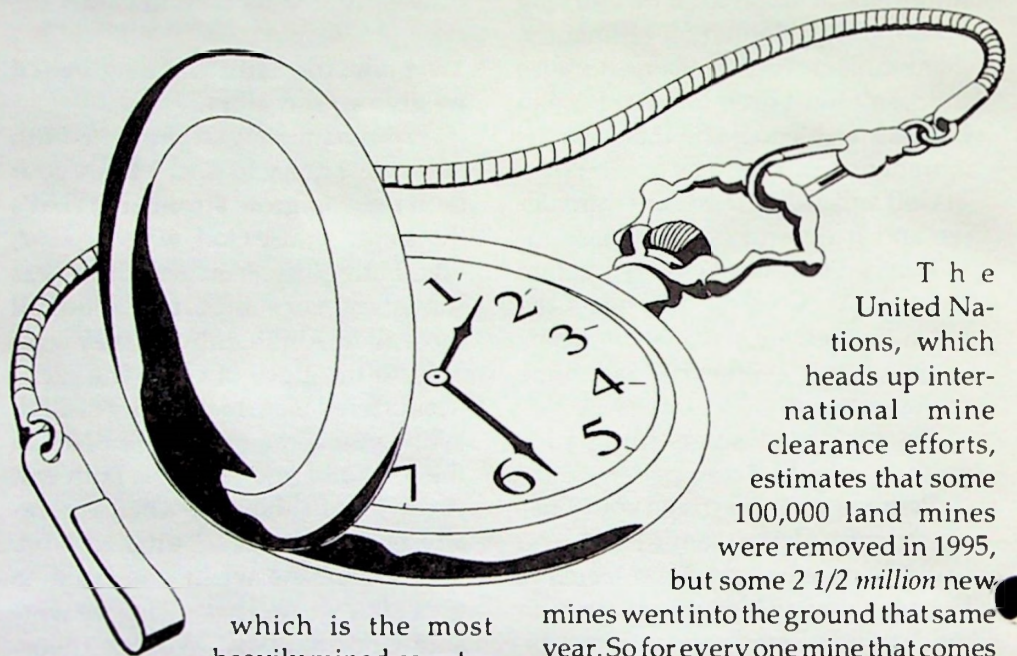
You wake up in an under-equipped hospital on a cold bed, bandaged and disfigured. What happened? You just picked up a land mine.

An incredible scenario? Unfortunately, no. This scene is played out every day, all over the world. According to the U.S. State Department, land mines kill or injure one victim every 20 minutes. That's 70 per day, 500 per week, more than 2,000 per month, 26,000 per year.

Who are the victims of these land mine accidents? Soldiers at war? Actually, 90% of the victims are innocent civilians. Thirty to 40% are children.

Some Sobering Statistics

Let's consider some specifics, starting with southern Africa. All but two countries in southern Africa have had people killed or injured by land mines. Three nations in southern Africa, Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, are among the countries most severely plagued by this indiscriminate killer. In Mozambique alone, there are a million mines. Angola,



which is the most heavily mined country in the world, has between 8 and 20 million mines in its soil. Considering the fact that Angola's population is only ten million, that means that there are possibly two land mines for every man, woman and child — one for every foot. Three-fifths of the country is virtually impassable because of mines. In Somalia, Nicaragua, Cambodia, and 80 other countries torn by civil war, it's almost as bad.

Money Matters

Land mines are inexpensive weapons; they cost from \$3 to \$30 apiece. However, it costs \$300 to \$1,000 to remove just one. Currently, there are an estimated 100 million land mines buried around the world. It will cost \$30 billion to clear all of them.

The United Nations, which heads up international mine clearance efforts, estimates that some 100,000 land mines were removed in 1995,

but some 2 1/2 million new mines went into the ground that same year. So for every one mine that comes out, 25 are going in! Calculate *those* figures over the course of a few decades, and the alarming growth of this problem seems apparent. Obviously, mine clearance must become a high priority in today's world.

In Mozambique, mines are being cleared by a company named Mechem, which has been given a sizable contract for the job. Here's where the irony comes in: Mechem itself *designed* and *produced* those very mines. The head of Mechem, Vernon Joynt, is known as the father of the South African land mine industry. This type of hypocrisy is not limited to Mechem. Singapore Technologies, for example, is developing protective equipment, like explosive-proof boots to protect the feet of soldiers and de-miners. But their subsidiary makes the mines.

To illustrate the absurdity of this type of "double-dipping," imagine a computer software company with two departments: One that designs virus programs and sells them to destructive "hackers," and another that designs anti-virus scanning software and sells it for ten times more. That could turn a pretty good profit, the company making money at both ends! That's exactly what's happening in the munitions industry.

The U.S. and Land Mines

By this point some may wonder why we should concern ourselves with this issue at all. If a third world nation wants to wage a civil war and bury land mines all over their country, isn't that their own problem? Why should the United States be involved?

That's exactly the problem: The United States is involved. You see, the U.S., along with Russia, China, and Italy, is one of the world's largest producers of land mines. Our country produces over 40 different models alone. Big countries like us get to produce mines and sell them at a hefty profit (like Alliance Technosystems in Hopkins, Minnesota, with \$437 billion in revenue in 1996), but we don't have to deal with the problem. We can make and sell the mines, but we're not the ones who have to step on them.

Our country's response to the land mine problem should be simple: Stop making them. Significantly, it's not only Christian pacifists who are calling for the end of this barbaric trade. In April of last year, 15 high-ranking retired military officials, including General Norman Schwarzkopf of Gulf War fame, wrote the following in a letter to President Clinton:

The rationale for opposing antipersonnel land mines is that they are in a category similar to poison gas; they are hard to control and often have unintended harmful consequences (sometimes even for those who employ them). In addition, they are insidious in that their indiscriminate effects persist long after hostilities have ceased, continuing to cause casualties among innocent people, especially farmers and children.

We understand that: there are 100 million land mines deployed in the world. Their presence makes normal life impossible in scores of nations. It will take decades of slow, dangerous and painstaking work to remove these mines. The cost in dollars and human lives will be immense. Seventy people will be killed or maimed today, 500 this week, more than 2,000 this

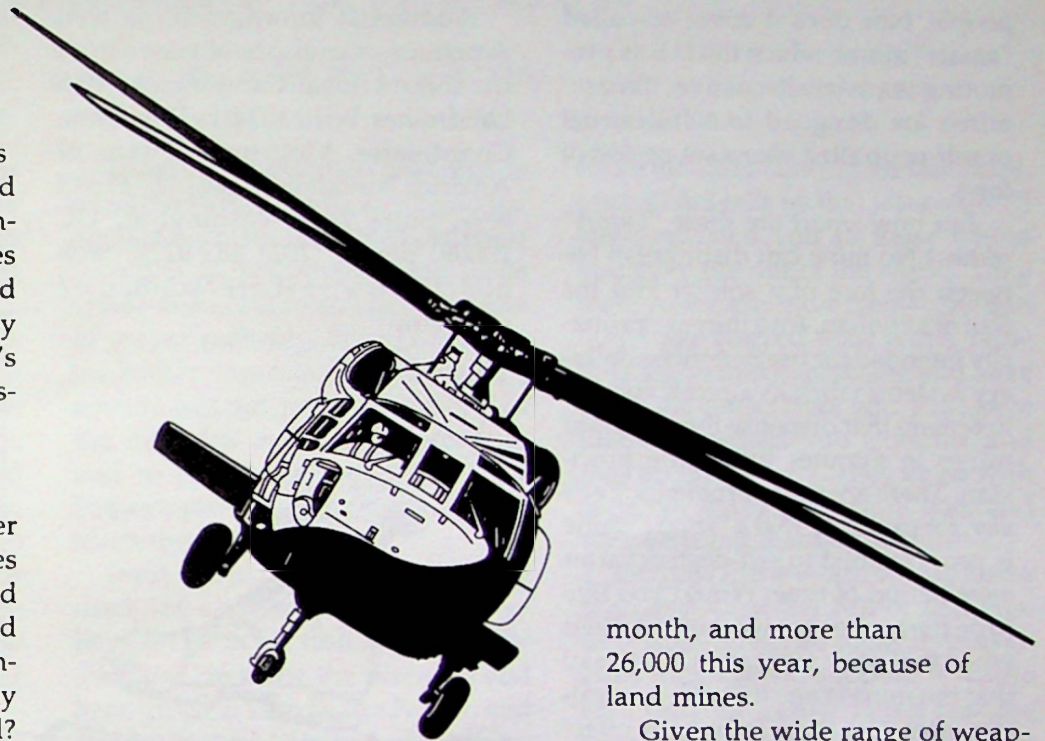
month, and more than 26,000 this year, because of land mines.

Given the wide range of weaponry available to military forces today, antipersonnel land mines are not essential. Thus, banning them would not undermine the military effectiveness or safety of our forces, nor those of other nations.

What Has Been Done So Far?

The United States has initiated a United Nations General Assembly resolution to ban land mines. However, progress in U.N. negotiations has been painfully slow. For example, the greatest achievement of the April 1996 conference in Geneva was an agreement that anti-personnel mines must be detectable — and that agreement doesn't take effect for at least nine years.

Currently, the U.S. has banned exports of anti-personnel mines. But "anti-personnel" is the key word: The ban doesn't cover "hybrid" mines which target vehicles as well as



people. Nor does it cover so-called "smart" mines, which the U.S. is promoting as a safer alternative. "Smart" mines are designed to self-destruct or self-neutralize after a set period of time.

But how smart are these "smart" mines? No mine can distinguish between the foot of a soldier and the foot of a civilian. And they are primarily intended for use in remote-delivery systems (such as aircraft and helicopters) that dispense thousands of mines in minutes with little precision. There are other problems. Let's say, for example, that a "smart" mine is programmed to self-destruct after a set period of time. Would you like to be the farmer out working his field when that mine went off? Or let's say that the mine is one that self-neutralizes after a set time. To be truly effective, the mine would have to be 100% percent accurate, which it isn't. Let's suppose that these mines are 99% effective. Now imagine yourself poised before a field with a hundred mines in it. Would you like to be the one to find the "smart" mine that didn't self-neutralize?

What Can Be Done Now?

If the United States is serious about eliminating the threat of land mines, we must take more initiative. Waiting for an international treaty to be brokered through the United Nations will take decades, like the treaty to ban nuclear testing which was finally achieved in 1996. We cannot wait that long.

As soon as December, dozens of countries are planning to agree to a comprehensive ban on the production, use, export, and stockpiling of mines. Canada is hosting the conference. So far, President Clinton has not committed to signing the treaty. We must urge him to do so.

Additional information, as well as petitions, can also be obtained from the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. Write to Mary Wareham, Coordinator, Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, 2001 "S" Street NW, Suite 740, Washington, DC 20009, phone (202) 483-9222, web <http://www.vvaf.org/landmine/uscl.htm>



Our Christian Witness

Some may feel that trying to influence political and military policy lies outside the purview of our Christian responsibility. But we are already involved in the political landscape, and rightly so. Many of us have actively opposed the killing of innocent unborn children, and have done so with letters, petitions, ballots, even sermons. Surely defending the lives of innocent children who have already been born is just as important. Jesus said, "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven

always see the face of my Father in heaven" (Matt. 18:10, NIV).

These innocents should be protected from the greed of munitions companies as well as from the threat of the surgeon's knife.

But why focus on land mines? Aren't there other deadly weapons, other problems? Yes. But to be effective peacemakers (Matt. 5:9) we need to tackle specific problems, and this is one such problem. We need to set quantifiable goals. As Christians we need to "hold out the word of life" in this "crooked and depraved generation" (Phil. 2:15, 16, NIV), witnessing to the world in our affirmation of God's gift of life. Part of the message of conditional immortality is that death is not a friend that ushers us into immediate bliss, but a terrible enemy to be hated, defied, and ultimately overcome (1 Cor. 15:54, 55).

I have already outlined some of the theological rationale for social action by premillennialists in earlier *HERALD* articles. Our peace witness is not a substitute for our preaching of the gospel; it is a supplement, part and parcel of the good news of the Kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed. We dare not isolate ourselves from problems such as these because we're passively waiting for Jesus to return and bring peace. Jesus calls us to be peacemakers here and now in order to witness to His loving character. The Good Samaritan didn't walk past the wounded man because Jesus was going to return some day anyhow and set everything right. Like the Samaritan of Jesus' parable, we need to take pity on the victims of the world's violent structures. Remember that by the end of this day, another 70 people will have fallen prey to a man-made horror which we have the power to oppose and eliminate. □

Intimacy with God

BY HENRY BLACKABY AND CLAUDE KING

One of the Scriptures that has always deeply disturbed my heart is a passage from 1 Samuel, when God makes an announcement to old Eli, the chief priest.

Eli had devoted his life to religious activity. He had not been careful to watch over his children, either. Now, they were cancelling Eli's ministry. So, God made this statement: "And what happens to your own sons, Hophni and Phineas, will be a sign to you — they will both die on the same day. I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind" (1 Samuel 2:34-35).

God said, "Eli, I want you to know I'm going to look for someone who will have on his heart what's on My heart, and in My mind." That has struck me profoundly. God was looking for someone who had on his heart what was on God's heart.

Is that the pattern of your own personal time alone with God? Do you approach your time of prayer as a time to learn God's agenda, or as a time to get God to do something for you, even bring revival? Somehow, we get in our minds that if we would just plead with God for revival, He would know that our hearts really want to see the lost saved. Well, we don't have to impress God with the need of the lost to be saved. That is already on His heart and mind. What God wants is for us to come to Him, ready to hear what is on His mind. He wants prayer to be the release of self to Him.

There is no question that this is what the Father wants when you examine the prayer life of the Lord Jesus recorded in Scripture. When Jesus would come out from His early time of prayer each day, His agenda was the Father's agenda. But, the Father's agenda had not yet become a part of the disciples' agenda. Jesus continued to pray for them and for the Father's provision of exactly what to teach them.

Jesus stated that He prayed for the disciples, and for all who would believe on Him. He testified to the Father that He knew the disciples had been given to Him by the Father, and that every word He had given them had been from the Father (John 17:6-19).

Jesus' example of consistent prayer was matched by His consistent obedience. When Jesus told Peter (Mark 1:35-39; Luke 4:42-44) that they could not stay with the crowds, He explained that they had to go on to the other towns and villages and preach the Gospel there. Jesus said that was why He had been sent. He told Peter, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent" (Luke 4:43).

God is not impressed with how many people we can get to attend any event or function. He is impressed with how deeply we understand how to obey Him where He's put us. That understanding can only come out of a consistent time of prayer.

The prayer life of Jesus shows us that it was through prayer that Jesus

chose the 12 disciples in the first place. John 17:6-8 tells us that Jesus said, "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me."

But how in the world did He know who and what the Father had chosen? Jesus spent all night in prayer. How long do you suppose it would take God the Father to tell His Son who the 12 were? Why did Jesus spend all night in prayer? All I can say is, if it takes the Lord Jesus all night to get a handle on what the Father was up to at a crucial moment in the Father's activity, don't be surprised if it'll take you at least all night.

It is not accidental that the Bible says Jesus remained all night long. When the morning came, He had it settled. He had not decided what He was going to do, but what the Father had asked Him to do.

When we read of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36), the Father marshals all that He has accomplished through the law and the prophets, and brings to Jesus a complete and total understanding of the Father's activity to redeem the world. Jesus set His face toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51), and neither His friends, nor opposition, nor the enemy of the souls of men could turn Him aside from the unmistakable

activity of God. Prayer kept the Lord Jesus in intimacy with the Father so that Jesus would not miss one moment of the Father's aggressive work in His life. If that is true for the Lord Jesus, it is preeminently true for your life and mine. To understand God's

assignment for those He commits to our hands, we must spend time with God. We must spend time in prayer.

Out of that time and understanding comes intimacy with God. Intimacy with God begins to give you a clear and unmistakable under-

standing of God and His purposes and His ways. There is no shortcut, that I know of, to that intimacy. There are no four easy steps to intercessory prayer. Understanding God's will comes from an established pattern of personal intimacy with God.

Bible Study

1. If God were to evaluate your closeness with Him today, how do you think He would describe your relationship? Which of the following best describes the way the Lord sees your relationship with Him? Ask the Lord to guide you in selecting your response.

a. Intimate: He/She spends ample time with Me and knows what is in My mind and on My heart.

b. Warm: He/She spends some time with Me daily and sometimes listens to Me. I wish we had more time together.

c. Lukewarm: He/She is too casual about spending time with Me. His/Her primary interest is making requests of Me. I don't have time to reveal what is in My mind or on My heart.

d. Distant: He/She seldom seeks Me out except in dire emergencies. I feel like a 911 operator who doesn't have time to form a relationship.

2. Read the following descriptions of Bible characters and the relationships they had with God. Underline a key word or phrase that describes their relationships with God.

a. Adam and Eve: They "heard the sound of the Lord God as He was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord called to the man, 'Where are you?'"

He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid'" (Gen. 3:8-10).

b. Enoch: "Enoch walked with God 300 years . . . Enoch walked with God; then he was no more because God took him away" (Gen. 5:22, 24).

c. Noah: "Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God" (Gen. 6:9).

d. Moses: "The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend" (Ex. 33:11). "When Moses came down from Mount Sinai . . . he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord" (Ex. 34:29).

e. David: "I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do" (Acts 13:22).

f. Jesus: "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered" (Heb. 5:7-8).

3. If you sense that you lack intimacy with God, what adjustments do you need to make in order to experience greater intimacy with Him? Read the Scriptures below and check the adjustments you need to make.

a. Get rid of pride and develop a contrite and lowly spirit: "This is what the high and lofty One says, 'I live in a high and holy place but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit'" (Isa. 57:15).

b. Quit sinning and demonstrate my love by obeying the Lord: "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23).

c. Seek and spend time with the Lord out of a sincere heart: "You will

call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:12-13).

d. Other: _____

Read and meditate on the following Scripture.

In that day you will say, "I will praise you, O Lord. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation."

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day you will say: "Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world" (Isaiah 12:1-5).

Take some time today to get alone with the Lord and spend some open-ended time with Him as your loving heavenly Father and your Friend. Ask Him to guide you in renewing or establishing an intimate relationship with Him that would be pleasing to Him. □

Originally printed in Experiencing God REPORT, January 1997. Special permission granted for republication. The first portion is by Mr. Blackaby; the Bible study portion is by Mr. King.

Till the Heavens Be No More

BY ELLSWORTH RICHARDSON

In Job 14 we find Job telling about the brevity of a man's life. He talks about him being as a flower that is cut down, a shadow that fleeth and continueth not. He is trying to tell us that man's life is short. In verse 10 he tells us that man wasteth away and giveth up the ghost. In other words, he dies.

In Hebrews 9:27, we are told that it is appointed unto man once to die. So death is a normal thing for man. There are other Scriptures to prove this.

But Job, in verse 12, tells us how long man will remain in the grave. He says, "So man lieth down [dies], and riseth not [till when?]: *till the heavens be no more.*" He further emphasizes, "They shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep."

Now this question arises: When shall the heavens be no more?

In Matthew 24 our Lord told of some terrible things that were coming upon this earth — wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, famines, earthquakes, pestilences. He says this is the beginning of sorrows. He speaks of false prophets that will deceive many.

In Matthew 24:29, we see what will happen after this great trouble on earth. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."

Is not this the time that Job spoke about — the sun being darkened, the moon not giving her light, stars falling from heaven, and the powers of heaven being shaken — "till the heavens be no more"?

Verse 30 of Matthew 24 speaks of Christ coming in the clouds of heaven. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17, we find: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall 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."

So we find the time that Job spoke of in Matthew 24:29. In verse 30 we find Christ coming to resurrect the dead. Notice that Christ will come after "the heavens be no more." "So man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more." He further emphasizes, "they shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep."

In Isaiah 13, beginning with verse 6, we find the same thing that Jesus talked about in Matthew 24 — "The Day of the Lord." Verses 10 and 13 speak of the shaking of the heavens.

In Isaiah 34, verses 1 through 3 present a troublesome time while verse 4 says, "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: And all their host shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from a fig tree." Is this the time Job spoke of? Isaiah 51:6 mentions the heavens vanishing away. Also read Hebrews 12:25-26; 2 Peter 3:10; and Luke 21:25-27.

I believe that all Bible students agree that the opening of the seals is a great time of trouble, possibly the same time Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24. You will notice that Revelation 6:12 is the

opening of the sixth seal. Just notice the things that take place in verses 12-14. "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together: and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." Doesn't this sound like the time Job spoke of?

Notice in Revelation 11:15 when the last angel of the seventh seal sounds. "And the seventh angel sounded: and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever." Is not this the coming of Christ to raise the dead — immediately after the heavens be no more?

