

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



# *The Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

FEBRUARY, 1995

## YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE!

"Let us make the contents of the Bible our study night and day, and endeavor, by prayer and meditation, to let its influence dwell upon our hearts perpetually . . . . This alone can lead us back to God, the eternal Fountain of all being and blessedness. He is both the Author and the Object of the Bible. It comes from Him, and is graciously designed to lead us to Him."

--Thomas Campbell

# MASTERING THE BIBLE

Or Rather,

## LETTING THE BIBLE MASTER ME

Here is the testimony of James M. Gray, former president of Moody Bible Institute. He shared this in his book, "Mastering the English Bible" — a book highly valued by R. H. Boll, J. Miller Forcade and other deep students of God's Word:

"The first practical help I ever received in the mastery of the Bible was from a layman. We were fellow-attendants at a certain Christian conference and thrown together a good deal for several days, and I saw something in his Christian life to which I was a comparative stranger—a peace, a rest, a joy, a kind of spiritual poise I knew little about. One day I ventured to ask him how he had become possessed of the experience, when he replied, 'By reading the epistle to the Ephesians.' I was surprised, for I had read it without such results, and therefore asked him to explain the manner of his reading, when he related the following: He had gone into the country to spend the week-end with his family on one occasion, taking with him a pocket copy of Ephesians, and in the afternoon, going out into the woods and lying down under a tree, he began to read it; he read it through at a single reading, and finding his interest aroused, read it through again in the same way, and, his interest increasing, again and again. I think he added that he read it some twelve or fifteen times, 'and when I arose to go into the house,' said he, 'I was in possession of Ephesians, or better yet, it was in possession of me, and I had been lifted up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus in an experimental sense in which that had not been true in me before, and will never cease to be true in me again.'

"I confess that as I listened to this simple recital my heart was going up in thanksgiving to God for answered prayer, the prayer really of months, if not years, that I might come to know how to master His Word. And yet, side by side with the thanksgiving was humiliation that I had not discovered so simple a principle before, which a boy of ten or twelve might have known. And to think that an 'ordained minister' must sit at the feet of a 'layman' to learn the most important secret of his trade!"

# THE WORD AND WORK

*"Declare the whole counsel of God"*

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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## THEME:

# YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

Alex V. Wilson

Pollster George Gallup reports that in the U.S. Bible knowledge is at an all time low. Most Americans say they believe in the Ten Commandments, but many can't name more than two or three. Half of those who call themselves Christians don't know who preached the Sermon on the Mount. And a surprising number can't say what Easter is about! In contrast, Stan Purdum writes:

Generations before us knew and loved the Bible. Many of our ancestors were so steeped in the Scriptures that they could easily quote dozens of verses from memory—verses whose wisdom helped them make crucial decisions. They could tell the great stories of the Bible and apply their lessons to everyday life. Words from the Bible routinely slipped into their conversation and became part of their common knowledge.

But no longer. Secularism in the public schools, time-robbing TV and our obsession with sports have ganged up to cheat us of our rich heritage. We have no time, we say.

*Christianity Today* commissioned Tim Stafford and Philip Yancey to make an in-depth study of young people in *Bible-believing churches*, to learn their attitudes and practices regarding the Bible. Happily they found little skepticism. The vast majority believe it is God's Word and accept its authority. They respect it and view it as essential. BUT—"they did not *read* the Bible. And when they tried, they rarely understood it . . . Well under 10 percent had any regular, voluntary habit of Bible reading. The only exception was with young people attending Christian schools, where Bible reading was mandatory. (Whether this required discipline later becomes a voluntary habit we could not test.)" Stafford goes on to observe that if believers don't form a Bible reading habit early in life, they'll rarely develop it once marriage and children come. "We may be breeding an illiterate church."

## Barriers

They found that by far the greatest hindrance to regular Bible study is *discouragement*. Most folks are not avid readers. The books they buy are usually fairly short and written recently. Except for the Bible, with its 1304 pages, written thousands of years ago! Thus many Christians who feel they *ought* to read Scripture, and really *want* to, feel intimidated by its size and complexity. They often feel very guilty over their lack of regular reading. But their resolutions to do better are usually short-lived, deepening their sense of failure.

Another great barrier is *lack of seeing the big picture* in Scripture. It contains poetry, proverbs, parables and "apocalyptic" books containing far-out visions and symbolism, etc. Many would-be readers find these passages beyond their grasp. Then too, how does a person with little Biblical background fit things in order? What relationship is there between David and Daniel, or Joshua and Job, or James and Jeremiah? Which came first, the exile, exodus or flood?