Let's go back to Job 14 now. He said in verse 12 that man would not rise until the heavens be no more. Verse 13 says, "Oh that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret until thy *wrath* be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me." Job points out here that man will be hidden in the grave until all these troublesome times (*wrath*) be over and then God will raise him. In verses 14 and 15, Job speaks of the resurrection. "So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep." □

African Devotions

BY PASTOR BADSON MIJERI

PASTOR OF MWITIWA CHURCH OF GOD, THYOLO, MALAWI

TRANSLATED BY MARGARET SAKALA AND SUBMITTED BY JAMES AND MARTHA MATTISON

"The heavens are the LORD's heavens, but the earth he has given to human beings" (Psalm 115:16).

That verse in the Word of God reminds us of what we have found through the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith. This is something I have believed for a long time. This encourages me and gives me strength, because God did not create earth for HIS dwelling place. God created the earth for the children of God to inherit. The Word of God says openly that heaven is not a place for the children of God; the earth is for the children of God.

If we go back to the beginning when God created Adam and Eve we can see that God

was pleased with those two people. He gave them dominion over all the earth (Genesis 1:28). Adam [did have a heavenly origin in that he] did come from God, but God formed him from the dust and gave him dominion over everything.

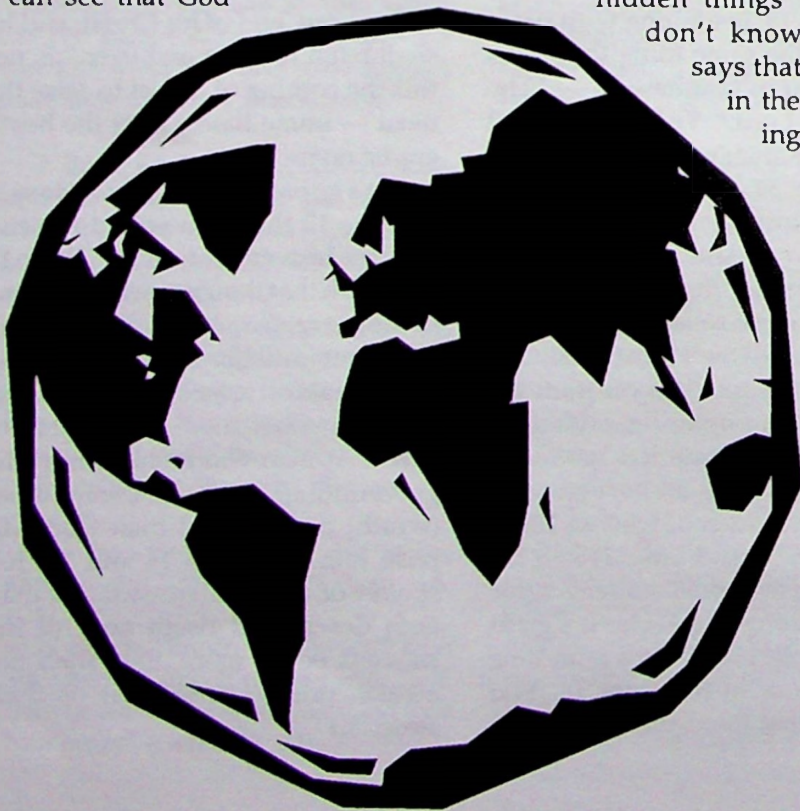
God did not promise that one day you are going to heaven. In heaven all we can see is God, the angels and Jesus on the right side [sic] of God. This is the truth we have found only in this church (Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith). The Word of God says openly that all this truth is revealed. However, many people don't accept that because they believe the deception of the devil.

In 1 Corinthians 15:53 are some "hidden things" that people don't know. The Word says that the dead are in the grave sleeping (Daniel 12:2).

The Word says God will restore everything as it was in the beginning. Sometimes, in the past, when I [Mijeri] heard about Israel I thought it was in heaven. But today I know that Israel is here on earth. I believe that Jerusalem is the capital city of the Kingdom of God. I believe that Jesus is coming and He is going to be established in Jerusalem, where He is going to [sit upon] the throne of God.

We believe, brothers [*speaking to Anthony Buzzard, Joe and Rebekah Martin, Martha and Jim Mattison*], today that this teaching is the only truth we have found here in Malawi. This truth has been hidden for a long, long time. Many preachers here preach that when we die we are going to heaven. Psalm 115:16 tells us that the heavens are the dwelling place of God, and the earth is for the children of God. We are going to inherit the earth. We believe the Bible and these teachings are from the Bible. □

This devotion was given by Mijeri in our room at the Bvumbwe government rest house near Limbe, Malawi, on August 24, 1996. Those present were Anthony Buzzard, Joe and Rebekah Martin, James and Martha Mattison, Pastor Kadula, Margaret Sakala, Beatrice Mijeri, and Austin and Francis Chaima. Pastor Mijeri was converted by Margaret Sakala from the Catholic Church in 1992. Mijeri and Kadula accompanied us everywhere on our second mission trip last summer. — James Mattison



How to Reach Secular People

BY DAVID KROGH

"How do you communicate Christianity's meaning to people who do not darken church doors, who have no church background, who possess no traditional Christian vocabulary, who do not know what we are talking about?"

Many growing churches today are primarily growing through transfer growth. People who were attending one church become dissatisfied and start attending another church. Or, people who have dropped out of church for several years for various reasons become reactivated in other churches. This is all happening at a time when it is estimated that there are more than 120,000,000 functionally undisciplined people ages 14 and older in the United States.

One of the textbooks used in the evangelism and missions course at Atlanta Bible College is a book by George G. Hunter III entitled *How to Reach Secular People*. The author points out that on an average Sunday 6% of people in West Germany and Italy attend church; between 1-3% in the Scandinavian countries; and less than 12% in Great Britain. In Canada, the percentage of people attending church on an average Sunday is less than half of what it was 40 years ago. Though church attendance in the United States has remained relatively constant at about 40% of the population, the author of

this text calls much American church attendance Christo-pagan. He defines that as "American civil religion in Christian clothing. Some churches



"Much American church attendance is Christo-pagan."



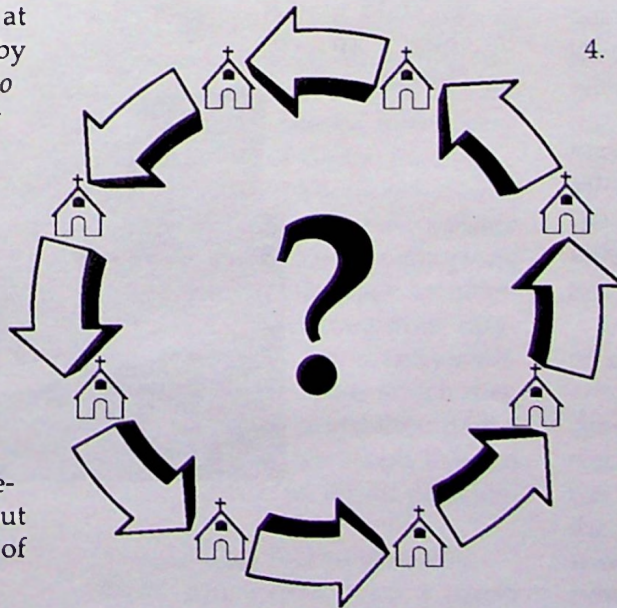
concoct a hash from ingredients like patriotism, moralism, cultural values, with some wisdom mixed with celebrities with selected Bible verses and then they serve the hash as Christianity."

The author says that the map of the Christian world mission has

changed. Whereas Western civilization was primarily Christian for nearly 2,000 years, secularization has swept through our culture causing the decline of Christianity.

George Hunter lists six watershed events that he believes are the reason why the West was lost:

1. The Renaissance which redirected people's attention from God and theological matters to matters of this world, to humans, and to humanity's progress.
2. The Reformation which turned the churches attention away from society and inward toward renewal, reorganization, and theological matters.
3. Nationalism which led to unprecedented warfare and therefore disillusionment and doubts about God.
4. Science which challenged Christendom's pre-scientific assumptions about the universe and human life.
5. The enlightenment belief that science, technology, and education will deliver inevitable progress.
6. The urbanization stampede which changed much of the world from a rural population where most churches were located to an urban culture where churches have been slow to establish.



The author proceeds to help the reader understand the secular population and then offers valuable insight on how to communicate with secular people. He discusses the kind of Christians who reach secular people and the kind of churches that can reach secular people.

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The message must not change, but the way ministry is done must change.

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The author has a strong passion for reaching secular people and he would encourage all believers to develop the same passion. He concludes that if the church is to reach even half of the 120,000,000 secular unchurched people in the United States today, it would require 100,000 churches that were averaging five new conversions per month over the next ten years to reach 60,000,000 people. He asks "Where would such churches come from?" He answers his question by proposing two strategies:

1. That a sizable number of present churches in the United States catch the vision and move from tradition to mission. In other

words, he challenges churches to consider laying aside their long-held traditions to design a ministry that will appeal to unchurched people. He strongly believes that the message must not change, but the way ministry is done must change.

2. He secondly proposes that many new churches need to be started which will intentionally reach out to the secular population.

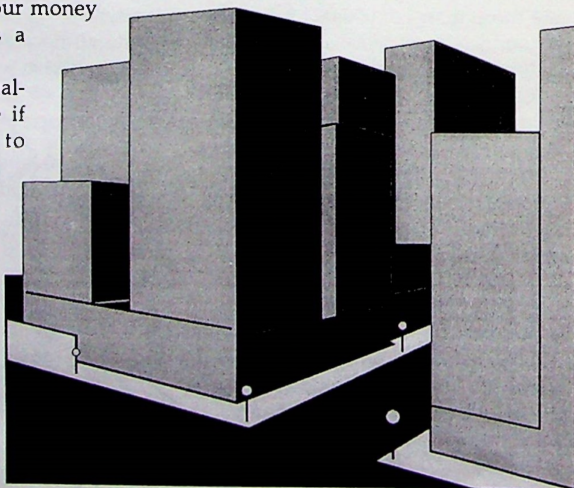
How can churches reach out to secular people? In a survey conducted by Rick Warren, a pastor in California, he found there are four main reasons why unchurched people don't attend:

1. Sermons are boring and irrelevant to their lives.
2. The members are unfriendly to visitors.
3. Churches seem more interested in your money than you as a person.
4. They want quality child care if they go to church.

Addressing these issues would not be a bad idea for any church that wants to have an effective ministry today. But these issues become extremely important if we want to reach secular people.

This book is *must* reading for believers who are concerned about the Great Commission and what can be done to reach the world. □

(This book is published by Abingdon Press and may be secured in a local Christian bookstore or through the Business Office of the Church of God General Conference, P.O. Box 100,000, Morrow, GA 30260 or call 1-800-347-4261.)



Slaying in the Spirit

Should Christians Seek the Experience?

BY ANTHONY BUZZARD

An increasingly popular activity among so-called "charismatic" believers involves an experience of what claims to be "the presence of God's spirit." It goes under various names: "slaying in the Spirit," "resting in the Spirit," "falling under the power," "fainting under the Spirit." Participants typically fall backwards during a healing or prayer session conducted by a minister experienced in such "moves of the Spirit." Recipients of this "blessing" report a temporary loss of consciousness or perhaps a deep sense of peace, as they lie prostrate on their backs. Others demonstrate more startling manifestations. After being caught by "catchers" who intervene to prevent a fall all the way to the floor, some have recently roared like lions, barked like dogs, howled like wolves or clucked like chickens. Others jump up and down for an extended period of time. Cases of levitation (notably in meetings conducted by Kenneth Hagin) have also been reported.

Testing the Slaying Phenomenon

Christians are committed to a fundamental obligation to "examine all things" in the light of Scripture. Experiences, however well-meaning those who receive or administer them may appear to be, are no safe guide to a genuine blessing. Scripture is full of warnings that powers hostile to God can transmit feelings of delight or peace. This is because Satan mas-

querades as an angel of light and possesses supernatural powers which threaten to deceive even the elect (Matt. 24:24). The mature Christian will accept the responsibility of comparing the "slaying" experience with the testimony of Scripture.

If one examines the four Gospels one will find that not once during Jesus' healing ministry did anyone fall to the ground as a result of His touch or prayer. Never on any occasion did anyone "fall or faint under the Spirit" when receiving healing or blessing from Peter or Paul. There is not a single reported case in the Bible of anyone causing another to fall to the ground by touching his head. No children on whom Jesus laid hands fell down, went into a trance, or had a vision. When Jesus, after the resurrection, imparted the holy spirit to the apostles (John 20:22) no one fell. The phenomenon of "slaying" is conspicuous by its absence from every biblical account of divine healing.

The Christian public does not seem to be much concerned for the witness of the Bible. Sometimes traveling long distances, thousands flock to meetings where the phenomenon of "slaying" is manifested. Apparently without recourse to the Bible which they claim as a guide to direct their paths, they are eager to gain access to what is clearly a most unbiblical practice.

People who Fell in Worship

Those who experienced a direct encounter with God or Jesus in the

Bible are found in Daniel 8:16-18; 10:7-11; Ezekiel 1:28; 2:1-2; 3:22-24; Matthew 17:5-7 and Revelation 1:17-18. How do these accounts compare with the modern charismatic "slaying"? Several differences are obvious. In the Bible there was no mediating human agent who imparted "the experience" to another. In the Bible people fell on their faces in worship; no one fell backwards into the arms of a catcher.

Frances MacNutt, a charismatic healer, tells of a woman who fell backwards "with a horrendous crashing noise . . . obviously injured; naturally we gathered round and began praying. After a while she got up and said she would be fine . . . [later] a lump rose on the back of her head and she was taken to the emergency room where she was diagnosed with concussion and immediately hospitalized." One can only wonder about the clumsiness of the "holy spirit." On another occasion a North Carolina lady fractured her back when she fell backwards during a healing service. She spent two months in the hospital.

In the Bible when the Spirit is encountered in a dramatic fashion everyone is affected (Acts 26:12-16). In charismatic meetings the one conducting the meeting is untouched by the Spirit and remains standing. In the Bible not one person fell backwards when receiving healing. This, however, is contrary to modern healing meetings when "slaying" often

Slaying in the Spirit (continued from page 23)

happens when healing is claimed. In Scripture angels often commanded a prostrate worshipper to stand up (Ezek. 2:1, 2; 3:24; Dan. 8:18; 10:18-19; Matt. 17:6-7; Acts 9:6). In charismatic meetings some remain on the ground for hours and can experience a grogginess after they stand up.

Judged by the light of Scripture the answer to our question is clear. God nowhere sanctions or encourages a loss of consciousness or balance as a genuine spiritual experience to be administered by one human being to another. The *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* notes in the article on "Slain in the Spirit": "An entire battalion of Scripture proof texts is enlisted to support the legitimacy of the phenomenon, although Scripture plainly offers no support for the phenom-

enon as something to be expected in the normal Christian life."

Hypnosis and states of mind induced by meditation may involve trance-like experiences. These are not therefore genuine encounters with God and the Holy Spirit. A trance-like condition (however delightful or impressive) experienced at the hands of one who claims to be a vehicle of the power of God is not a biblically based way of worshipping God. It can claim no precedent in the Bible which is our source of divine wisdom and guidance. Not one case of Jesus blessing or healing was ever accompanied by a fall backwards to the ground or a "slaying." It is of interest to note that there are two occasions when falling backwards or going backwards are recorded in Scripture. The enemies of Jesus re-

treated and fell to the ground (John 18:6), and Eli the priest fell backwards off his seat when disaster struck him and Israel (1 Sam. 4).

Euphoric experiences in a church setting may well encourage people to study and pray. If someone believes that the experience comes from God he will naturally react with increased devotion. This does not, however, prove that the experience was truly from God. It is sometimes said that since there are counterfeit experiences of the supernatural, there must be a genuine experience of God to be found at the hands of someone claiming to administer a special physical sensation. But this argument assumes that God desires to have people fall backwards or faint when hands are laid on them. The Bible shows that He nowhere commended such practice. □

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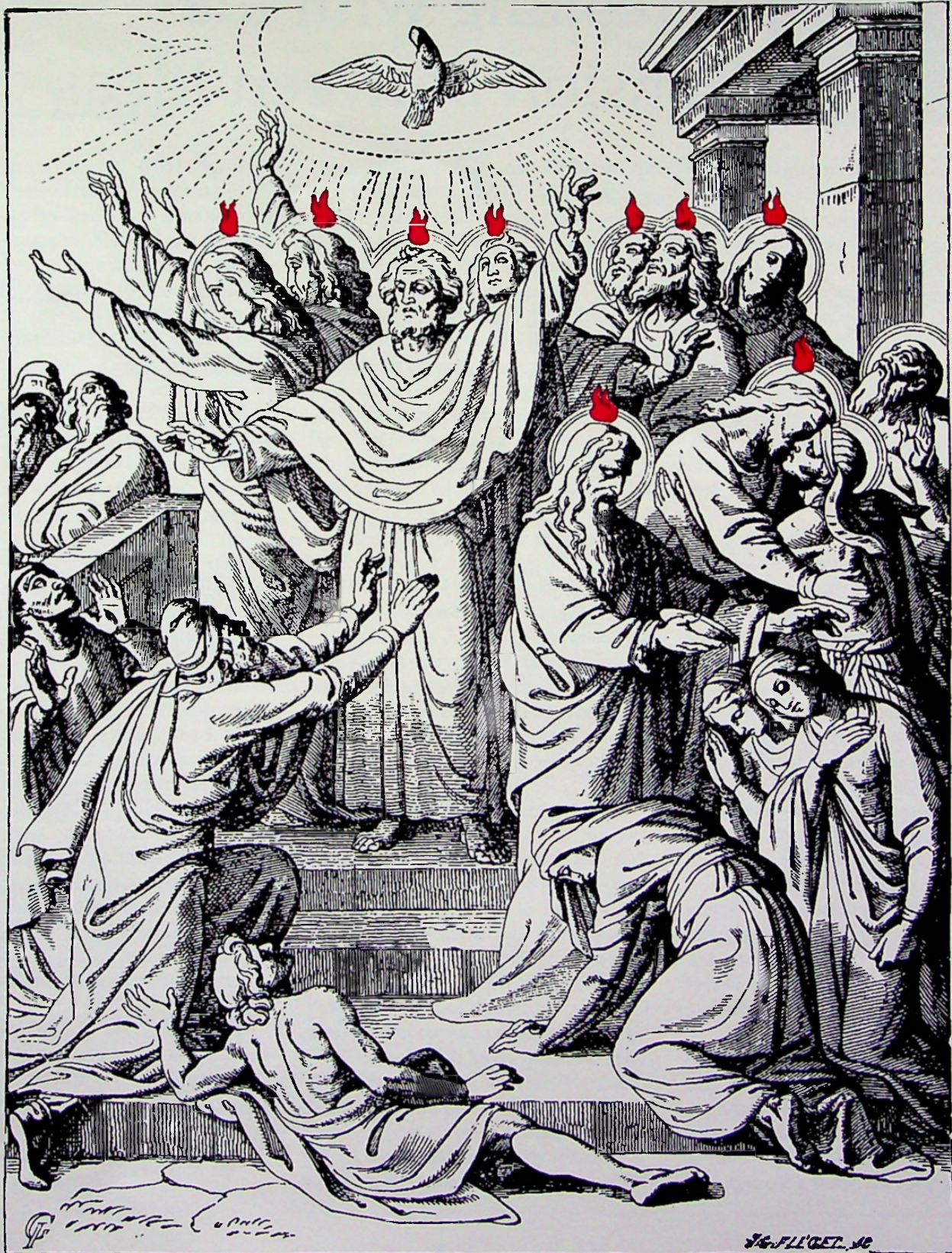
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The Restitution Herald

June, July • 1997

Volume 86, Number 5





Wrestling with the Tension Between Ideas

I want to take a few moments to talk with you about the last issue of THE RESTITUTION HERALD (April, May 1997). Your overall response to the issue as a whole was highly favorable, but there was some disagreement among you with regard to the article "Musings on Christology." Some of you felt it was an excellent article, well thought out and well written. You felt that it raised some important issues that are being discussed within the Church of God and that it was certainly appropriate to publish in THE RESTITUTION HERALD.

Some of you were strongly opposed to the article. You felt that it was too speculative and left the reader with a false impression regarding what the Church of God stands for. Some of you were so angry that you threw away your bulk subscription bundles and refused to distribute the magazine within your churches or evangelistically to those outside of the church.

First of all, let me say that as editor I take full responsibility for every article that is published in THE RESTITUTION HERALD. If you are angry about this article (or any article) being published please do not direct your anger at the author, the Board of Directors, the president of the Conference, or the General Conference as a body. Direct the blame at the appropriate person, the editor.

Second, I very much appreciate hearing from you. I value your input and feedback with regard to the magazine. When you take the time to write, call or E-mail me it shows that you care about the magazine and what goes into it. I

appreciate both your positive comments and also your criticisms. If you feel strongly about something, either positively or negatively, please don't hesitate to contact me. (Note my new E-mail address printed on page 3.)

Third, with regard to the last issue, some of the feedback I received came from individuals who were concerned that THE RESTITUTION HERALD had changed its position regarding the nature of God. Please understand that this has not happened. Note that the things we stand for as a magazine, found on page three, have not changed. Number one is still "The Oneness of God." Also, go back and check out the article on page five, "Two Gods?" by Juan Baixeras. I can't imagine a clearer statement on the Oneness of God than was presented by this remarkable new adherent of biblical unitarianism. (The story he shared at the Theological Conference this year about his search for and discovery of truth was very inspiring.)

Juan's article was intentionally placed alongside Greg Demmitt's "Musings on Christology" to give the reader an opportunity to wrestle with the tension between ideas. Juan's conclusion was that anyone who thinks that Jesus is God is a polytheist. Greg believes that "we should consider as Christian brothers and sisters all those who call upon Jesus as Savior and offer Him lordship over their lives." Both articles were well thought out, scripturally based and compelling. As Christians we are, at times, forced to wrestle with theological tensions even in the Bible — for example salvation by grace

through faith versus works. Now there's tension. Martin Luther had such a tough time with the tension between Paul's letter to the Romans and James' epistle that he simply wanted to remove the book of James from the Bible altogether. That is one way of dealing with tension between ideas. Another is to strive for balance, to avoid the errors of extremism.

Greg's article made me wrestle with some of my extremist thinking. It made me uncomfortable, not because I thought what he said was wrong — but because it led me to the conclusion that he may be right. He forced me to step outside of my comfort zone — just as James forced Luther out of his comfort zone. I believe the role of pastors, teachers, biblical writers — even the Bible itself — is to challenge us to stretch our thinking and understanding, to avoid becoming lethargic, complacent, and (dare I say it?) too comfortable with our definitions of faith.

Whether or not you agree with Greg's musings, I hope that reading them forced you to go back to your Bible and look afresh at what it says. If you came away more fully convinced than ever of the things you believe, praise the Lord! If the article challenged you to rethink some of your presuppositions, if it stretched you, praise the Lord!

But if you read the first two paragraphs, got angry and threw it away or refused to read any further, can I invite you to go back and read it? (I'd be happy to send you a copy of the article.) You don't have to agree with it,

(continued on page 6)

The Restitution Herald

THE RESTITUTION HERALD
VOLUME 86, NUMBER 5: JUNE, JULY 1997. ©1997.

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- 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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Set Free by the Truth

BY PEG ECKEL

As Ken sat in the pew of the charismatic church that we attended, he heard the pastor trying his best to explain to the congregation why he was leaving in 11 weeks to take another position at another church. Ken was listening intently, so he thought, but was distracted from the pastor's speech by another "voice" — very audible, very clear — that Ken heard say: "I have called you to My ministry; this is your church now." Ken shook his head, as if to clear it, and decided that he didn't really hear anything. He went back to concentrating on what the pastor was saying. In just a short while, there the "voice" was again, only a little louder this time: "Ken! I have called you to My ministry! This is your church now!" Ken got up immediately and came home. He knew that this time, it wasn't just his imagination. He believed God was calling him to His ministry, but he was shocked and a little scared.

This kind of thing was not uncommon in Pentecostal churches. We'd often heard "testimonies" of this kind of thing happening to others. Upon his arriving home, I saw that something was wrong — Ken looked like he had just seen a ghost! I asked, "What's wrong? What happened?!" Ken related to me what had just happened at church. I was taken aback by his story, not because he told me that God had called him to His ministry, but because I couldn't picture myself as a "pastor's wife." I just didn't consider myself "good" enough for that. I had heard of God doing some "strange" things in these "last days," so although we didn't understand why God would "call" Ken and me, we were willing to be "pastor" and wife if that's what He wanted us to do. We loved Him and we would do anything that He asked us to do.

The next morning Ken went to work as usual and I started my daily housework. But I couldn't get what happened the day before out of my mind. I decided to call our friend Samantha. She was "spirit-filled" and she had first taken us to the church, so I thought that she would know what we should do.

I called Samantha and told her everything that had happened to Ken the day before. I'll never forget her words. She said: "I feel a leading in my spirit that we should pray." So Samantha prayed and when she finished she asked God quietly for "guidance." Then

Samantha spoke these words: "My child, this is truly of Me. I have called your husband to My ministry. Don't doubt! Don't doubt! Trust Me! Trust Me! There will be many obstacles. I will remove them all — for I, the Lord your God, have spoken it!" After hearing these words, I was totally convinced that Ken had really and truly heard from God, and I was so proud of him!

When Ken came home from work, I told him what had happened and about the "Word from God" that Samantha had spoken on the phone to me. Ken immediately called and talked to Samantha himself. He told her what had happened at the church the day before. Samantha told Ken that she felt they should pray. Once again Samantha prayed and then she had a "Word" for Ken. It was identical (which meant it was a confirmation) to the "Word" that was spoken to me. Samantha's advice to us was: "do what God tells you to do from now on."

That night, after our four kids were in bed, Ken and I knelt and prayed that God would guide and show us what He would have us do.

Ken and I were on our knees every night after that for the next 11 weeks! We were shown, by visions, and told, by "messages," many things: Ken would eventually have a worldwide ministry that would begin with "taking the pulpit" in our present church; Ken saw "visions" of his eventual "new church building"; three nights we were "told" to stay up all night and God would "sustain" us, even though Ken had to go to work in the morning and I had to take care of our home and four children; we obeyed and we were not tired the next day.

As time drew closer to the day when Ken would "take the pulpit" at the church, we were shown more and more details of what would happen that Sunday when Ken would begin his ministry. We were told that God "would announce His choice of Ken for the new church pastor by two members of the congregation having 'tongues and interpretation.'" Then Ken would "take the pulpit." Ken even had a sermon prepared for his first day as pastor.

A few nights before the "big day," Ken had what I thought was a strange "message" from God. Ken was told at the beginning of this "message" that he should "quit his job"! But at the very end of the "message" a "word" came: "but don't quit your job yet!" I thought this was strange

because we knew that Ken would have to quit his job if he was going to be a full-time minister. But because God said not to quit, he didn't quit his job.

Finally the day arrived! I was so disappointed that I couldn't go with Ken to church because our little girl was sick. But we just accepted it as God's Will and Ken went off to church by himself. He was so excited and light as a feather with every confidence that God would do all that He had promised to do for us in the previous 11 weeks! It was an awesome day for us; we felt very blessed!

An hour or so passed and Sue called. She said she had been praying and that God "told" her that Ken "was in the pulpit preaching"! I was so excited! I tried to picture him there in the pulpit preaching the sermon he had prepared. I knew how dedicated he was to God's "calling"! He was so determined to be a good minister of God! We were very happy!!

I had no sooner hung up the phone with Sue when our front door flew open! I walked to the steps (we lived on the second floor) and saw Ken! All these thoughts began flooding my mind! I said, "Ken, what are you doing here? Sue just told me that God told her you're preaching! Church couldn't be over already!" And then it hit me, the reality of what I saw on his face. Ken looked like he had been hit by a truck! He was gray looking — like someone had knocked all the breath out of him. As he climbed the steps to our apartment, he was doubled over so far that his chin almost hit the steps as he walked. As he reached the top he just shook his head "no" and held on to me and cried. He kept saying, "It was all for nothing. They wouldn't believe me! They wouldn't believe me!" Ken had to go to bed for a while; he was totally exhausted. He slept all afternoon. I spent the day in total confusion. I knew something terrible had happened and I was very numb.

Later, when Ken was composed, he told me what had happened. Ken went to the church service as we were "told" he should. He waited for the tongues and interpretation which we had been "told" would come to announce Ken's "ministry." The "tongues and interpretation" never came. Ken was so determined to obey the things that God had told us to do in the previous 11 weeks that he did not give up just because these "tongues and interpretation" didn't come.

Now, it just so happened that the district leader of the church was there that day to welcome the man whom *they* had picked to "take the pulpit." Ken, so fully convinced that it was God's Will that he "take the pulpit," went up

to this "leader" and requested a meeting with him and the board members of the church. He told them (very boldly) that it was very important that he meet with them. They met with him after the church service in the downstairs Sunday School room.

When they were all assembled, Ken had "tongues and interpretation" and announced his own "ministry." When Ken was finished, the men (leaders) mocked and scoffed him; one man told Ken he would have a desire to first teach Sunday School if God was truly "calling" him to preach. Ken told this man he had no desire to teach Sunday School; his desire was to serve God and preach His Word! When Ken shared with them all that had happened during the previous 11 weeks, another man said to him, "my spirit doesn't bear witness with your spirit." Another man told Ken that this was just "wishful thinking," that "self" got into it, and that he shouldn't worry about it. Then they all left Ken standing there alone and devastated and broken-hearted.

After Ken finished telling me what had happened, he put his Bible away. He was totally DEVASTATED!! Three months later, Ken ended up in the VA hospital with a nervous breakdown; he had lost 64 lbs. in one month.

As for me, I was extremely tempted to totally give up trusting God, but I refused to do that. My faith was down to a mere flicker (about as big as a grain of mustard seed), but it was still there and so was my love for God! I held on to that for dear life!! But for a long time I felt "used and abused."

The damage that was done to my husband was irreversible in many areas. Today he sometimes reads his Bible. But he does not consider "reaching out" anymore. He will not share his beliefs unless he is specifically asked to do so. The boldness and the desire he once had to speak God's Word is gone.

In November 1995, Ken and I heard the Gospel of God (the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ) for the first time in our lives!! We believed it!!

What happened to us happened because we did not know the Gospel of God. Hosea 4:6 says it all!! By God's wonderful mercy and love, Ken and I came through horrendous days of error and deception.

The way to cure deception is to seek and find Truth. Our prayer for everyone is that they would "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness"! □

Editor's note: Peg is a newly baptized member of the Church of God who lives in Fredericksburg, PA.

On Recent "Revivals"

BY DAVID WILKERSON — REPRINTED FROM WORLD CHALLENGE, INC.

I have been receiving a number of letters asking my opinion about certain "revivals" in Canada and the USA. I have been told, "Brother Dave, your name is frequently used in the ---- revival. Times Square Church is named often. Does this mean you approve of that movement?"

I have never endorsed any so-called revival. First of all, I do not consider my opinion as being that important — and secondly, I can neither help nor hinder any true spiritual movement. I have not been to any of these meetings so I have no personal involvement. I have been so busy ministering to multitudes of hurting people here in New York — and shepherding a ten-year moving of the Holy Spirit in this great metropolis at Times Square Church.

Do I believe any of the "revivals" represent the last-days outpouring — the last great revival before Jesus comes? No! Not at all. We should rejoice in every work of the Spirit that results in true conversions — but any "revival" that purports itself to be "the great revival" and is promoted and "spread" by its leaders must be

immediately discounted. When the last great outpouring comes, it is prophesied to come "upon all flesh." It will not be isolated in just a few areas. No one will be counting numbers. Hungry seekers will not be falling backwards — but frontwards, on their faces, humbled and broken. The preaching of the cross will be central. There will be no fundraising, no introducing of star visitors. The meetings will be times of wooing by the Holy Spirit, because He never drives people to altars — He woos them. No one will have to defend such an outpouring. All manifestations will focus on Christ, not flesh. Weeping, brokenness, a lifting of holy hands in thankfulness for God's mercy and grace will produce a true spirit of joy.

Local revivals usually have a life span of five to six years, or less. Even the Azusa Street revival that gave birth to modern Pentecostalism lasted less than six years. People flock from around the world to see the "new thing." Good reports and evil reports go throughout the land. Theologians and preachers either bless or curse it. Some who attend are blessed and changed; others leave wounded and

confused. So it is today — nothing changes. I have heard from some who visited a revival and were greatly touched. Others write telling us they left emotionally wounded and convinced it was mostly flesh. God be praised for all who have repented and are changed. For others, I grieve. Tides that come in must go out. The Toronto tide is fading fast — its tide going out. Soon it will be only a memory. So with all other localized revivals. The excitement ebbs — the crowds leave — and suddenly it is all over.

My recommendation? Get your own revival! You will find it in Isaiah 58:10-11. You need no airline ticket, no travel. I have found the springs of water that never fail!

And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. □

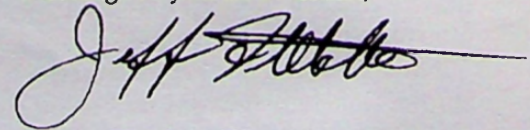
Wrestling with the Tension Between Ideas (continued from page 2)

or like it — but read it and read your Bible, and wrestle for a few minutes with the tension.

I'm guessing that in this issue and in upcoming issues there may be some thought, some idea that you don't agree with or necessarily like. May I suggest that if something challenges you then let it be an impetus for you to go back

to your Bible and study? Take it to your Sunday School class or home Bible study and enter into a dialogue about it with others. Get on COGmail* and share your ideas, ask your questions, raise challenges. We have a wonderful opportunity to learn and grow and "spur one another on to love and good works."

Blessings to you all in Christ,



Jeffrey Fletcher, Editor

*To subscribe to COGmail, the Church of God's E-mail forum for prayer requests and sharing of ideas, please E-mail Jan Stilson at: jans@sinnfree.org

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

BY JIM MATTISON

Phase One: *From the beginning until Christ.* There is one God, and one God only. Abraham had to learn this. So did Israel, time after time. He was the mighty Deliverer who could be trusted to take care of them. Their whole social, religious and daily lives were to revolve around Him. By His power and word He had made all things. He Himself dealt personally with men. He walked with Adam in the garden. He called Abraham. He raised up judges to deliver sinful Israel when they called to Him. "The Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon Gideon" (Judg. 6:34). "The Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon" Samson (14:6). Later, God had to send an Elijah to drag them back to Him. Hosea recalled Israel to her first love, Yahweh. Jeremiah and Isaiah continually remind the people that there is one God only, who is their refuge. Thus God Himself dealt with His people by His Word and Power in the Old Testament.

Phase Two: *On from Bethlehem.* God now speaks to us through His Son. "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1, 2). This JESUS, Son of God, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and God gave not that Spirit by measure unto Him (Jn. 3:34). This Spirit was given Him at His baptism (Matt. 3:16, John 1:32, 33). "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon

him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit." God indeed visited and redeemed His people through Jesus, *Emmanuel*, God with us, and savior. Jesus used this power to do good "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38).

The Spirit of God is no natural quality of man.



Phase Three: *Began at Pentecost and has not ended.* When Jesus left He asked God to send another Comforter to dwell with us, to be in us: the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-26; 16:7-14). This is also called the spirit of truth. This Comforter was to work in and be a blessing to *all* who believed. Paul commands *all* believers to be *filled* with it, not to grieve it or quench it, but be "comforted" and strengthened by it (see Phil. 2:1). Paul speaks of "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:19). Everywhere in Paul's writings he speaks of our great need for this spirit of God and of Christ (Romans 8; 1 Cor. 12:1-7, etc.). If we don't have it, we are none of His (Rom 8:9).

The Meaning of "Spirit"

Ruach in Hebrew and *pneuma* in Greek have the three main meanings of "wind," "breath," and "spirit." The spirit of God is the life-giving breath by which we remain alive. It also can make us alive spiritually. This spirit is God's mysterious wind which man cannot get under his control. This wind is powerful, yet mysterious. Jesus said, "The wind [*pneuma*] blows where it will, and you hear its sound but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit [*pneuma*]" (Jn. 3:8).

The Spirit of God is no natural quality of man. Our human quality is described by another word: *nepesh*. *Nepesh* is natural; it belongs to man. True, *ruach* is sometimes used for the breath of life, as in Genesis 6:17, but actually *ruach* belongs to God. It is supernatural. The Bible emphasizes that this powerful mysterious Spirit belongs to God and to God alone. Man can ask for it, can use it, can be filled with it, but it is not his own spirit, which is natural (Job 32:8; Jer. 17:9). God's Spirit is a HOLY Spirit.

New Testament Teaching on Baptism in the Holy Spirit

There are only seven references in the New Testament to baptism in or by the Holy Spirit. Six of them refer to the baptism John the Baptist predicted the Messiah would bring. In contrast

to his own water baptism, Jesus would baptize with the Spirit. Plainly this is the meaning in Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; and Matthew 3:11. John 1:33 is similar. Acts 1:5 is equally expressive. There, Jesus reminds the disciples of John's words: "for John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence."

The sixth reference, Acts 11:16, shows Peter explaining the Cornelius conversion to his Jerusalem colleagues:

As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them [Cornelius and that group] as on us at the beginning [at Pentecost]. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God?

In these six references we have a clear picture: John baptized with water; Jesus would baptize with Holy Spirit. This became possible on the day of Pentecost when the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred on the Jews only (Acts 2). Later, Peter was amazed that this same thing happened to Gentiles (Acts 10), showing that all men now were accepted of God if they believed, repented, and were baptized. In the one case it gave the apostles the ability to speak the wonderful works of God in different languages. In the other it confirmed that Gentiles also were acceptable to God, that Gentiles can also receive this Holy Spirit power.

It seems evident in Acts 19 that the twelve men were not Christians yet, being baptized only with John's baptism. When they were baptized into Christ, they were then able to receive the Holy Spirit. It is the same with us, as the seventh reference shows. The seventh reference, 1 Corinthians 12:13, reads, "By one Spirit are we baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, and whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Doesn't this mean that by God's Spirit we are all baptized into God's family?

Paul said there was only one baptism (Eph. 4:5). Peter said when we

This writer understands it is at baptism that we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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are baptized in water in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Jesus said it this way: You must be born of water and the Spirit to enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5). He explained that by saying, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit . . . You must be born again" (vv. 6, 7). Jesus calls this salvation process being born of the Spirit (v. 8).

The difference between flesh and spirit is a large part of Paul's teaching. We must be born of water *and* born of the spirit. That baptism, when we believe and repent, is what brings

us into Christ and keeps us in the spiritual way. It is this Spirit of God in us that changes us to be like Him. The formula for Kingdom entrance is clear: we must be born of water and the spirit to be born again. This takes place in this age as we look forward to complete salvation in the age to come.

Back to Pentecost

Joel predicted that in the last days God would "pour out [His] spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servant and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit" (Joel 2:28, 29). After the baptism of the Holy Spirit had been given at Pentecost, Peter said Joel's words were fulfilled. The Spirit had been given. It was a one-time thing, but we must couple it with the baptism of the Spirit on the Gentiles in Acts 10 and 11. Both together fulfilled Joel's prediction. This outpouring of GOD'S Spirit in its fullness was bestowed on the CHURCH. From that moment on God's spirit was to dwell in the church as God's Temple, and take up permanent residence within each member.

We are either "flesh" or "spirit." Pentecost was the beginning of the Comforter or Spirit for all believers. This is indicated by what Peter said after Acts 2:38. Talking about having sins remitted and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, Peter said, "The promise [these two above things: sins remitted and gift of spirit given] is unto you, and to your children, and to all

that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." This includes us. This promise is to us also. We today can also have the Comforter, the Holy Spirit to help us. In fact, Paul commands us to be filled with it (Eph. 5:18).

Examining "The Promise of My Father"

Jesus told the apostles to wait in Jerusalem after His ascension, "until ye be endued [enclosed] with *power from on high*" (Lk. 24:49). Luke also wrote Acts, and there he continues this thought in Acts 1:4-8. "They should not depart from Jerusalem, but *wait for the promise of the Father . . . for . . . ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence . . . ye shall receive power*, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be *witnesses unto me* both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and *unto the uttermost part of the earth.*" This includes us!

In these passages, the "Power from on high," "the promise of my Father," and "ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit" all refer to the same thing. It all happened at Pentecost, and this promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to us today. It is out there for us to take and use. It is available to us.

The Spirit of God came upon New Covenant men at Pentecost as the sound of a rushing mighty *wind*. It looked like a tongue of fire rested on each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. The first thing they did with it was to speak of the wonderful works of God in the many

languages of the 17 nationalities assembled there. This made it possible for 3000 to understand their sins and see that JESUS was their Savior, and they were baptized into Christ that same day. Later, many others were also converted to Christ.

The apostle John notes that this giving of the Spirit called the Comforter could not occur until Jesus Himself was glorified (John 7:39). Jesus was glorified when He was resurrected by God from the dead to eternal life 50 days before Pentecost.

This very passage, John 7:37-39, gives *all Christians* the wonderful promise that out of *us* can flow rivers

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the control of the old
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of living water of the Spirit. "If any man thirst [and we all do, don't we?] let him *come unto me and drink*. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said [Isa. 12:3?], out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (*But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should after receive*: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" What a marvelous and comforting promise, that we who believe in Jesus can have the SPIRIT OF GOD to help us in life today and to proclaim Christ!

When Do We Receive This Power of God?

If this power of God is for us today, and Acts 2:38-39; 1:8; and John 7:37-39 show this to be true, when do we receive it?

Acts 2:38-39 and 1 Corinthians 12:13 indicate that after faith and repentance have pricked our hearts, we are "born again" (John 3:3, 5) by water and spirit and become new creatures. Our old man of the flesh has been replaced by the new man of the Spirit. We are no longer under the control of the old human nature, but now are under the control of God and of Christ.