Christians know of course that there are wonderful, helpful passages in the Book. They have favorites that have blessed them many times. But their location? Ah, that's another thing. "I know the Bible contains much that I need to know, but I have no idea where to find it," confessed a high school senior. "I spend so much time just flipping through the Bible, trying to find the good stuff," is a widespread complaint. Philip Yancey observes;

Many teenagers view the Bible as a book of magic. They think that hidden in it, perhaps in code, lie the secrets to the meaning of life. If you can just find the right places, you will discover an instant solution to your questions about guidance, emotional problems and ethical choices.

Such an approach to the Bible has dangers. God did not give the Bible in the form of an encyclopedia, with alphabetized entries explaining the answer to every question. And the 66 books of the Bible were meant to be read as books.

Then there's the all-important matter of *application*. Believing the promises. Obeying the commands. Living by the principles. Unless we apply God's Word, our knowledge is worse than useless. Most adults say "applying Scripture to concrete life situations" is their major difficulty. And for young people it's even harder. "What do spears, chariots and dietary laws have to do with my life?" they ask. They need help.

## Solutions

All this underlines once more the urgency of Bible reading *in the home*. It is the family that determines most of all whether a child loves the Lord, loves to read (in general) and loves the Bible. Family devotions are top priority. "Family altar or family falter," they say. For family devotions we should use *Bible story-books* on our children's level. The U.S. is blessed beyond measure with a wealth of such materials. The variety is breath-taking. There are top-quality story-books which go through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation using vocabulary and pictures that interest children of various ages. That helps them see God's unfolding plan of salvation. It also helps them see how Job, Joshua, David and Daniel fit together. Also there are devotional

books for children, which give a few Bible verses and a short present-day story illustrating how the verses apply to us now.

We should regularly patronize *Christian book stores*. Do you even know where they are? In a church bulletin I listed for our folks seven such stores in the Greater Louisville area alone! They have various aids which can help all age groups to get more from Bible study. Can our church members find needed passages, using a concordance? Do you have a Bible commentary or dictionary so you can understand the significance of Israel's "high places," or the Baalim, or why anyone would deny that Christ "came in the flesh"?

Understandable *Bible translations and paraphrases* are a great ally. Older folks who grew up learning the King James or American Standard versions can understand them well enough, but young people and unchurched adults find the language mostly hard and forbidding--like Shakespeare. For them the NIV, NKJV, NASV, NRSV or even the Good News Bible would be far better. We often don't realize how low is the reading comprehension ability of many people.

Christian *schools* assume greater importance as our culture becomes rapidly post-Christian. Thank God for schools where His Word is taught and applied regularly. They are worth their weight in gold, because Scripture is more precious than the finest gold. Let's back them up to the hilt.

Of course *the church* has no greater duty than to explain and apply the Holy Word of God. *Sermons* should dig into the Word so that members learn to dig in for themselves. Expository series of messages that go through a book chapter by chapter are vital, and far too rare. But there is also a need for topical sermons relating scriptural principles to current issues which may not be directly mentioned in the Bible (like the lottery, TV, the use but not abuse of sports, etc.). And *classes* with interaction between teacher and students are essential too. Stafford comments, "Our research found, again and again, that group Bible studies are the context in which people gain confidence and excitement about the Bible."

We like to feel that *Word and Work* is a valuable tool too, to stimulate and equip our readers to study the Bible profitably. We had two issues centering around the Psalms and how to understand them better. Another issue had several articles on the book of Job. We ran a series of articles on Romans and Jonah. March and April '95 will zero in on the Old Testament in general and then the OT prophets in particular. This month has several articles on how to interpret Scripture. May the Lord help us so that through His Word we may know Him better, and assist others also to know Him and His truth.

# STUDYING THE BIBLE AS OTHER BOOKS

R. H. Boll

There is sense in which the Bible should be studied as all other books--with intelligence, with the same thoroughness and earnest application, using good sense, discriminating in each part of it as to who it is that speaks and who is spoken to, what about, and when. Seeing the revelation of God is couched in human language, its meaning must be determined according to the laws of language and not in any arbitrary way. The Bible should not be used irrationally, nor in a superstitious fashion, as though some magic value inhered in the book, as if it were some sort of "charm." God deals with us, as with reasonable beings, and addresses our intelligence; and we must approach the Book in keeping with this fact.

## The Bible Not As Other Books

But, again, in a very important sense the Bible cannot and must not be studied as other books. The very fact that it is the Word of God demands a difference in our attitude toward it. Paul thanked God that the Thessalonians received his message, "not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God which also worketh in you that believe"(1 Thess. 2:13). Such conviction would profoundly affect the manner of our approach to the Bible and the nature of our study. If it is God's word we must open our inmost hearts to it. We must come to it with humility and reverence. ("To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that *trembleth at my word.*" Isa. 66.2) I would study it as in the sight of God who spoke it, who meant it for me, and whose eye is upon me while I read.