(Other passages showing that God will give us His Spirit: Luke 11:13 — God will give the Holy Spirit to those who *ask* Him. Acts 5:32 — God will give His Holy Spirit to them that *obey* Him. 1 Thessalonians 4:8 — God has given His Holy Spirit to *His children*. Galatians 4:6 — Because we are His sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son *into our hearts*.)

This writer understands that it is at baptism that we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit. Yet a gift has to be received, accepted, and used to be profitable and helpful.

What Will It Do?

Look at Jesus. He received the Holy Spirit at baptism (Matt. 3:16; John 1:32-33). What did Jesus do with it? How did He use it? With His anointing by it, Jesus used that Spirit to powerfully preach the gospel of the Kingdom, to teach, and to heal (Matt. 4:23). With that Spirit He went about

doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil (Acts 10:38).

What will *we* do with God's Spirit when we receive it?

- It is to be used to help us become more Christlike (Gal. 5:22-23).
- It is to be used to help us turn from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18).
- It gives us *assurance* that we have been adopted (Gal. 4:5, 6; Eph. 1:5; Rom 8:15, 16) and sealed (Eph. 1:13; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 4:30). It is the "earnest" (pledge, down payment) of our future inheritance. It is God's first installment of the future salvation that awaits us.
- It is the firstfruits of the Spirit that God gives us today as we wait for the day when our "vile bodies" shall be made like Christ's glorious body (Romans 8:23).
- By it we know we will have eternal life if we continue faithfully (1 John 3:13-14; 5:11, 12).
- It makes us willing to face the opposition of the world (1 Peter 4:1-4, 12-16).
- To match our *joy* in the Spirit (Rom. 14:17), we also *groan* in the Spirit (Rom. 8:26).
- This Spirit in us will intercede for us (Rom. 8:26, 27).
- This Spirit will help us to do great things for God: "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these" (John 14:12).

Unfortunately, not all Christians accept and use the Holy Spirit after

baptism. It is available. Paul began using it immediately (Acts 9:17-20). Jesus had the Spirit without measure. It seems sometimes to be in varying degrees of strength in us. Is this because the flesh nature is stronger in us at times? Which do we want to prevail? That is the question. As we *earnestly* desire to have God's



Spirit at work in us, cannot we live deeper Christian lives and do far more good for God?

Jesus said, "According to your faith, be it unto you" (Matt. 9:29). Perhaps we do not have a strong enough faith?

Conclusion

The Comforter *has* come. The pouring out of God's Spirit at Pentecost and Caesarea fulfilled Joel's prophecy that in the last days God's Spirit would be poured out on all flesh, or *continues* to be poured out on all flesh, for we, today, have access to that same Spirit. There is only one Spirit of God (Eph. 4:4).

It has power to change our lives and eventually save us completely. It is the power of God inside us. It

brings wonderful peace, assurance and strength to us. It will move us to do great things for God. It will help us in our Bible study to know the truth of things. It will help us in our preaching of the Word, for that Word is Spirit and it is Life, and it is quick and powerful as a two-edged sword piercing a man's insides and helping him repent. It will bring answers to our prayers. It will help us go about and do good, as Jesus did. (This timid and unsure-at-first person who writes this was able to preach the Word for over 40 years because he felt he had a message from God for the people.)

The Spirit of God brought confidence and power to the apostles at Pentecost. Before that day they stayed behind closed doors. Afterward they boldly proclaimed the message of salvation and turned the world upside down. This same transforming power is available to us, to help us do God's work and live God's life.

Paul said that we are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in us (1 Cor. 3:16). Let us make sure we are *full* of that Spirit so our fruits of it shall demonstrate our love, our joy, our peace, our long suffering, our gentleness, our goodness, our faith, our meekness and our self-control. We must *allow* God's Holy Spirit to come into us, and dwell with us. Don't we want to *open up our hearts* to it, and *long* for it? It is nothing to be afraid of. Rather, it is something to long for, to seek for.

May "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion [fellowship] of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:13). □

The Soul

BY C. H. FRENCH

Quite often in everyday language, men get it right about the soul whereas theologians miss the mark. Such expressions as "the poor old soul" or "hundreds of souls perished" readily convey in the true sense that the reference is to people.

The international distress signal, S.O.S., meaning "Save Our Souls," is another example. It is not a plea to rescue something which is invisible or intangible, but rather to rescue the whole being, that those concerned might hold on to life and be restored to loved ones.

For our consideration of this much misunderstood word, let us go back to the beginning of creation, to Genesis 2:7: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Before Adam began to breathe, he was a "dead soul." All the organs were in place just as for a new baby, waiting for the lungs to begin functioning, thereby setting in motion the living being: "The breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (Job 33:4). We refer also to Genesis 1:20-21, quoting in part verse 20: "And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life." The A.V. marginal note says to substitute "soul" for "life," thereby ren-

dering, "let the waters bring forth the moving creature that hath a soul." Also, verse 24 reads, "God said, 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind.'"

So we find that, before Adam was created a living soul, many other beings were created in a similar way with a soul. Interesting, isn't it? But consider also such passages as:

Ps. 33:19 "to deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine." Also Prov. 19:15.

Ps. 63:1 "my soul thirsteth for thee." See also Prov. 25:25.

Ez. 18:4 "the soul that sinneth it shall die."

Mat. 10:28 "fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (the grave).

Mat. 26:38 "my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." See also Rev. 16:3.

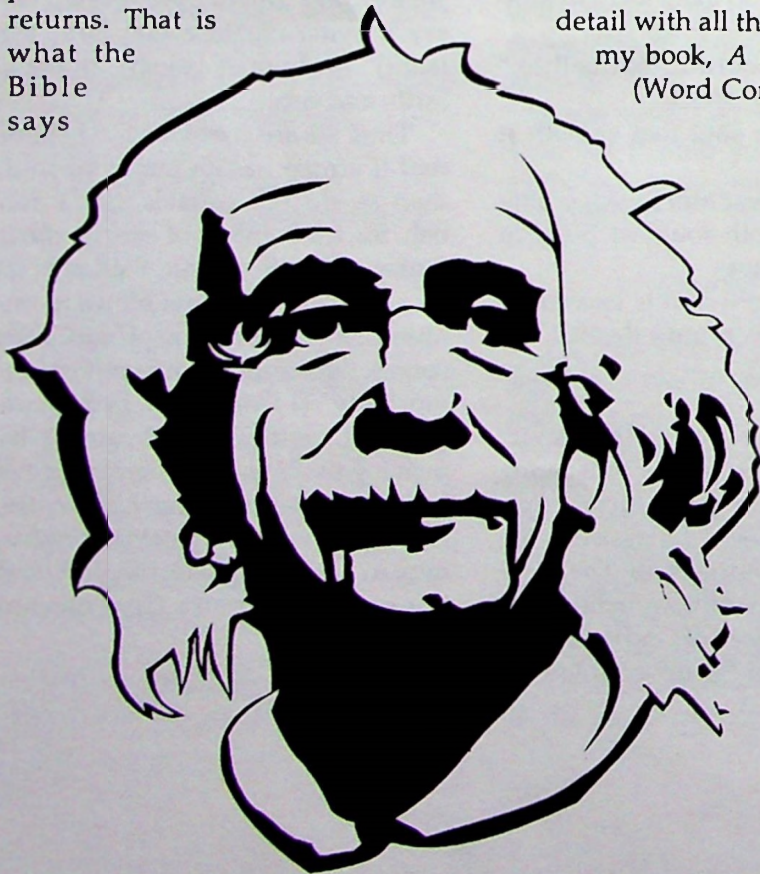
We surely understand that "soul" in every instance relates to a living being which hungers, thirsts, sins, sorrows and dies. This destroys the myth of the immortal soul. The long-standing challenge thus remains: Provide from the Word of God the words "immortal" and "soul" coupled to-

gether. Some would claim Solomon did this in another way when he wrote, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return to God who gave it" (Ecc. 12:7). This is often quoted to prove there is a "spark of life" which continues on at death, returning to be with God. However, this is not so. The word translated "spirit" is often translated "breath," and it is that "breath of life" that returns to God who gave it. Job states, "if he gather unto himself his spirit [breath] and his breath, all flesh shall perish" (Job. 34:14), that is, "every moving creature that hath life [soul]" — human beings, animals, birds and fish.

Thus we are compelled to believe that if a man has an immortal soul, then so do the animals, birds and fish. Such a belief is, of course, sheer fantasy, for the apostle Paul tells us that when the trumpet blows to announce the resurrection, when Christ comes, "this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53). In Romans 2:7 Paul verifies this statement by proving that men and women do not have any immortality now. He writes, "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." □

The Time/Space Continuum

[Concerning] what happens at death, my ideas are highly influenced by Einstein's theory of relativity. At the speed of light all events occur simultaneously. That means that events that are separated by time as we apprehend reality, are not separated by time when we transcend the time-space continuum as humans comprehend it. What that means to me is that from the human perspective, when a person is buried that person remains in the grave until the trumpet sounds and the Lord returns. That is what the Bible says



happens and I affirm that. I contend that there is no such thing as resurrection of the soul; the Bible teaches the resurrection of the body. Therefore, from the human perspective the dead remain dead until the trumpet sounds. However, I can also say that instantaneous with death is the resurrection, because the time-space continuum is transcended. The moment of your birth and the moment of your resurrection are not two separate moments; they are both part of the eternal now.

I wish I had time to go into further detail with all this. Get a hold of my book, *A Reasonable Faith* (Word Corp. Pub.). There

is a rather extensive explanation of all of this in that book.

What I am saying is that there is a paradox here: from our human perspective to die is to remain dead until the resurrection. From a transcendental perspective caught up in the reality of God the moment of death is the moment of the resurrection, because "there is no waiting" in the academy of God. God like the speed of light apprehends all reality simultaneously.

I hope this brief excursion into quantum physics and the theory of relativity helps a little bit as we try to apprehend the truth of Scripture. I hope this helps (Anthony Campolo, letter to Anthony Buzzard, February 25, 1993).

Dr. Anthony Campolo teaches sociology at Eastern College, St. Davids, PA, and is an ordained Baptist minister.

Dr. Campolo speaks above about matters not discussed in the Bible (eternal now/time-space continuum). However Church of God students often say, "When you fall asleep in Christ, it will seem like only a second until you awake in the resurrection." That is, for those who've been "asleep" 1000 years or 10 years, there will be no conscious knowledge of the passage of time. I believe this is what Dr. Campolo means — and I don't think we would disagree with that concept. He does believe in the biblical "sleep of the dead" as opposed to the "resurrection of the soul" (as Campolo puts it; orthodoxy's immortality of the soul).

— Rex Cain



Christ the Firstfruits

BY HOLLIS PARTLOWE

A man who was dissatisfied with the world's religions asked his friend how he could start a new religion. His friend replied: "It's hard to found a new religion, but there is one plan that you might try. I recommend that you be crucified and rise again the third day." Well, that's what Jesus Christ did to establish Christianity.

The New Testament is not only cross-centered but also resurrection-centered. The resurrection transforms the tragedy of the cross into the Gospel. Jesus' resurrection should never be divorced from His crucifixion. They are two halves of one whole. It was hard for the disciples to face His death, hard for them to face the fact that nothing was lost in His death, but that there was an infinite gain. By raising Jesus from the dead, God placed His stamp of approval upon His sacrificial death. It was God's way of saying that Jesus' death for the sins of the world had been accepted in the courts of high heaven. The ransom price for sin and death had been PAID IN FULL. Believers can now approach God "by a new and living way" that Jesus has opened up for us (Heb. 10:20).

Some Serious Implications (1 Cor. 15:14-19)

If Christ has not been raised from the dead:

1. Our preaching is vain.
2. We are false witnesses.
3. Our faith is vain.
4. We are yet in our sins.

5. Believers who have died have perished forever.

6. We are to be pitied.

This was the emphatic conclusion of Paul the apostle if Christ did not rise from the dead. This reveals beyond doubt that the resurrection is central to Christianity.

"But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those

The resurrection transforms the tragedy of the cross into the Gospel.



who are asleep" (v. 20). "Firstfruits" is an agricultural term. In the Old Testament it referred to the beginning of harvest. Those first sheaves of grain were offered to the Lord in thanksgiving for the full harvest soon to follow. Likewise, Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection, and believers are the rest of the crop. They will be raised to immortality when Jesus comes, "but every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:23).

Every grave proclaims weakness and corruption. The natural body is of the earth, earthy, and to dust it returns (1 Cor. 15:47-49; Gen. 3:19), but Jesus has gained victory over death and the grave. He has "abolished death, and brought life and

immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10). This He did first for Himself and then for us. How did He accomplish this? Through His death, burial and resurrection. Having passed through the grave and standing on the other side He could say: "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades," that is, the grave (Rev. 1:18, NIV).

Christianity doesn't rest upon a deceased founder but upon the ever living, ever present Lord who has power and authority to raise the dead. If Jesus was not raised, His death was a noble but useless gesture. That all men continue to die is an easily observable fact, and the only hope we have beyond the grave is resurrection when Jesus comes. Reward or punishment of every person depends on resurrection. Moreover, belief in the coming resurrection to immortality involves more than mental assent. Genuine belief involves an active preparation for that event. The resurrection of Jesus assures us that ours will take place as surely and literally as did His.

"Of First Importance"

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4, NASB). Observe that Paul affirmed that these events took

place "according to the Scriptures." The resurrection of Christ was the beginning of the harvest. It will be continued when Jesus comes (1 Thess. 4:16-17). The fear and anxiety of death are answered in the resurrection. Jesus said: "Because I live, you shall live also" (John 14:19).

The power behind the preaching of the apostles was not generated by a corpse. A dead body had not rekindled their enthusiasm. The rise and power of Christianity prove that Jesus ever lives. One word distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. That word is RESURRECTION. The cross would have been a relic without Easter and Pentecost. The Christian gospel is the message of a living Savior who ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and for ever" (13:8). That's why we meet for worship on Sunday. We commemorate Jesus' resurrection each week. Dr. Alva G. Huffer has well said, "Each Sunday is Easter in miniature."

Jesus lived a short life of about 33 years, taught a few disciples and then died a criminal's death. What religion of man could survive such a blow? The resurrection of Jesus was not an afterthought but an integral part of God's divine plan for redemption of mankind. "Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?" (Acts 26:8, NIV). We live in a time when the world is more ready to listen to men of doubt than men of faith. God is not dead. Neither is Jesus Christ still in the grave.

The Foundation of the Gospel

Christianity stands or falls on the truth of the resurrection of Christ. If Christ was not raised we are pro-

claiming a hoax. The resurrection of Christ and ultimate resurrection of all the dead is the pivot for the whole of Christianity. If that is not a fact all other Christian theology comes crashing down, and we have no hope. Our faith is futile, we are still in our sins, the ones who have died are lost and we are to be pitied more than all men (1 Cor. 15:14-19). We are just beating the air.

Every church spire, every open church door is a testimony that Jesus lives. The resurrection was not a trick. The disciples did not expect it to happen. It came as a shock; it was unexpected (Luke 24:11; Matt. 28:1-6). Easter means that God is satisfied with the redemptive work of Christ. Easter means that you can believe and be saved (Heb. 7:25). Easter is God's pledge to us of immortality. "Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power" (1 Cor. 6:14).

He has risen! That is not argument but affirmation. There is quite a difference between the theology of Paul and the philosophy of Plato. Plato taught that there is no death, but Paul preached that Jesus rose from the dead and that we shall be raised in His likeness (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2). Furthermore, proof of the resurrection is conclusive. Witnesses of the resurrection were called by name. Over 500 at one time saw the resurrected Lord. Even in Paul's day some of them were still living, although some had fallen asleep in death (1 Cor. 15:5-8). Luke tells us that there were "many infallible proofs" dur-

ing Jesus' forty-day post-resurrection ministry (Acts 1:3).

All of this makes Christianity distinctive, unique and set apart from all other religions. Resurrection means that the chain of death has been broken. The resurrection will produce the same personality insofar as identity is concerned. This mortal will put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:52-54), but that will not change our identity. We will be changed but not into someone else. The same person enters high school who went to kindergarten. Likewise, the same

Christianity doesn't rest upon a deceased founder but upon the ever living, ever present Lord who has power and authority to raise the dead.



person will be resurrected who was placed in the grave. It was so with Jesus; it will be the same with us. That is certainly Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15:35-44. We do not lose our identity in the kingdom. In my opinion, we'll know each other.

The Gospel

The gospel is this: Christ died for our sins; He was buried; He tasted death for all of us; He didn't live during those three days in Joseph's tomb; He was dead ("the dead know nothing," Eccl. 9:5). But Jesus arose! He lives! He has promised us a share in His victory. He "will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). "We know that when he appears, *we shall be like him*, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). These great and precious promises (2 Peter 1:4) are

(continued on page 16)

The Rapture — When?

BY ANTHONY BUZZARD

We all believe in the “rapture” — the event by which living Christians will be caught up into the air (“raptured”) to meet Christ as He descends to the earth at His Coming (1 Thess. 4:13-18). However, in the 1830s a brand new view of the Second Coming arose. It was suggested by some of the Plymouth Brethren that the Second Coming will happen in two distinct stages:

- 1) Christ will arrive to take away (rapture) the church for seven years.
- 2) Christ will arrive seven years later with the church to punish the world and set up the Kingdom of God on earth.

From the start this new view of the Second Coming caused sharp division. Over the past 150 years it has created a great deal of conflict. The chief exponents of the so-called “pre-tribulation rapture” are the faculty of Dallas Theological College. The teaching has spread into many American fundamentalist churches.

A number of scholars have written books to refute the pre-tribulation rapture which they were taught as children. Since the question has to do with God’s timetable, it is important. We are urged to speak with one mind on these issues (1 Cor. 1:10).

When the pre-trib rapture was introduced into the Brethren movement in England in the last century, it must not be supposed that all the Brethren accepted the new views. The following extract from the writings of George Muller, the “apostle” of faith

and founder of orphanages in England, is significant. Asked shortly before his death whether Christians are to expect our Lord’s return *at any moment*, or whether certain events must be fulfilled before He comes again, Muller replied as follows:

I know that on this subject there is great diversity of judgment, and I do not wish to force on other persons the light I have myself. The subject, however, is not new to me; for having been a careful, diligent student of the Bible for fifty years, my mind has long been settled on this point, and I have not the shadow of a doubt about it. The Scriptures declare plainly that the Lord Jesus will *not* come until the Apostasy shall have taken place and the Man of Sin (the Antichrist) shall have been revealed, as seen in II Thess. 2:1-5. Many other portions of the word of God distinctly teach that certain events are to be fulfilled before the Return of the Lord Jesus Christ (cited in *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, by Alexander Reese, Grand Rapids International Publications, p. 27).

A leading London preacher, Cambell Morgan, the “Dwight Moody” of England, was asked the following question during a course of public lectures:

After your long study and extensive expositions of the Bible, Dr. Morgan, do you find any warrant for the distinctions which many Bible teach-

ers draw between the second coming of the Lord for his own (The Rapture) and the coming of the Lord with his own (The Revelation), with a time period of three and a half or seven years between these two events?

“Emphatically not!” Dr. Morgan replied. “I know that view very well, for in earlier years of my ministry I taught it and incorporated it into one of my books entitled *God’s Method with Man*. But further study so convinced me of the error of this teaching that I actually went to the expense of buying the plates of that book from my own publisher and destroying them. The idea of a separate and secret coming of Christ to remove the church prior to his coming in power and glory is a vagary of prophetic interpretation *without any biblical basis whatever*” (Clarence Bass, *Background to Dispensationalism*, Baker Book House, p. 17, emphasis added).

No student of Scripture need be in any doubt about the order of events described by Paul:

- 1) The Apostasy (falling away from the faith) (2 Thess. 2:1-3)
- 2) The Man of Sin (Antichrist) revealed (2 Thess. 2:1-3)
- 3) Christ arrives to gather the church (2 Thess. 2:1, 8)

Contradicting Paul, dispensationalism and the pre-tribulation rapture
(continued on page 16)

The Rapture — When? (continued from page 15)

theory since 1830 have taught:

- 1) Christ arrives secretly to gather the church.
- 2) The Man of Sin is revealed.
- 3) Christ arrives publicly with the church.

Paul specifically warned against teachers who promised that the Day of the Lord and our gathering together to Jesus would come *before* the Antichrist and the tribulation (see 2

Thess. 2:1-3). In the interests of a clear understanding of the Bible, the reader is urged to reread Matthew 24 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10: First come the Antichrist and the tribulation (Matt. 24:15ff.). *After the great tribulation*, Jesus comes to gather the saints (Matt. 24:31).

Note also: Christians will continue to undergo trouble until the *public*, spectacular arrival of Jesus *to punish the world*. Paul could hardly have written 2 Thessalonians 1:7 if he had

believed in a prior "coming." In that verse he states that Christians will be granted relief from suffering "*when* the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not obey the Gospel." Until Christ comes in power to set up the Kingdom of God on earth, believers must endure the hardships which accompany life as a Christian. There is no relief from trouble seven years before the public arrival of Jesus. □

Christ the Firstfruits (continued from page 14)

guaranteed to us by Christ who shall judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom (2 Tim. 4:1).

The Reality of Death

Every tombstone, every graveyard, every cemetery is a reminder of the change and decay all around us. In his great hymn, "Abide with Me," Henry F. Lyte has well written: "Change and decay in all around I see, O Thou who changest not, abide with me." I trust that each reader will recognize his or her deep need for our unchangeable God (Mal. 3:6).

Legends and myths in the pagan world abound with ideas about what happens at death. Paganism has perverted the gospel. In his eagerness to solve the riddle of death, man has pretended that it does not exist. Greek philosophy with its pagan belief of the immortality of the soul has con-

fused the Christian community in general. Even today many learned men imagine that the dead are alive, surrounding them in some mysterious way, ready to answer their call. Others believe that the righteous dead are conscious and "with the Lord"

*Resurrection means
that the chain of death
has been broken.*

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and the wicked dead are presently suffering torment even before their judgment. All such concepts are based on superstition and paganism. We should avoid them like the plague. Simply and clearly the Bible scatters the ignorance surrounding the grave. Scripture says that when one dies, "His breath goeth forth, he

returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psa. 146:4).

Death was not a part of God's original plan. It was unknown in Eden until Adam and Eve disobeyed God. The Bible is clear about how sin and death came upon the human race. "Through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Pronouncing judgment upon Adam after he had sinned, God said to him: "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19). Make no mistake! The Bible teaches the mortality of man, the sleep of the dead and the resurrection of the whole man. The grave is always considered the temporary resting place of all the dead until the resurrection. "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57). □

Confession

BY FRANCIS BURNETT

One of the difficult things for most persons to do is to admit to making a mistake or doing wrong. To do so involves the idea that one is weak and not strong or that one is not to be trusted — and several other ideas. *Yet*, the Bible gives many different applications of confessing, making a confession and just plainly admitting that a mistake has been made.

David wrote, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah" (Psalm 32:5). We know that confessing of sins was a most important item with God. When the live goat was to be sent out into the wilderness once a year by the High Priest, the priest was to "lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat,

and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:21). Before this, a live goat had been killed and a sacrifice was offered for all of the sins of Israel.

Since the ministry of Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross, the confessing has to be through Jesus. "But if we walk in the light . . . the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin . . . If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7-9).

It is very important to confess Jesus as your personal savior and to let it be known. "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." *However*, the positive is, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:33, 32). The apostle Paul wrote, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him

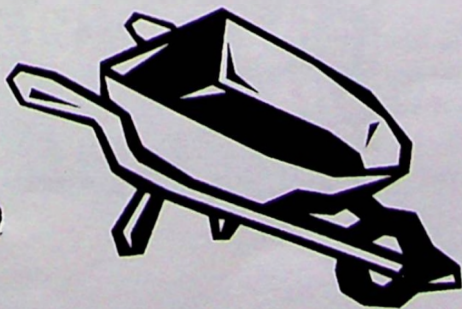
from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9, 10).

Then there is James' instruction, as put by the Simple English Bible: "Admit your sins to one another. Pray for each other. God will make you well. When a person is right with God, the power of his sincere prayer is tremendous" (James 5:16).

Is there any kind of healing when we confess our sins to God and to one another? Often, those sins may be mistakes that we have made, not outright violent acts. The Word of God is true. The more we keep it in every way the more blessing our Heavenly Father is able to give unto each of us. What do each of you do to really make known to the persons around you that Jesus is your master? That is one way of confessing Him. Confession is a vital part of Christian living! □

Did You Ever Notice?

A lot of Christians are like wheelbarrows — no good unless they are pushed.



Some are like canoes — they need to be paddled.

Some are like kites — if you don't keep a string on them, they fly away.

Some are like footballs — you can't tell which way they will bounce next.

Some are like balloons — full of wind and ready to blow up.

Some are like trailers — they have to be pulled along.

Some are like neon lights — they keep going on and off.

And then, for which we thank the Lord, some Christians are like gold watches: open-faced, pure gold, quietly busy, and full of good works.

Or as the Bible says, "He shall be planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:3).

Which one are you? May God help us to be genuine, real and full of good works. □

The Wrong Use of Our Estates and Fortunes

BY WILLIAM LAW — ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN 1728

It has been observed that a prudent and religious care is to be used in the manner of spending our money or estate, because according as we are wise or imprudent in this respect the whole course of our lives will be either very wise or very full of folly.

Persons who are well affected to religion, who receive instructions of piety with pleasure and satisfaction, often wonder why they make no greater progress in that religion which they so much admire. Now the reason is this: it is because religion lives only in their head, but something else has possession of their heart. Therefore, they continue from year to year mere admirers and praisers of piety without ever coming up to the reality and perfection of its precepts.

If it be asked why religion does not get possession of their hearts, the reason is this: it is because their hearts are constantly employed, perverted, and kept in a wrong state by the indiscreet use of such things as are lawful to be used. The use and enjoyment of their estate is lawful, and therefore, it never comes into their heads to imagine any great danger from that quarter. Yet our souls may receive an infinite hurt and be rendered incapable of all virtue merely by the use of innocent and lawful things.

What is more innocent than rest and retirement? And yet what more dangerous than sloth and idleness? What is more lawful than eating and

drinking? And yet what more destructive of all virtue — what more fruitful of all vice — than sensuality and indulgence? How lawful and praiseworthy is the care of a family! And yet how certainly are many people rendered incapable of all virtue by a worldly and solicitous attitude toward the family!

*Rendered incapable of
all virtue merely by the
use of innocent and
lawful things*

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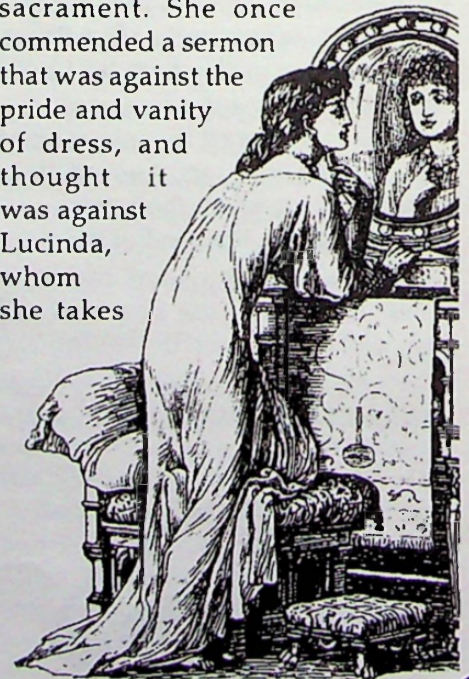
Now it is for lack of religious exactness in the use of these innocent and lawful things that religion cannot get possession of our hearts. And it is in the right and prudent management of ourselves as to these things that all the art of holy living chiefly consists.

Gross sins are plainly seen and easily avoided by persons who profess religion. But it is difficult to make people at all sensible to the peril of the indiscreet and dangerous use of innocent and lawful things. These persons, as has been observed, may live free from debaucheries and may be friends of religion so far as to praise and speak well of it, and admire it in their imaginations. But it cannot govern their hearts and be the spirit of their actions till they change their way of life and let religion give

laws to the use and spending of their estate.

Flavia and Miranda are two maiden sisters who each have two hundred pounds a year. They buried their parents twenty years ago, and have since that time spent their estate as they pleased.

Flavia has been the wonder of all her friends for her excellent management in making so surprising a figure on so moderate a fortune. Several ladies who have twice her fortune are not able to be always so genteel and so constant at all places of pleasure and expense. Flavia is very orthodox — she talks warmly against heretics and schismatics, is generally at church, and often at the sacrament. She once commended a sermon that was against the pride and vanity of dress, and thought it was against Lucinda, whom she takes



to be a great deal finer than she need be.

If anyone asks Flavia to do something in charity, if she likes the person who makes the proposal or happens to be in a right mood, she will toss him a half crown or a crown and tell him if he knew what a long milliner's bill she had just received he would think it a great deal for her to give. A quarter of a year after this she hears a sermon upon the necessity of charity. She thinks that the man preaches well, that it is a very proper subject, and that people need to be put in mind of it. But she applies nothing to herself because she remembers that she gave a crown some time ago when she could so ill spare it.

As for poor people themselves, she will admit of no complaints from them. She is very positive they are all cheats and liars and will say anything to get relief. Therefore, it must be a sin to encourage them in their evil ways. You would think Flavia had the tenderest conscience in the world if you were to see how scrupulous and apprehensive she is of the guilt and danger of giving amiss.

She buys all books of wit and humor, and has made an expensive collection of all our English poets. For, she says, one cannot have a true taste of any of them without being conversant with them all. She will sometimes read a book of piety — if it is a short one, if it is much commended for style and language, and if she knows where to borrow it.

Flavia is very idle and yet fond of fine work. This makes her often sit working in bed until noon, and be told many a long story before she is up. I need not tell you, then, that her

morning devotions are not always rightly performed.

Flavia would be a miracle of piety if she were but half so careful of her soul as she is of her body. The rising of a pimple in her face or the sting of a gnat will make her keep to her room two or three days — so that it costs her a great deal in sleeping pills, in spirits for the head, in drops for the nerves, in cordials for the stomach, and in saffron for her tea.

If you visit Flavia on Sunday you will always meet good company and you will know what is doing in the world. Flavia thinks they are atheists



who play cards on Sunday, but as soon as she comes from church she will tell you the nicety of all the games, what cards she held, how she played them, and the history of all that happened at play. If you would know how cross Lucius is to his wife, what ill-natured things he says to her when nobody hears him; if you would know how they hate one another in their hearts though they appear so kind in public — you must visit Flavia on Sunday. But still she has so great a regard for the holiness of Sunday

that she has turned a poor old widow out of her house for having been once found mending her clothes on Sunday night.

Thus lives Flavia — and if she lives ten years longer she will have spent about fifteen hundred and sixty Sundays after this manner. She will have worn about two hundred different suits of clothes. Out of these thirty years of her life, fifteen will have been disposed of in bed. And about fourteen of the remaining fifteen will have been consumed in eating, drinking, dressing, visiting, conversation, reading and hearing plays and romances, at operas, assemblies, balls, and diversions. For you may reckon thus spent all the time that she is up, except about an hour and a half that is disposed of at church most Sundays in the year.

I shall not take upon me to say that it is impossible for Flavia to be saved, but this much must be said: she has no grounds from Scripture to think she is in the way of salvation. If you were to hear her say that she had lived all her life like Anna the prophetess, who "departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day," you would look upon her as very extravagant. Yet this would be no greater extravagance than for her to say that she had been striving to enter in at the strait gate or making any one doctrine of the gospel a rule of her life.

Here it is to be well observed that the vain turn of mind, the irreligion, and the folly of this whole life of Flavia is all owing to the manner of using her estate. It is this that has formed her spirit, that has given life

(continued on page 22)

What Surprised Jesus

BY PHILIP YANCEY

Once read through all the miracle stories of the Gospels and found they reveal remarkably different degrees of faith. A few people demonstrated bold, unshakable faith, such as a centurion who told Jesus he need not bother with a visit — just a word would heal his servant long-distance. “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith,” Jesus remarked, astonished.

Another time, a foreign woman pursued Jesus as he was seeking peace and quiet. At first Jesus answered her not a word. Then he replied sharply, telling her he was sent to the lost sheep of Israel, not to “dogs.” But nothing could deter this Canaanite woman, and her perseverance won Jesus over. “Woman, you have great faith!” he said.

Jesus seemed impressed that, as foreigners, these were the *least likely* people to demonstrate great faith. Why should a centurion and a Canaanite put their trust in a Messiah his own countrymen had trouble accepting?

These stories threaten me, because seldom do I have such outstanding faith. Unlike the Canaanite woman, I am easily discouraged by the silence of God. I identify more readily with the wavering man who declared to Jesus, “I believe, Lord. Help my unbelief!”

To my surprise, I found the people who knew Jesus best faltered in their faith. Jesus could do few miracles in

his hometown because of his neighbors’ lack of faith. John the Baptist, who had heard a decisive voice from heaven at Jesus’ baptism, later questioned him. And several times Jesus remarked with astonishment on the 12 disciples’ faithlessness.

Jesus’ three most intimate disciples saw a dramatic miracle shortly before his death. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus’ face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. The dazed disciples found themselves in the presence of two long-dead giants of history, Moses and Elijah.

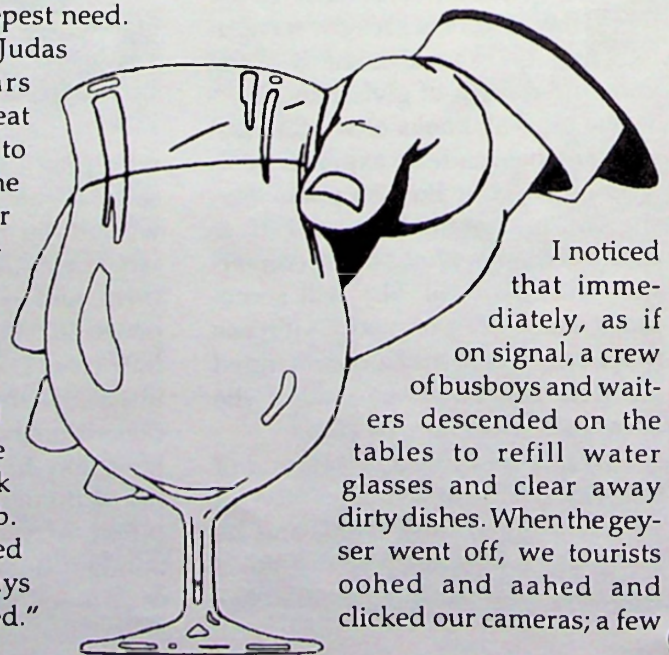
Yet what impact did such a stupendous event have? Shortly, the eyewitnesses of the Transfiguration joined the rest of the Twelve in abandoning — *denying*, in Peter’s case — Jesus in his hour of deepest need.

We easily forget that Judas had for three years watched Jesus work great miracles and listened to his teaching; even so, he betrayed Jesus. Another disciple, “doubting Thomas,” gained the reputation as a skeptic, but in truth, all the disciples showed a lack of faith. None of them believed the wild reports the women brought back from the empty tomb. Even after Jesus appeared to them in person, says Matthew, “some doubted.”

A curious law of reversal seems to be at work in the Gospels: Faith appears where least expected and falters where it should be thriving.

I remember my first visit to Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park. Rings of Japanese and German tourists surrounded the geyser, their video cameras trained like weapons on the famous hole in the ground. A large, digital clock stood beside the spot, predicting 24 minutes until the next eruption.

My wife and I passed the countdown in the dining room of the Old Faithful Inn overlooking the geyser. When the digital clock reached one minute, we, along with every other diner, left our seats and rushed to the windows to see the big, wet event.



I noticed that immediately, as if on signal, a crew of busboys and waiters descended on the tables to refill water glasses and clear away dirty dishes. When the geyser went off, we tourists oohed and aahed and clicked our cameras; a few

spontaneously applauded. But, glancing back over my shoulder, I saw that not a single waiter or busboy — not even those who had finished their chores — looked out the huge windows. Old Faithful, grown entirely too familiar, had lost its power to impress them.

A little later, our church back in Chicago faced something of a crisis. The pastor had left, attendance was flagging, a community outreach program now seemed threatened. The leadership suggested an all-night vigil of prayer.

Several people raised questions. Was it safe, given our inner-city neighborhood? Should we hire guards or escorts for the parking lot? What if no one showed up? At length we discussed the logistics and the

“practicality” of such an event. Nevertheless, the night of prayer was scheduled.

To my surprise, the poorest members of the congregation, a group of senior citizens from a housing project, were the ones who responded most enthusiastically to the prayer vigil. I could not help wondering how many of their prayers had gone unanswered over the years — they lived in the projects, after all, amid crime, poverty, and suffering — yet they showed a childlike trust in the power of prayer. “How long do you want to stay — an hour or two?” we asked. “Oh, we’ll stay all night,” they replied.

One black woman in her nineties, who walks with a cane and can barely see, explained to a staff member why

she wanted to spend the night sitting on the hard pews of a church in an unsafe neighborhood. “You see, they’s lots of things we can’t do in this church. We ain’t so educated, and we ain’t got as much energy as some of you younger folks. But we can pray. We got time, and we got faith. Some of us don’t sleep much anyway. We can pray all night if needs be.”

And so they did. Meanwhile, a bunch of yuppies in a downtown church learned anew a lesson of faith from the Gospels: Faith appears where least expected and falters where it should be thriving. □

Reprinted from *Christianity Today*, Sep. 12, 1994, p. 88. Used with permission.

No Time to Pray

I knelt to pray, but not for long
I have too much to do.
Must hurry off and get to work
For bills would soon be due.

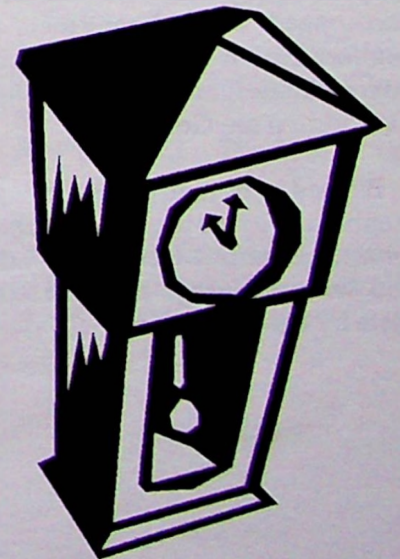
And so I said a hurried prayer,
Jumped up from off my knees;
My Christian duty now was done
My soul could be at ease.

All through the day I had no time
To speak a word of cheer,
No time to speak of Christ to
friends —
They’d laugh at me, I feared.

No time, no time, too much to do —
That was my constant cry;
No time to give to those in need —
At last ’twas time to die.

And when before the Lord I came
I stood with downcast eyes,
Within His hands He held a Book,
It was the “Book of Life,”

God looked into His Book and said,
“Your name, I cannot find,
I once was going to write it down
But never found the time.” □



The Wrong Use of Our Estates and Fortunes (continued from page 19)

to every idle attitude, that has supported every trifling passion, and that has kept her from all thoughts of a prudent, useful, and devout life.

When her parents died she had no thought about her two hundred pounds a year, except that she had so much money to do with what she would, to spend upon herself, and to purchase the pleasures and gratifications of all her passions. She might have been humble, serious, devout, a lover of good books, an admirer of prayer and retirement, careful of her time, diligent in good works, full of charity and the love of God — but the imprudent use of her estate forced all the contrary attitudes upon her.

Now, though the irregular, trifling spirit of this character belongs, I hope,

to but few people, yet many may here learn some instruction from it and perhaps see something of their own spirit in it. For as Flavia seems to be undone by the unreasonable use of her fortune, so the lowness of most people's virtue, the imperfections of their piety, and the disorders of their passions are generally owing to their imprudent use and enjoyment of lawful and innocent things.

More people are kept from a true sense and taste of religion by a regular kind of sensuality and indulgence than by gross drunkenness. More men live without regard for the great duties of piety through too great a concern for worldly good than through direct injustice. For all these

things are only little when they are compared to great sins — and though they are little in that respect, yet they are great as they are impediments and hindrances to the spiritual life.

If we, therefore, would make real progress in religion, we must not only abhor gross and notorious sins, but we must regulate the innocent and lawful parts of our behavior, and put the most common and allowed actions of life under the rules of discretion and piety. □

Excerpted from: *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, published by Westminster Press. Used by permission.

Blessed Is the Man

BY WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD

Blessed is the man for whom a good woman lives, to whom his work is a pleasure, by whom his friends are encouraged, with whom others are comfortable, in whom a clear conscience abides, and through whom his children see God.

Blessed is the man whose strength is enhanced by his tenderness, whose wisdom is empowered by his faith, and whose courage is made complete by his compassion.

Blessed is the man who looks at life with joyful optimism, who listens to his children with eager attentiveness, who enriches his community with creative enthusiasm, who loves his country with grateful loyalty, and who worships his God with unswerving fidelity.

Blessed is the man who brings honor to the word "father," who is a credit to the word "brotherhood," who is a quiet example of the child's perfect image of the word "manhood."

Blessed is the man who confidently builds bridges of understanding, who generously lightens the loads of his fellow man, and who cheerfully brightens each day with words of hope, inspiration and assurance.

Blessed is the man of whom his children often say, "We're glad he's our father," of whom his wife often says, "I'm glad he's my husband," of whom his parents say, "We're glad he's our son." □

Obtained from Rex Cain

Some of the Best Chapters in the Bible

BY E. B. TURNER

I am submitting my list of sixty of some of the best chapters in the Bible. Note, I am not calling it, "The Sixty Best Chapters," but "Some of the Best Chapters in the Bible."

1. Genesis 1 – The Beginning Chapter
2. Genesis 3 – The Temptation Chapter
3. Genesis 12 – The Abraham Chapter
4. Genesis 41 – The Joseph Chapter
5. Exodus 2 – The Moses Chapter
6. Exodus 20 – The Ten Commandments Chapter
7. Joshua 1 – The Good Courage Chapter
8. Judges 7 – The Gideon Chapter
9. 1 Samuel 20 – The Jonathan-David Chapter
10. 1 Kings 3 – Solomon-Wisdom Chapter
11. 1 Kings 18 – Elijah Chapter
12. Job 1 – The Suffering Job Chapter
13. Psalm 1 – The Blessed Man Psalm
14. Psalm 19 – The Works and Word of God Psalm
15. Psalm 23 – The Shepherd Psalm
16. Psalm 51 – The Penitent's Psalm
17. Psalm 91 – The Shadow of the Almighty Psalm
18. Psalm 103 – The Bless the Lord Psalm
19. Psalm 119 – The Bible Study Psalm
20. Proverbs 3 – The Advice to Sons Chapter
21. Isaiah 6 – The Call of Isaiah Chapter
22. Isaiah 53 – The Suffering Christ Chapter
23. Isaiah 55 – The Everlasting Salvation Chapter
24. Ezekiel 3 – The Watchman Chapter
25. Daniel 2 – The Dream Chapter
26. Matthew 5-7 – The Sermon on the Mount Chapter
27. Matthew 13 – The Parables Chapter
28. Matthew 26 – The Gethsemane Chapter
29. Matthew 28 – The Great Commission Chapter
30. Mark 9 – The Transfiguration Chapter
31. Luke 2 – The Nativity Chapter
32. Luke 10 – The Good Samaritan Chapter
33. Luke 15 – The Prodigal Son Chapter
34. Luke 24 – The Emmaus Chapter
35. John 1 – The Call of the First Disciples Chapter
36. John 3 – The Nicodemus Chapter
37. John 10 – The Good Shepherd Chapter
38. John 14 – The Comfort Chapter
39. John 15 – The Abiding Chapter
40. John 16 – The Holy Spirit Chapter
41. John 17 – The Christ's Intercessory Prayer Chapter
42. Acts 2 – The Pentecost Chapter
43. Acts 10 – The Cornelius Chapter
44. Acts 22 – The Paul Defense Chapter
45. Romans 8 – The Victory Chapter
46. Romans 12 – The Service Chapter
47. 1 Corinthians 13 – The Love Chapter
48. 1 Corinthians 15 – The Resurrection Chapter
49. Galatians 5 – The Fruit of the Spirit Chapter
50. Ephesians 6 – The Armor Chapter
51. Philippians 3 – The Pressing On Chapter
52. Colossians 1 – The Preeminent Chapter
53. 1 Thessalonians 4 – The Believer's Hope Chapter
54. 2 Timothy 2 – The Good Soldier Chapter
55. Hebrews 11 – The Faith Chapter
56. James 1 – The Doers of the Word Chapter
57. 1 Peter 2 – The Chief Corner Stone Chapter
58. 1 John 2 – The Fellowship Chapter
59. 1 John 4 – The God Is Love Chapter
60. Revelation 22 – The Tree of Life Chapter □

—Originally in *The Gideon*; reprinted from *THE RESTITUTION HERALD*, March, 1939, pp. 10, 11.

Respect

BY DR. G. CLELL FRANCE

The word respect is often discussed and used in different ways. We sometimes hear that we all deserve respect — as though it should be automatic and have nothing to do with what we do or how we behave. We just deserve respect for being. That may be so and it would be nice, but it is not the

kind of respect that differentiates among us.

At other times you hear that you have to earn respect — that respect is dependent on what you do and how you behave. This respect does differentiate among us.

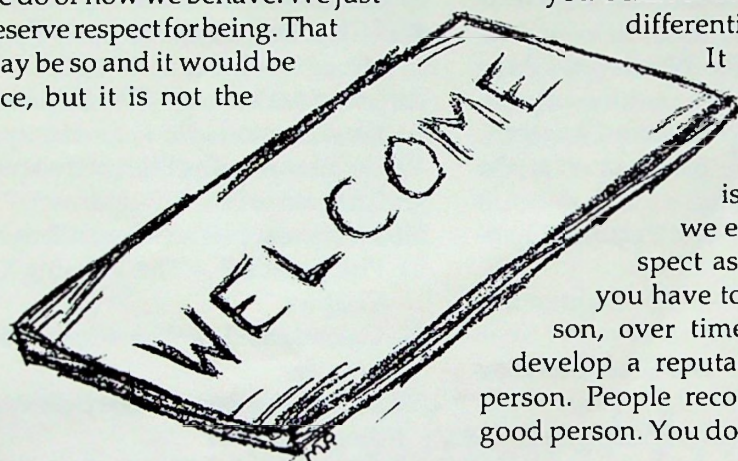
It depends on what we do and how we behave. This

is the respect that we earn. To earn respect as a good person

you have to be a good person, over time. You have to develop a reputation as a good person. People recognize you as a good person. You do not talk about it,

you *do* it. You have then earned that respect.

Another kind of respect is the respect of an equal. You do not earn this respect, you require it. People do not respect you beyond what you require of them. We all go the course of least resistance and if I am that course of least resistance, I do not require the respect of an equal. I will then be encroached upon and taken advantage of, even if I am respected as a good person. A "doormat" mate can do everything that is expected, and more. They can be respected as good people — look at all the work they do — but they can be severely taken advantage of. They have not required the respect of an equal. □



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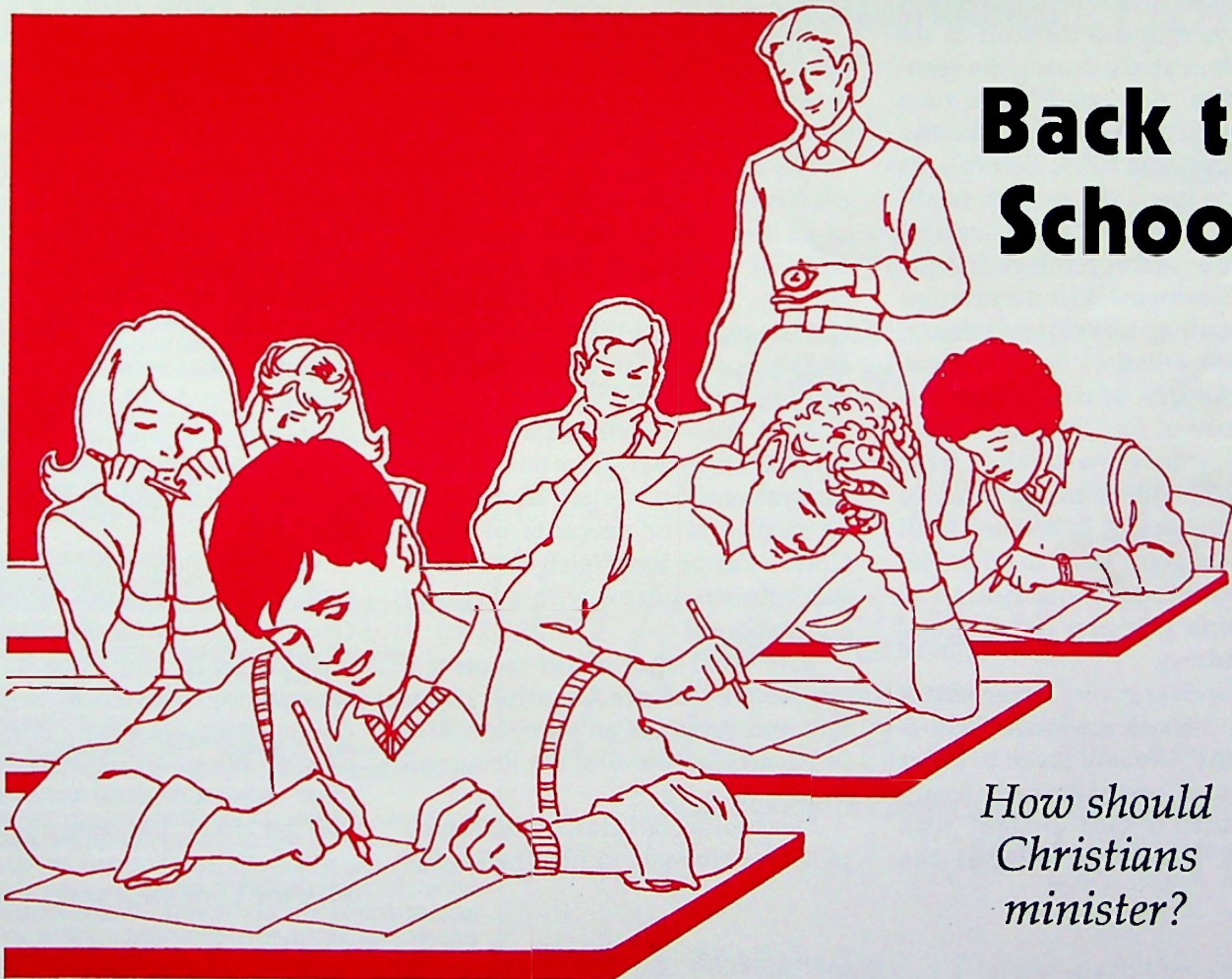
The Restitution Herald

August, September • 1997

Volume 86, Number 6

*Who is a
Christian?*

*How should
Christians behave?*



**Back to
School**

*How should
Christians
minister?*

*What is a
Christian's
attitude
about sex?*

*How can I know
Jesus was
resurrected?*



Back to School

Summer is coming to a close and fall is on the horizon. That can only mean one thing — back to school time. For some reason I've always found it difficult to do much serious study during the summer months. Perhaps it's the heat that makes it more difficult for my brain to operate at 100%. Perhaps it's just hard to break the pattern established by 13 years of public education and four years of college. But the fall always brings with it the promise of new learning, new discoveries.

Jesus has called us to be His *disciples*. A disciple, of course, is a student or learner. As Christ's disciples we are never to take a vacation from following Him or learning more of His ways; however, in keeping with the theme of going back to school let us dedicate this issue to some important subjects that any good school would address.

Our first class is very *elementary*. It asks the most basic question: "Who is a Christian?" We will listen to Elder Joseph Marsh, one of the early teachers of Church of God thought, who over 100 years ago offered his

most basic definition of a Christian. (Special thanks to Mark Mattison for helping me to access this excellent piece.)

Next, we have a course in *ethics*. Brother Chuck Jones shows us that it is important that we act, rather than simply react.

We follow with a course on *sex education*. Miss Tracy Savage reminds us all that good students of Jesus live a life of sexual purity governed by chastity. This is a much-needed piece which you are invited to photocopy and pass on to your children or grandchildren (teens and up).

Next, there is a course in *ministry*. While it's true that all are not called to *pastoral ministry*, we are all called to be ministers or servants of Jesus Christ. Pastor Jon Welch teaches us that ministry begins with a heart of compassion.

Any good curriculum requires a course in *science*. Brother Juan Baixeras provides an excellent class in his article "Proving the Resurrection."

Our brother Sid Hatch left a legacy of sound biblical teaching before his

death, which is represented here by a *vocabulary* lesson about the resurrection.

Pastor Hollis Partlowe provides us with a *history* class as he reviews Brother Hatch's account of World War II. Readers will note that their Christian convictions allowed both these two brethren to serve in the military (as have many others). We recognize that many of our readers (including the editor) have elected not to serve in the military based on their Christian convictions. This class may provide some of us with an opportunity to do additional independent study and perhaps put into practice Brother Marsh's lesson as well as Brother Jones' counsel to act, not react.

We round out the class schedule with a lesson in *math*: "Banking on God," taught by Brother Dave Opel.

Well, there you have it, a well-rounded curriculum to begin your fall semester. Now then, students . . . pay attention, sit up straight, open your ears and close your mouths, and get rid of that chewing gum.

May the Lord bless you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Fletcher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jeff Fletcher

The Restitution Herald

THE RESTITUTION HERALD

VOLUME 86, NUMBER 6; AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 1997. ©1997.

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD IS OWNED AND PUBLISHED BY THE CHURCH OF GOD GENERAL CONFERENCE, A NONPROFIT CHRISTIAN CORPORATION LOCATED AT 5823 TRAMMELL ROAD, P.O. BOX 100,000, MORROW, GA 30260. THE HERALD IS MAILED SIX TIMES A YEAR.
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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Acting Right, Not Just Reacting

BY CHUCK JONES — GRAND RAPIDS, MI

Here is an idea for a new game show that I would call "What Would You Do?" Contestants would be quizzed about their responses to different situations. Their spouse, friends, children or parents would afterward discuss what our contestant would do in this situation. The best treat would be comparing answers. What we think we would like to do in a particular situation is not always what we actually do. People who watch us know better how we react in various situations.

When people are embarrassed, feel guilty, or hate the way they react, they dislike the way they are. They ask questions such as, "Why did I say or do that? How am I going to fix this problem now?" They really don't like the way they are, but they don't know how to change. God's Word speaks directly to the problem, "How do I become a better person?"

God gives us clear and decisive instruction. Proverbs 23:7 says, "As he thinks in his heart, so is he." As a man thinks in his heart, that is the way he is. The key to all of this acting, or reacting, is *thinking correctly*; getting a handle on how we are thinking, how we are preparing to respond when a bad or a good situation happens.

Someone you don't like might receive good news. How would you react? On the other hand, how would you react when someone you did like received bad news? The way we think

in our hearts influences the way we react. The bottom line is that we need to start thinking correctly.

One of the subtle tools of destruction that Satan uses on God's people today is wrong thinking on many of life's issues. (This isn't limited to negative or positive thinking.) When God's people start thinking correctly Satan doesn't have an avenue of attack. You need to start thinking cor-

As a man thinks

in his heart,

that is the way he is.

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rectly about yourselves, not thinking about yourself more highly than you should, but soberly. Think about where you fit; the job you do; how you perform in the family of God; your ministry; how the Spirit of God has equipped you to work.

Your circumstances are another topic that demands correct thinking. By not thinking correctly about your circumstances, you leave the door wide open to envy. You start by entertaining envious thoughts. You might think about your spouse, family, job, wages, car — all of your circumstances — and wish, "Oh, it would be so much easier if my life was different." Start thinking correctly about your circumstances and it will lead to contentment with whatever God has given.

You need to think correctly about what is said to you. This is tough, isn't it? If a nasty word is said to you, how should you respond to it? First of all, you should ask if it is correct. If someone is trying to correct you, you should listen. Now, if someone speaks dishonestly about you, trying to discredit your witness, hallelujah! You should take that gladly. You need to think correctly about what is said.

What about what others do to you? That requires correct thinking also. You could entertain thoughts about revenge, trying to get even. In Romans 12:19 God says, as it is recorded by the apostle Paul, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." That's the correct way to think. In 2 Thessalonians 1:6, again God says, "It is a righteous thing for me to repay to all of those who have treated you wrongly, to repay to them all of this that they have done." Correct thinking is that God will take care of you. Every wrong that has ever been done against you, big or little, is going to be made right. It is difficult to look forward to that day, when you look forward to getting even now. Jesus has promised He is coming back and everything is going to be made right. Can you wait until then, or do you need to take things into your own hands? You need to think correctly about what others do to you.

As humans we put meaning to events. Meaning usually comes out of personal interpretation, the way you talk to yourself about it. The

flesh is a controller, a manipulator; it is an enemy to our spiritual self. Your flesh doesn't need to be satisfied or gratified. It is the spirit of God within you which needs to be satisfied and gratified. Your flesh is going to interpret your circumstances, what other people say and do in selfish terms. Your flesh is going to interpret it by looking at your surroundings and other people. It will come up with wrong interpretation. This will lead to error. Conclusions reached through error will lead to wrong action. When we let our flesh direct our thinking, we follow up with wrong actions. When our flesh directs us, we aren't thinking correctly.

When the world directs our thinking, that's not correct, either. When we give Satan a place in our lives to direct our thinking, that also isn't correct. Superstition is interpreting events wrongly, which will lead to wrong action. No one wants to be accused of being superstitious, but you act that way when you don't think correctly. Tithing can be a superstitious action, supposing, "If I give God this much, He will give back a lot more." When you try that approach, you will not receive anything because you are not trying to please God—you are trying to please yourself. A double-minded man has to be reminded that he isn't going to receive anything because he is unstable in his thinking. It takes correct thoughts.

On a personal level, interpretations are subjective constructions. You will construct thoughts and meaning as they apply to yourself. When you look subjectively, it means you're looking from within your self. This interpretation, this construction (whether it is a recent event, or it happened a long time ago) will be a

subjective construction as it affects you. We are simply made this way.

It is very difficult to look at situations objectively, that is, from an onlooker's point of view, from a "stand back and look at the whole situation" point of view. That's what it takes to think correctly. You need God's objective view about your life. God's objective view is the correct

The key to all of this acting, or reacting, is thinking correctly; getting a handle on how we are thinking, how we are preparing to respond when a bad or a good situation happens.

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way to think when you are formulating responses and interpretations.

Jesus spent time helping, directing and confronting to get people to think correctly:

When it came to pass and the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem and sent messengers before his face, and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him. And they did not receive him because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down out of heaven and consume them just like Elijah did?" (Luke 9:51-54).

Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem and, passing through a city of the Samaritans, the disciples looked for a place to stay. No one would accommodate Jesus because He would not stay and teach. James and John then interpreted this subjectively and said, "They don't know who they are talking to. Do you want us to call fire down out of heaven and burn the whole bunch of them?" Now, that may sound like a normal human response. When we don't get what we want, when people don't react the way we think they should, the first thought that comes to mind is "Squash them!" Jesus turned around and rebuked His disciples, saying, "You don't know what kind of spirit is directing your thinking, your talking or your actions." Certainly it wasn't the same spirit that was directing Jesus. He had to correct the way they were thinking, which would correct the way they were talking, and correct their desires.

Look at another account: "From that time forth began Jesus to show his disciples how he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and of the chief priests and of the scribes, and be killed and be raised the third day. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him saying, 'Be it far from thee, Lord; this will not be to you'" (Matt. 16:21, 22). What was Peter thinking about? Here was someone he loved, and could not do without, saying, "I'm going to go to Jerusalem and the Pharisees will beat and abuse me. Finally they will kill me; then on the third day, I am going to stand again among the living." Peter said, "No way. If I have anything to do about it, it won't happen that way." Jesus had to help Peter understand. He turned around and said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are

Good Sex

BY TRACY SAVAGE — MISSIONARY IN RUSSIA

This article is for young people and parents. Please take the time to read it and allow God to speak to your hearts and minds.

Today, not only is premarital sex looked at as the expected or norm, but living together is just as accepted. I don't even like the word "premarital" because this implies that there will be a resultant "marital" relationship, which I would say doesn't often happen. It is better to just say sex outside of the marriage commitment.

Looking through the pages of Scripture and at our sick world, it is obvious that sexual impurity is one, if not the main, cause of God's heartache and what separates a person from God and keeps him from knowing the grace and love of God.

Parents have a responsibility to train a child in the way he should go (Proverbs 22:6). Young people (and all people) have a responsibility to flee from sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:18). It will be easier for a young person to do his part if his parents have done theirs.

Television, music, movies, etc. all portray a picture of "love." Unfortunately this is far from the love God intended between a woman and a man. The "love" the world portrays is better termed "lust." Love as God intended is not only a sexual relationship but a relationship based on commitment and the love of God.

God gave mankind the sexual relationship as well as, or along with, the marriage relationship. He intended a sexual relationship to be only within the marriage of two people.

Why are there so many problems in our world, in the personal lives of so many people? One of the biggest reasons is because people have disobeyed God and have followed after

*The "love" the world
portrays is better
termed "lust."*

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their own sinful desires. Think of how many people are affected by broken homes, sexual diseases, abortions, heartache over a lost "friend," or finding out that one's "friend" or spouse has cheated on them. God set His rules for sex for our own good. He knows what is best for us. He knows that we need security, which will only come from a commitment. He knows we need to feel loved, be loved and be cared for. He knows that people are sexual beings. He knows that a sexual relationship not only affects the physical part of people, but also the psychological, emotional and spiritual parts. He knows everything and therefore since He loves us has set guidelines for healthy and prosperous living. It hurts Him to see those whom He

loves stray from the Way, the Truth and the Life. God has so much good for us and He desires only what is good and perfect for us. He wants us to be happy and healthy.

I have heard it said so many times about men and boys that they *can't* wait or *can't* control themselves. They *must* have sex. What a bunch of rubbish! With God all things are possible!! Unfortunately more people are not with God than are with Him. Only a weak person can't wait and only a weak and spoiled person believes they *must* have it. Be strong in the power of *His* might! Where are these strong men? Where are the men of God? Reveal yourselves. Stand in truth and on His behalf. Be proud and boast of Jesus in you! Self-control is a fruit of the spirit and if His spirit dwells in you you *can* control yourself and you *can* wait. You just have to make a decision and love God more than anything else.

If we acknowledge God as our daddy and trust in Him, He will help us in all situations. But there still comes a time when we must make decisions for ourselves. Will we follow God or will we follow the world or our own temporary desires? God gave us a free will. He wants us to love Him and to obey Him because He loves us and that is what is best for us, but He will not force us to obey Him. He has given us all we need for life and godliness, but we need to choose a life of purity. In a moment of

(continued on page 14)

Compassion: The Heart of Ministry

BY PASTOR JON T. WELCH

In 1975 a child named Raymond Dunn, Jr. was born in New York state. The Associated Press reports that at his birth, a skull fracture and oxygen deprivation caused severe retardation. As Raymond grew, the family discovered further impairments. His twisted body suffered up to twenty seizures per day. He was blind, mute, immobile. He had several allergies that limited him to only one food: a meat-based formula made by Gerber Foods.

In 1985 Gerber stopped making the formula that Raymond lived on. Carol Dunn scoured the country to buy what stores had in stock, accumulating cases and cases, but in 1990 her supply ran out. In desperation, she appealed to Gerber for help. Without this particular food, Raymond would starve to death.

The employees of the company listened. In an unprecedented action, volunteers donated hundreds of hours to bring out old equipment, set up production lines, obtain special approval from the USDA, and produce the formula — all for one special boy.

In January 1995, Raymond Dunn, Jr., known as the Gerber Boy, died from his physical problems. But during his brief lifetime he called forth a wonderful thing called compassion (Larry A. Payne, "To Illustrate . . . Compassion," *Leadership Journal*, summer 1995, Vol. XVI, Number 3, p. 38).

The actions of the employees of Gerber Foods show humanity at its best. Compassion! By allowing the needs of one solitary life to touch them in this way, they exemplify how compassion gets to the heart of ministry.

Definitions of Compassion

Webster's Dictionary defines compassion as "sympathy . . . pity . . . mercy." In the Greek, it means "to have the bowels yearn, i.e. (fig.) feel sympathy, to pity, have (be moved with) compassion" (Strong's). However, these definitions fail to convey, at least in my mind, the full definition of compassion.

To get a clearer picture of what compassion should be for followers of Christ, and particularly for pastors of the Church of God, let's look at the example of Jesus for a more complete definition of compassion.

Jesus' Compassion for People

One of the primary texts that speaks of the compassion Jesus had for people is Matthew 9:35-38:

And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep

without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (All Scripture references are from the NASV unless otherwise noted).

As Jesus looked at the people He saw them hurt and broken. He had compassion on them because "they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd." They wandered aimlessly in much the same way we observe people around us today.

The NASB says, "He felt compassion." The NIV says, "He had compassion." The KJV says, "He was moved with compassion." The God's Word Translation says, "He felt sorry for them." And finally, The Message says, "His heart broke." Each of these translations indicate that Jesus had deep feelings for the people. His heart broke or ached for them. But He did not stop with just a feeling.

Again, Jesus told His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Matt. 9:37, 38), indicating that the harvest was great and there weren't enough laborers for the harvest; therefore they were to pray for God to send workers for the harvest. In chapter 10 Jesus sent the twelve disciples out with

power to minister to the needs of the people. *He acted on His compassion!*

In each passage I found about Christ and His compassion, there was *always* an action attached. In other words, Jesus' compassion was at the heart of His ministry. Here is a sampling of other passages of Jesus acting on His compassion.

"And when He went ashore, He saw a great multitude, and felt compassion for them, and healed their sick" (Matt. 14:14).

"And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, 'I feel compassion for the multitude, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not wish to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.'" He then fed the 4,000 (Matt. 15:32).

"And moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him" (Matt. 20:34).

Other Examples of

Compassion Moved to Action

There are parables Jesus used to teach compassion:

The king whose slave owed him \$10,000,000 in silver and could not pay it back had compassion on that slave. Matthew 18:27 says, "And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt."

The good samaritan saw a beaten traveler along the road side and felt compassion (see Luke 10:33-35).

The father of the prodigal son had great compassion for his wayward son. Luke 15:20 says, "And he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father

saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him, and kissed him." He then had the fatted calf fixed for him and had a party.

These examples, along with many others, show us that compassion is more than a feeling, it is an *action!*

Ministry Needs

a Heart of Compassion

At the heart of our ministry is compassion. It must motivate us to action.

In Matthew 9:10-11 Jesus is chided for who He was hanging around and helping. "And it happened that as He was reclining at the table in the house, behold many tax-gatherers and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, 'Why is your Teacher eating with the tax-gatherers and sinners?'" Jesus goes on to say in verses 12 and 13, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Jesus desires us to have compassion for people, to meet them where they're at, and to help them. If we're not careful actions can become empty motions. They mean very little without compassion. Our challenge then is to work *from* our compassion rather than to work for work's sake.

With what shall I come to the LORD and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? Does the LORD take delight in thousands

of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my first-born for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:6-8).

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become as a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

Getting to the Heart of Ministry

Our actions, like Christ's, are to be motivated by *compassion!* We must each ask ourselves if our compassion moves us to action. Do we have compassion to begin with? I'd like to challenge each of us to truly examine our hearts for our level of compassion for people (especially those who are lost — those who do not have Christ as their Lord and Savior). Do we feel sorry for those people and if so what are we doing about it? We are to have compassion for God and people and do something about it (or else it's not really compassion).

For God

And one of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well,

asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:28-31).

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also (1 John 4:20, 21).

This means to seek God by building your relationship with Him through prayer and time in the Word of God. Spending time with God is at the heart of ministry.

For Each Other

And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you (Colossians 3:12, 13).

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's

goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth (1 John 3:16-18).

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:34, 35).

And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you" (John 13:12-15).

This means to follow the example of Jesus and serve one another in humility. To set aside our own agendas and focus on one another's needs is at the heart of ministry.

For the World

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be

saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time. And for this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth (1 Timothy 2:1-7).

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:19, 20).

God's desire is for "all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." That's compassion. The Great Commission is a commission of compassion. It was given so that God's desire might be fulfilled. We are to go out *into all the world*. Everyone needs to be given a chance to hear the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

This means supporting missions, missions programs, and missionaries. It means looking within your own community and developing the outreach program of your church to meet the needs of *your* community. This is at the heart of ministry.

Conclusion

Moving closer to the heart of God brings us closer to Him, to one another, and to humanity. It develops our compassion which is the heart of the ministry. □

CHRISTIAN *Living*

Acting Right, Not Just Reacting (continued from page 8)

sometimes we are worthless and useless. We have to accept that. That is just a fact of life, but the judgment has to be based upon a fact, not on how we *feel*. Let's lay the feeling aside and go to the bottom line and ask, "What makes you think you're worthless? What did you do to make you think you are not a good person? What did you do that makes you think you aren't a good husband or wife or whatever it may be?" There is a fact behind it and basing your judgment on the facts will bring a correct judgment. Basing judgments upon feelings is not good. We can't make value judgments based on feelings. They have to be based on facts and proper thinking.

Acting right takes thinking, getting in touch with what we are thinking about in respect to the situation. We need to get in touch with our

thoughts according to the pattern laid out for us in Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true . . ." Is what I am thinking about, or entertaining, really true? "Whatever things are honest" — is it honest? Do I know this is a fact? "Whatever things are just" — does this stand out under God's scrutiny? *Are they pure* or are they leading to sin? *Are they lovely* or are they leading to corruption? Do these thoughts lead to a *good report*, or if somebody knew I was thinking this, would it change their thoughts of me? *Is there any virtue* in this? *Is there any praise* to God for the things I am thinking now? Paul is saying: if the things are true and honest, just, pure, lovely, if they bring about a good report, if there is virtue, if there is any praise, that is what we need to think on. "That takes work! That's

too hard! I can't do it," your flesh may cry. We *can* do it because we have God's spirit in us. The Word says, "The weaponry we have is mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds and every imagination, every argument, everything that would raise itself against this can be torn down, destroyed, dismantled, thrown away so that we can bring every thought into obedience of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

When you start thinking right about life, that is when you will realize the power you have for living. You need to start thinking correctly about your life and everything that relates to you so that you can be under submission to God. You can become one who acts after careful consideration rather than one who simply reacts. □

Good Sex (continued from page 10)

passion this decision for godliness may be difficult to make; therefore decisions need to be made before the temptation comes or one will be less likely to stand up under the temptation and flee from it. There is God's way and there is man's way. Which way will you choose? If you truly love God you will obey Him. His Word says so.

We all fall short in different ways and God is faithful to forgive us if we ask and if we turn from the sin; but continual sin merely crucifies the Messiah over and over again. Chris-

tians should come out from the world and be separate when there is a conflict between God's ways and man's ways. The world is not the measure of what is right and what is wrong. Movies and music do not reveal true love. God has called His children to purity and natural parents ought to do the same — not because they are "old fashioned" but because the Word of God and God Himself calls all of us to a pure and godly life. Children should know that this is from God, not just from Mom and Dad. God is the authority and the

Author of life and the rules by which to live. Each time one is tempted to sin, sexually or in any way, he should ask himself if he desires this more than he desires God.

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy spirit which is in you, which you have received from God? *You are not your own*; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body (1 Cor. 6:18-20). □

Proving the Resurrection

BY JUAN BAIXERAS — MIAMI, FL

A lot of people who are not familiar with the facts think that Christianity is simply a blind leap of faith. This is just not the case. God does ask that we have faith in His promises, but He has left us a good amount of hard-core evidence to prove that what He has told us is true. The greatest proof is the resurrection of His son, Jesus the Messiah.

Everything hangs on the resurrection. It is the single most important fact in Christianity. If the resurrection of Jesus is true, then we must accept that He was who He said He was, the Messiah of God's kingdom, which also means that God does exist. If we accept Him as the Messiah, then we must also accept His teaching of the kingdom of God and the forgiveness of sins. It all comes down to the resurrection. If it is true, then Christianity as it was taught by Jesus is true. If it is not true, then Christianity is the biggest lie in the history of mankind. The big question is, can we prove the resurrection of Jesus Christ? The answer is, we sure can! You just have to use what God gave you in the first place — your mind. A successful businessman once said, "Do not accept any deal until you have all the facts, but do not reject any deal until you have all the facts." Well, here are the facts.

Nobody disputes that a man named Jesus of Nazareth actually existed. He is mentioned many times in Roman¹ and Hebrew² records as well as Christian. The dispute is in whether He was resurrected, thus

proving that He was the Messiah, the Son of God.

Atheists will say that He was just a good man. Other religious groups will claim that He was just another prophet. During His ministry, Jesus performed many miracles, from healing the sick and the blind, to raising Lazarus from the dead. The Jews admit to these miracles, but point out that Old Testament prophets like Moses and Elijah also performed great miracles. In this they are correct. Performing miracles does not make you the Messiah, but defeating death does.

No other prophet, religious leader, or other person in history has ever predicted that he would come back from the dead, and then actually returned from the dead — none except Jesus.

In Jerusalem after Jesus' death, three main groups were interested in His body. They were the Pharisees, who were a powerful branch of the Jewish religious leaders, the Romans, and Jesus' disciples.

After His death on the cross, Jesus was placed in a tomb which was closed off by a huge stone. Jewish tombs of that time had an entrance 4 1/2 to 5 feet high. Modern engineers have taken the type of stone used in that time and calculated the size of the stone needed to roll against a 4 1/2 to 5 foot doorway. They estimate that a stone of those proportions would weigh a minimum of 1 1/2 to 2 tons. These stones were placed in

front of the tomb in a slight incline and were held in place by a wedge. When the wedge was removed the stone rolled slightly forward and sealed the tomb. To enter the tomb after it had been sealed required that the stone be removed, requiring great effort.

The Pharisees were aware of Jesus' claim that He would return from the grave after the third day. They did not want Jesus' disciples to come during the night and take His body away and then claim that He had been resurrected. In order to prevent this, they went to the Roman governor himself, Pontius Pilate, and asked him to place a guard detachment at the tomb so that nobody could remove Jesus' body. The governor agreed, and a guard detachment was placed at the tomb, and the governor's seal was put on the tomb's entrance (Matt. 27:62-66).

Before going on, something must be said about the Roman guards. The Romans at this point in history controlled much of the known world. Their armies were considered to be the best in the world because the Roman soldier was considered to be the best in the world. This was due mostly to excellent training and harsh discipline. The Roman guards that were placed at Jesus' tomb were the Governor's Custodian Guards, which were the elite of the elite in the Roman army. They would be equivalent to today's Green Berets or Navy Seals.

Proving the Resurrection (continued from page 15)

It was the custom in the Roman army, as well as in most armies of that day, that if you were ordered to guard a prisoner and he escaped, the penalty was death. In Acts 12:19 when Peter escapes from jail, Herod questions the guards and then has them executed. In the Roman army, the penalty of death was carried out by stripping the guard of his clothes, and then burning him alive with a fire started with his own garments. This was a harsh punishment, but it produced incredible vigilance and discouraged bribery. After all, you cannot spend bribery money if you are dead. There was also the death penalty by upside-down crucifixion for anyone breaking the governor's seal.³

These guards were ordered by none other than the governor himself, so we can deduce that these guards were highly motivated to perform their duty. Their lives depended on it!

Roman procedure required each Roman guard to be able to defend six feet of ground. Using this fact, and knowing the size of most Jewish tombs, there were probably about 16 Roman guards assigned to guard Jesus' tomb — 16 very disciplined and very motivated Roman Custodian Guards. Roman procedure for standing guard at night was the following: with sixteen guards, four guards would stand in front of the tomb's entrance, while the other twelve would sit to each side in front of the entrance, forming a sort of parenthesis in front of the tomb. These twelve would sleep while the four in front of the tomb would stand watch. Every hour they would switch the guards that were in front of the entrance, so that there would always be

four alert guards, with all the others nearby in case of trouble.⁴

Of the three groups that were interested in the body of Jesus, the disciples were definitely not interested in taking His body. They were themselves skeptical. They were waiting to see if what Jesus had predicted would happen. It seems highly illogical that the apostles would want to take His body and thus deny themselves of that certainty. The apostle Thomas (now known as doubting Thomas) did not believe that Jesus had been resurrected even after the other ten apostles told him that they had seen the resurrected Jesus. When they told him, he said, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). A week later he got his chance.

The Pharisees most definitely did not want to take Jesus' body from the tomb because they wanted to prove that He was not the Messiah. They wanted to open up the tomb after three days and find His body still there, and then claim, "See, we were right; he was not the Messiah."

The Romans wanted to find His body after three days and put all this behind them. They did not like all this talk of the Jewish Messiah and His kingdom. To the Romans, talk of kingdom and kings sounded too much like rebellion. A resurrection would also nullify their whole belief system of multiple gods, which in time is exactly what happened.

The main argument against the resurrection is that the disciples took Jesus' body from the tomb. This argument is very weak to say the least. Let us review the facts.

The Bible states in Matthew 28:2-15 that the guards at the tomb felt an earthquake and saw an angel of the Lord roll back the stone. It says his appearance was like lightning and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid, they shook and became like dead men (maybe paralyzed with fear). It then states that afterwards some of the guards went into the city and reported what had happened to the chief Jewish priests. When the priests had devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money and told them to say that Jesus' disciples came in the night while they were sleeping and stole the body. Also, in return, the chief priests would talk to the governor and keep the guards out of trouble. Remember, this is exactly what the Pharisees were trying to prevent by having the guards placed at the tomb.

This argument would never stand up in a court of law. If the disciples had indeed decided to take Jesus' body, how could they have gotten past the Roman guards? They would have had to wait until all the guards had fallen asleep. Their training and their procedures for standing watch at night make it a virtual impossibility that all of them fell asleep at the same time. Let us suppose for a moment that all the guards somehow fell asleep. I would then have to believe that the disciples quietly stepped past the guards and moved a two-ton stone without waking the guards up. This possibility is almost laughable!

A final contradiction to this argument is that if all the guards were asleep, then how did the guards know that it was the disciples who took the body? It would stand to reason that if one of the guards had awakened and

seen the disciples, he would have sounded the alarm and awakened the rest of the soldiers.

It would have been a much better argument if the guards had been found dead. Then one could argue that the disciples had killed the guards and taken the body. But that is not what happened. All the guards were perfectly alive.

So, basically, if you do not believe that Jesus was resurrected, you have to believe that 16 Roman Custodian Guards placed personally by the governor under a penalty of death for failure to carry out their duty, fell asleep, and did not wake up as the apostles moved a two-ton stone, or did wake up to see them, but did nothing to stop them. I personally find these options extremely hard to believe.

This proof would probably be sufficient in a court of law, but there is still one more piece of evidence which is even more convincing than what has already been presented. This is the apostles themselves.

The Bible tells us that in a period of forty days, Jesus appeared to His apostles together and individually nine times. The lives of the apostles have been documented by Roman and Christian historians. Nobody disputes their evangelistic journeys. You can still go to Rome and Damascus and see where Paul was imprisoned.

The proof of the resurrection is in the lives of the apostles. It is in how they lived and how they were treated. I used to ask myself, "Why didn't God help the apostles during their journeys?" They went through such hardships. All of them were beaten, tortured, imprisoned, and all except

John were brutally killed. Let us take a quick review of some of their lives.

Paul was whipped at least five times, beaten countless times (2 Cor. 11:23), imprisoned twice for years (2 Cor. 6:4, 5), left for dead after being stoned (Acts 14:19), and finally beheaded during the persecution under Emperor Nero.

Keep in mind that Paul persecuted Christians before his conversion. He was at the stoning of Stephen, so he knew firsthand the consequences of being a Christian. You must also understand what it meant for a Jew, especially a Pharisee (which Paul was) to become a Christian. You were thrown out of the synagogue, your family disowned you, you were considered an outcast by your friends and the community. It was socially and economically devastating. It was a major tragedy for an individual and it should be evaluated properly. Imagine if that happened to you today. Would you go through all that for a lie?

Peter was also martyred during Nero's persecution. At Peter's request he was crucified upside down. They were going to crucify him upright but he did not feel he was worthy to die in the same manner as his Lord.

Andrew went to the "land of the man eaters," in what was later to become known as the Soviet Union. Russian Christians claim him as the first to bring the gospel to their land. He also preached in modern-day Turkey, and in Greece, where he is said to have been crucified.

Thomas was most active in the area east of Syria. Tradition has him preaching as far east as India where the ancient Marthoma Christians revere him as their founder. They claim that he died there when he was

pierced through with the spears of four soldiers.

Philip had a powerful ministry in Carthage in North Africa and then in Asia Minor, where he converted the wife of a Roman proconsul. In retaliation the proconsul had Philip arrested and cruelly put to death.

Matthew, the tax collector and writer of a Gospel, ministered in Persia and Ethiopia. Reports say that he was stabbed to death in Ethiopia.

Bartholomew had widespread missionary travels attributed to him by tradition: to India with Thomas, back to Armenia, and also to Ethiopia and Southern Arabia. There are various accounts of how he met his death as a martyr for the gospel.

James the son of Alphaeus is one of at least three James's referred to in the New Testament. There is some confusion as to which, but this James is reckoned to have ministered in Syria. The Jewish historian Josephus reported that he was stoned and then clubbed to death.

Simon the Zealot ministered in Persia and was killed after refusing to sacrifice to the sun god.

Matthias was the apostle chosen to replace Judas. Tradition sends him to Syria with Andrew and to death by burning.

It stands to reason that if the apostles had stolen Jesus' body from the tomb, then they would surely know that He had not been resurrected. Why then would they go through years of incredible hardship for a lie? Would you (as Paul did) be ostracized by everyone you know and love, and then go into towns for about thirty years, getting whipped, tortured, stoned, and imprisoned

(continued on page 21)

Vocabulary of the Resurrection

BY PASTOR SYDNEY A. HATCH, DECEASED

The hope of God's people is the second coming of our Lord and the resurrection from the dead. It has been of interest and encouragement to me to consider terms associated with resurrection. Only a limited number of them may be mentioned here, and briefly at the most, but I hope these sketchy remarks will hearten the reader and inspire him with the hope that is ours.

Sleep

Paul describes "the dead in Christ" as "asleep in Jesus" (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Jesus Himself said (of Jairus' daughter), "She is not dead, but sleepeth" (Luke 8:52). Of Lazarus, He told His disciples, "Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (John 11:11). Lest the actual death of Lazarus should be doubted, we read further: "Then said Jesus . . . plainly, Lazarus is dead" (v. 14).

To describe the dead in Christ as "asleep in Jesus" is a beautiful figure of speech which should excite within us the keenest spiritual pleasure and fondest hope of the future. It implies very plainly one thing: these dead shall wake up some day; the dead in Christ shall live again!

Three Greek words, primarily, are used in the New Testament for "sleep": *hupnos*, *katheudo*, and *koimao*. *Hupnos*, from which comes our word "hypnosis," is never used of the sleep

of death, but rather of slumber. So Eutychus sank into a deep sleep (*hupnos*) before he tumbled out of the third-story window (Acts 20:9)! Paul earnestly warned the Romans, "It is high time to awake out of sleep [*hupnos*]" (13:11).

The second word, *katheudo*, was used most frequently of natural sleep,

Since the Bible speaks of death as sleep, so it speaks of resurrection as awaking.

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as when our Lord was asleep in the ship (Matt. 8:24), and in the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:5). It was also used of death (Mark 5:39) and of spiritual indifference (1 Thess. 5:6).

It is the third word, *koimao*, which is of special interest to us, for it is used preeminently of the sleep of death. Eighteen times it occurs in the New Testament, and fourteen of these occurrences refer to death.

It is the word used of Lazarus, and of Stephen when "he fell asleep" (Acts 7:60). It is the word employed by Paul in those great resurrection passages, 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. It is the word used in his assurance, "We shall not all sleep" (1 Cor. 15:51).

Koimao, "to put to sleep," is especially the word of comfort, for it was also used as a metaphor of stilling, calming, or quieting. Its comforting aspect is still preserved today in the English word "cemetery," from the Greek word *koimeterion*, which means a sleeping chamber or sleeping place.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* tells us that early Christians applied the term "cemetery," or "sleeping place," to the areas set apart for the burial of their dead. This was testimony to the pagan world. The ground wherein they rested became more than a burial ground, a graveyard of the ages. For them it was rather "the sleeping place," until the resurrection!

Awake

Since the Bible speaks of death as sleep, so it speaks of resurrection as awaking. This was the language of David (Psa. 17:15), Daniel (12:2), and our Lord (John 11:11). David and Daniel, in the aforementioned verses, used the Hebrew word *kutz* of being aroused from the slumber of death.

Resurrection

A study of this kind should certainly not overlook the word "resurrection." The most common Greek word for it in the New Testament, occurring about 42 times, is *anastasis*. It is a combination of two words: *ana* meaning "upwards, up," and *stasis*, meaning "a standing, a place." In this

way we see the simplest sense of resurrection, a "standing up." We shall not be swept out of the grave in a recumbent position, but shall stand up in that moment! As Lazarus stepped forth (John 11:44), so we shall step forth. (The legs of Lazarus, it has been suggested, were probably bound separately.)

There is another matter about this word which I have considered many times. The verb form, *anistemi*, meaning "to raise up, to rise," was often used of those who prepared themselves for a journey. It was used of our Lord: "He arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea" (Mark 10:1). It was used of Mary when she "arose . . . and went into the hill country with haste" (Luke 1:39).

It was also used when the prodigal son said "I will arise and go to my father" (Luke 15:18). The Spirit addressed Peter, "Arise . . . and go with them" (Acts 10:20). The Lord spoke to Saul, lying on the road, "Arise, and go into Damascus" (Acts 22:10). In each case it indicates preparing for a journey, and then departure.

Do we not have here a suggestion of our experience in the resurrection? First, while lying in the grave, we hear His voice (John 5:28). Then we arise, standing up (our *anastasis*). But, at the same moment, the Lord has prepared us for a journey, having changed us and clothed us with immortality (1 Cor. 15:52, 53). In the next instant — in the twinkling of an eye — we have been snatched away to a meeting in the air (1 Thess. 4:17)!

"To Live" and "Life"

These terms in Scripture often mean more than having a spiritual

life or new nature in Christ now. They also frequently refer to living again in the resurrection.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for life is *chayah*. It occurs in the description of a strange and wonderful miracle in 2 Kings 13:21. A dead man was cast into the grave of Elisha. When he touched the bones of Elisha we read that "he *revived*, and stood up on his feet"!

There are wonderful lessons in this miracle, but we cannot discuss them here. We can point out that here the word *chayah* is translated "revived." The man came to life again and stood up on his feet! This is the word Isaiah used when he wrote, "Thy dead men shall *live*, together with my dead body shall they arise" (26:19).

The word is used again in Habakkuk's familiar prophecy, "The just shall *live* by his faith" (2:4); that is, he shall *live* again in the resurrection. We see what Paul meant when he wrote, "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38).

The relevant Greek words are *zao*, to live, and *zoe*, life. Their meanings include resurrection: "Christ both died, and rose, and *revived* [*zao*]," or "Christ died and *lived again*" (RSV) (Rom. 14:9). "They *lived* and reigned with Christ a thousand years," or "they *came to life again*" (RSV) (Rev. 20:4).

We see our responsibility in "holding forth the word of *life* [*zoe*]," as Paul writes in Philippians 2:16. It is to tell men not only of a present work of grace but of a future hope of resurrection. It is to have the courage to include conditional immortality — life only in Christ — in our message.

Salvation

As "life" and "live" often refer to the resurrection, so also does "salvation." Because of the emphasis which tradition has placed on the unscriptural idea of going to heaven at death, the term "salvation" has come to be used almost entirely of coming to know Christ as Savior. We have lost sight of the fact that in the Bible it also frequently means to be raised from the dead.

The basic sense of "save" is to rescue from peril, injury, or suffering. The disciples in the ship cried, "Lord, save us; we perish" (Matt. 8:25). The sinking Peter called out, "Lord, save me" (Matt. 14:30). And we read that the Lord "saved the people out of the land of Egypt" (Jude 5). Thus, in the resurrection, He will reach down and draw us to Himself, out of the grave and death.

I think this is the sense of "salvation" in Hebrews 2:10, where Christ is called the "captain" or "pioneer" of our salvation. The Greek word is *archegos*, meaning one who takes the lead, who goes first, who blazes the way. Christ blazed the trail as far as death and resurrection are concerned. He entered the frontier, the stronghold; that is, death and the grave. After three days and three nights He came out victorious! The cold grip of the dark enemy could not hold Him. He became our "hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5:8, 9), our hope of resurrection: for "if Jesus died and rose again," so God "will also raise up us by his own power" (1 Cor. 6:14).

Whether "salvation" refers to the present experience, the future resurrection, or both is determined by context. Certainly it refers to the
(continued on page 22)

Book Review: *In Combat with the Blackhawks:*

Blessings from Those Days of Battle, by Sidney A. Hatch, TH. M.

BY HOLLIS PARTLOWE

Many of our readers were richly blessed by Sid's book, *Daring to Differ: Adventures in Conditional Immortality*. Now from the pen of this gifted and scholarly servant of God comes an equally good book based on his experiences of World War II. In fact, I've enjoyed *Daring to Differ* more since reading *In Combat*. Both deserve a second and third reading.

Sid fell asleep in Christ on October 1, 1995 and is buried near Sherwood, Oregon. *In Combat* was published by his family after his death. He spent his final days battling leukemia, finishing this book and working on another one.

During World War II he served as a sergeant in the 86th Infantry Division, the "Blackhawks," which saw action in Europe and the Philippines. For this service he earned Combat Infantry Badge and the Bronze Star Medal. After the war he pastored churches in California, Texas, Oregon and Connecticut.

Since Bro. Hatch could speak German, he served as an interpreter as well as an infantry rifleman. Preparation for this part of his service began with his first year of college, when his counselor suggested that he study German among the many choices of languages. "Little did I realize the role this decision would play in my life a few years hence" (pp. 117-118). "Preparation for that responsibility began several years before the war, perhaps in the foreknowledge and providence of God" (p. 121).

A deep faith and trust in the only true God comes through loud and clear throughout the book. The reader will have his faith lifted and strengthened by reading *Blessings from Those Days of Battle*. Even those who feel that Christians should not participate in war to any degree would be hard pressed to refute Sid's deep convictions and commitment to God's Word. In fact, the main strength of the book is how he uses his deep understanding of the Bible and applies it to his battle experiences. When our lives and country are threatened by inhuman aggressive forces, like Adolph Hitler's and the Japanese empire, it is appropriate, according to Hatch, to defend ourselves. "A combat experience may not seem conducive to the spiritual life, but God can make the difference" (back cover quote).

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). This verse is quoted and followed by these comments:

But peace was no longer possible in the terrible days of World War II. This verse indicates that there comes a time when men and nations must fight. They have no other choice.

During my years in the ministry I have occasionally had to contend with pacifism. Several years ago a man in Australia wrote me a letter and sent me some material in which he informed me that I could never join his church unless I would confess my "sin" of having served in the military. I wrote back to this man and told him about an experience

my wife and I had in New Zealand while on a visit there in 1973.

This was a fraternal visit and preaching mission. When our New Zealand hosts learned that I had served in the military in World War II and even in combat they expressed appreciation. "You don't know how relieved we were," they said, "when American troops arrived in New Zealand during World War II. We knew then we would not become a colony of Japan."

I wrote this to my friend in Australia. I reminded him that had it not been for the good old USA, his country might have become a colony of Japan. Also, somebody had to fight and die so he could be a pacifist. I received no reply to my letter.

The fallacy of pacifism is twofold. It fails to recognize that some element of force is necessary to maintain peace and order in the universe. Secondly, it disarms the innocent and leaves them at the mercy of the aggressor and the criminal elements in the world.

Jesus of Nazareth said, in His Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). We note that He said "peacemaker," not "peacekeeper." Before peace can be kept, it must be made, even created. That is the role of government, the public official, the soldier, the policeman on the beat. That is why the apostle Paul said, and I apply it to the soldier, "he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Romans 13:4).

The very appropriate epilogue of the book is the message Sid gave at

the memorial service of the Blackhawk reunion in San Diego, California, September 1995. He had the honor of being selected as chaplain speaker. The epilogue alone is well worth the price of the book.

Another outstanding feature of the book is a return to the battle areas after the war. In 1982, Sid, Jo — his wife — and their oldest son Dr. David Hatch returned to Ingolstadt. "We located the old fort and stood on the east bank of the Danube River at the

very point where our company came across the night of April 26-27, 1945. The intervening years have not erased the memories of that moment" (p. 107). Pictures of the old pockmarked German fort are shown on pages 108-109. One of them shows Sid with his hands on the fort. One can only imagine the emotions and memories that raced through his heart at that moment.

The first line of the preface reads: "This book is about spiritual experi-

ences in combat during World War II." It is indeed just that. It has impacted my life as few, if any, other books have. □

Available from Josephine Hatch
21800 S.W. Pacific Highway #1
Sherwood, OR 97140-9130

Daring to Differ \$9.95

In Combat . . . \$19.00

Reviewed by Hollis Partlowe
Veteran of World War II
South Pacific Theater of Operations

Proving the Resurrection (continued from page 17)

every time you preached the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, if you knew it was a lie? Would you, like Peter, request to be crucified upside down because you did not feel worthy to die in the same manner as Jesus, if you knew that He had not been resurrected and thus was not the Messiah?

I cannot think of any reason why these men would do what they did unless what they claim is true, that Jesus Christ after His death appeared to them. If I went into a town knowing that Jesus Christ had not been resurrected and said to the people, "Jesus of Nazareth has been resurrected," and someone put me to the whip, I can honestly say that I would be on my way home.

The reason the apostles lived such hard lives and died such gruesome deaths is because they had to. It was part of God's plan. It is the indisputable proof that God left for future generations. If the apostles had been welcomed into towns and people had

fed them, given them money, and treated them as important and distinguished, then people today would look back and say that they acted from selfish reasons, because it was a good way of life.

God designed it so that the apostles would live the kind of lives which they did in order for us to have proof of the resurrection in the years to come. There was absolutely no human reward for what they did. There is no way one could get these men to do what they did for so many years unless they had really seen the risen Jesus. Think about it — what would it take to get you to do what they did? I certainly would not do it for a lie! Can you think of another reason why they did what they did? I have tried, and I have come up with nothing. As a matter of fact, nobody whom I have ever asked this question has offered a plausible explanation.

God, through the prophets, the apostles, history, and logic, testifies to the fact that He resurrected Jesus

Christ. Christianity is based on faith, but faith that is based on hard evidence. The Bible itself is full of fulfilled prophecies, and prophecies that God will fulfill in the future. This is where faith comes in. We know that God is true because of what He has shown us; therefore we believe (have faith) in His promises for the future.

Jesus Christ did rise from the dead, and all the secular evidence agrees with this fact. And if Jesus rose from the dead, then so will His followers. See you at the resurrection! □

¹ Suetonius in AD 49 in *Claudius*, 25, 4 and Tacitus, AD 115-117, in *Annals*, XV, 44.

² Flavius Josephus, 1st century AD, *Antiquities*, XX, 200.

³ M. P. Speidel, *Guards of the Roman Armies*, Bonn, 1978.

⁴ M. P. Speidel, *Roman Army Studies* 2, Stuttgart, 1992, MAVORS 8 reviewed in JRS84 (1994). R. E. Smith, *Service in the Post-Marian Roman Army*, Manchester, 1958.

Vocabulary of the Resurrection (continued from page 19)

resurrection in such statements as "now is our salvation nearer" and "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Rom. 13:11; Heb. 9:28).

Redemption

The Greek word for "redemption" I have in mind is *apolutrosis*. It means a deliverance, a liberation, a release effected by payment of ransom.

As with "salvation," so with "redemption," God's people have been prone to overlook its resurrection aspect. Truly it speaks of deliverance through Christ from evil and the consequences of sin. Thus we are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1:7).

But, of the ten occurrences of *apolutrosis* in the New Testament, at least four are associated with the second coming of Christ. Our Lord said, "Look up . . . for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). Paul wrote that we "groan within ourselves for . . . the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). Certainly here is its deliverance from frailty and mortality! So also the apostle spoke of "the redemption of the purchased possession" and "the day of redemption" (Eph. 1:14; 4:30).

In the Old Testament two words for "redemption" are prominent. The first is *gaal*. It means to demand back, to buy back. It was used of delivering God's people from captivity, but this was only a shadow of the redemption to come: "I will ransom them

from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death" (Hos. 13:14). Job cried, "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (19:25); that is, the One who will raise me from the dust. And, of that future highway, Isaiah wrote, "The redeemed [resurrected] shall walk there" (Isa. 35:9).

The other word was *padah*. It especially referred to deliverance from bondage (Deut. 7:8), but was also used of the resurrection: "Like sheep they have laid in the grave . . . But God will redeem my soul [self, person, body] from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me" (Psa. 49:14, 15).

Consolation

"Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25, RSV). The New English Bible describes the hopeful Simeon as "one who watched and waited for the restoration of Israel."

Here is one of the overlooked words of the resurrection. Its Greek form is *paraklesis*. *Para* means "beside." *Klesis* means a "calling," or a "call." It is used in Philippians 3:14 of "the high calling" or "the upward call." Thus it was a "calling beside" for which the righteous Simeon waited.

Simeon's hope will eventually have its fulfillment in the words of Matthew 24:31: "He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds." Thus will be ushered in the Kingdom of God. Frederic William Farrar has

written that waiting for "the consolation of Israel" is equivalent to Joseph of Arimathea's hope, "waiting for the kingdom of God" (Mark 15:43), and that among the Jews a prayer for the coming of the Messiah was, "May I see the Consolation of Israel."

It is my feeling that "consolation" reminds us of the comforting aspect of His coming and the resurrection. It is, literally, our summons to His side. Commenting on Simeon's hope, A.T. Robertson says that "consolation" means the Messianic hope, calling to one's side for cheer.

The verb form of *paraklesis* is *parakaleo*, and means "call for." Paul used the word about the leaders of the Jews in Rome. "I have called for you, to see you, and to speak with you" (Acts 28:20). In the consolation Christ will call for us, to see us, and to speak with us.

Simeon was willing to die when he had seen the Christ, the One appointed "for the . . . rising again of many in Israel" (Luke 2:28-34).

Regeneration

The word "regeneration" is found twice in the Scriptures (Matt. 19:28; Titus 3:5). The Greek word is *palingenesia*. *Palin* means "again," and *genesia* is derived from the Greek word for "to be born." Lexicons tell us *palingenesia* means "a new birth." It is not good English, but a most literal rendering would be "the borning again."

The apostle Peter once asked the Lord, "We have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" Jesus then assured him that in the regeneration the apostles

would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Furthermore, those who have left all for His sake — houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children, lands — will receive a hundredfold and inherit everlasting life (Matt. 19:27-29).

Obviously, the great reward promised here can only come in the resurrection. This will be, as the Lord says, "the regeneration" or "the new birth."

Paul wrote of our having been saved by "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5, ASV). Trench wrote that this is regeneration of individuals, and that elsewhere the Lord mentions regeneration of the whole creation (Matt. 19:28) (*Synonyms of the New Testament*). So the present change is emblematic of the regeneration — new birth — which is to come.

To speak of "regeneration" or "new birth" as referring only to the present robs it of its prophetic splendor. In the Old Testament, resurrection was regarded as a new birth or second creation (Isa. 66:7-9; Ezek. 37). Some early Christian fathers made "regeneration" synonymous with "resurrection." Thoughtful students of the Word will realize Jesus had more in mind than the present when He told Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7).

Refreshing

At three o'clock in the afternoon — the hour of prayer — Peter and John are entering the temple. At the Beautiful Gate Peter heals a lame man, saying, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6).

To the astounded throng which gathered Peter then made his wonderful offer of the King and the Kingdom. "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that *times of refreshing* may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus" (3:19, 20, RSV). It staggers the imagination to think how human history would have changed had Israel accepted this offer!

Times of refreshing — seasons of living again! The Greek word for "refreshing" is *anapsuxis*. *Ana* means "again" and *psuxis*, or *psuche*, means "life" or "person." *Anapsuxis*, "life again." This word could also refer to a present refreshing. Paul wrote of the faithful Onesiphorus, "He oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains" (2 Tim. 1:16).

But in Acts 3:19, 20, as the context indicates, Peter spoke of the second coming of Christ. It is easy to see that day, which includes the resurrection of the just ones (Luke 14:14), as "times of refreshing." The present age of conflict and distress will be followed by rest in Messiah's Kingdom.

"Times of refreshing" cannot refer to death and the intermediate state, as a sort of rest for the dead in the Lord. The Scripture calls that time one of sleep. The Greek original suggests the times of refreshing are the seasons of taking breath, and living again when our Lord returns.

Restitution

On that same occasion when Peter spoke of "the times of refreshing," he also mentioned "the times of restitution" (Acts 3:21). This phrase

especially refers to the work our Lord will perform when He returns.

The Greek word *apokatastasis* means the restoration of something to its former state. Greeks used it of repairing and restoring temples. Its verb form was used of the withered hand, "restored whole as the other," and of the blind man who was "restored, and saw every man clearly" (Luke 6:10; Mark 8:25).

The disciples also had a restitution hope, for they asked, "Lord, will you at this time *restore* the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6, RSV).

The "times of restitution" will see the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. War and bloodshed will cease (Micah 4:3); government will be purified; physical infirmity will be removed; vegetation will be delivered from the curse; and the animal creation will be changed (Isa. 11, 35). Trouble and poverty will be gone (65:19-23); people will be eager for God's Word (2:3); and prayer will be answered without delay (65:24).

All this is only the beginning! As age upon age rolls by other blessings will be added. There will develop the condition Adam and his children would have attained if not for sin.

It is difficult to comprehend the extent and glory of the ages to come, but with the wicked and wickedness utterly destroyed from the face of the earth, the Lord's words, "I make all things new," shall have their fulfillment (Rev. 21:5). With this thought we close our consideration of the vocabulary of the resurrection. □

Reprinted from THE RESTITUTION HERALD, April 15, 1965.

Banking on God

BY DAVE OPEL — WENATCHEE, WA

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3).

We are all acquainted with the concept of qualifying for bank loans. It has been said that the only way to get a loan is to prove to the banker that you really don't need it! This would demonstrate that you have a reasonable chance of paying off your debt.

Compare this to banking for spiritual life and you will find this rule reversed. The only way to qualify for this resource from God is to realize that you have no qualifications, no collateral, nothing to trade, no meritable work — nothing.

In fact, God wants you to declare spiritual bankruptcy. He wants you

to admit that you are already overdrawn in your account with Him and that there is no possible way to ever pay back what you owe.

Spiritual poverty is the condition of being without benefit of any spiritual resources. One is said to be "poor in spirit" when he is spiritually poor. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus stated, "Those who know they have great spiritual needs are blessed" (Matt. 5:3, New Century Version). Jesus meets all needs and is the fountainhead of all spiritual resources. He personally is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn. 14:6). Newness of life (spiritual life) is in Him and through Him.

Indeed, this is "good news" for the spiritually poor. Jesus was anointed to preach this good news to the poor

(Isa. 61:1-3, NIV). He fulfilled this prophetic qualification for being the Messiah (Matt. 11:5; Luke 4:14-21).

God's word abounds with these paradoxes:

In poverty you are made rich.
Giving you shall receive.
We surrender all though we have nothing to give.
The first shall be last and the last first.

"God chose the poor in the world to have some special blessings: to be rich with faith and to receive the kingdom God promised to those who love him" (Jas. 2:5, NCV).

"God created the world out of nothing, and so long as we are nothing, He can make something out of us" (Martin Luther). □

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