I would study it with love, for God is love and spoke in love. I would study it with confidence as to its truth and with expectation of blessing, for He gave it for blessing. I would take it to be meaningful beyond all my conception, for if it embodies *God's* mind it transcends all power of human comprehension. Yet I would feel assured that, seeing it was meant for me, I can get the lesson from it He meant me to have and at any one time the special light and help I need just then. And I would take it to heart to trust in it and obey it gladly. These things and others necessarily follow when one receives the word of God as the word of God. And this is fundamental to true and profitable Bible study. We could not and must not approach any other book in such an attitude, but no one has ever come to grief through giving the Bible his whole-hearted reverence and submission.

## "Come And See"

If any man is not assured that this Book is the Word of God let him "come and see." Let him come to the book itself with earnestness and sincerity. It deserves a candid and painstaking examination more than any other book in the world. We cannot afford to pass it by—we must look into it. If it is what it claims, it is to our incalculable interest to know it; and if its claims are false we ought to know. This is a matter we cannot leave unsettled. If it were a writing informing us of our right to a million dollar inheritance and how we may obtain the same, I suppose all of us would go into it from every angle and would not grudge the time and labor to get all the certainty out of it. If it were a matter involving our physical life or death, we would deem it worthy of the most earnest investigation. How much more in view of the eternal issues that are staked in this book! If it is God's word I must know it and I must know what it says and means!

### The Key To Conviction

There is a standing challenge for any man and all men in John 7:17. It is this: "If any man willeth to do his (God's) will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from myself." That is to say that if a man will approach the teaching of Christ in readiness to obey God's will just as soon as it is determined to be God's will, to him shall come the sure conviction as to whether this Jesus be an impostor or truly the Son and Messenger of God. This is absolute, and applies to every man. If any man fails of the conviction he has either failed in this honest attitude to do God's will or he has neglected to the loss of his own soul to inquire into the matter at all. This spirit of willingness to God's will is an eye-opener, enabling us to discern and see which way the truth lies. And for those who already believe, this attitude is necessary to a further understanding of God's word.

### The Key Of Humility

To enable us to understand God's word there is a preparation far more indispensable than that of the intellect or the knowledge of grammar and Greek (valuable though these be)--namely *humility*. To the proud God will show little or nothing. "The haughty he knoweth from afar." A puffed-up scholarship is immeasurably farther from the truth than the humble babe. "God *resisteth* the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." He will not open His word to the self-conceited, the man of pretense, the self-righteous man, to the boaster, to those who pride themselves in their ability and knowledge and "set all others at naught." The Scribes and Pharisees, leaders and scholars of Christ's time, were as a rule entirely too wise and learned to see the

truth when it was presented to them. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight." (Matt. 11:25, 26). Therein lies an explanation why "so many able men differ," as people often say.

### Like-Mindedness With God

In human writings a certain likeness and congeniality with the author is presupposed, if the reader should at all understand the writer. To be sure a man can get *some* of the import of another's language even if he is wholly out of rapport and sympathy with him. He can still analyze and grammaticise, and tell the structure of sentences and definition of words. But he will not grasp the real purport of the other man's writing, and here and there will misunderstand badly. So, those who would go on in God's word must fall in with His point of view. Now God speaks in righteousness and in love. The man who pursues evil will either change his way at the hearing of the word, or else he will walk in deepening darkness. He will never understand more than, as it were, the husks of things; for sin darkens the spiritual vision. And if a man loves not, he walks in darkness, and the darkness has blinded his eyes and he knows not what he is about, though by men he be esteemed a great Bible scholar. (1 John 2:9-11).

### Spiritual Insight And Understanding

In fact, *spiritual understanding* is something more and deeper than mere intellectual apprehension. Any man, for example, can see the figures delineated in a painting, and perhaps name and analyze the colors used. But that is not understanding it. It requires somewhat of an artist's spirit to understand an artist's work. We have heard even blind people talk well of things they really knew nothing about—light and forms and beauty and color. Thus there are men who talk of Biblical facts and doctrines with considerable correctness who neither know what they are saying nor do they understand. Now "everyone that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (1 John 4:7, 8). And if a man knows not God, neither can he know God's word. Seeing they see, but they do not perceive; hearing they hear and do not understand. "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word." (John 8:43). The world's doctrine does not fail to strike a responsive note in them ("they are of the world: therefore speak they as of the world, and the world heareth them." 1 John 4:5); but the Shepherd's voice hear only the sheep. "And the sheep follow him for they know his voice; and a stranger will they not follow for they know not the voice of strangers." (John 10:4, 5). "If therefore thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be

evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. But if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!"

### "Open Thou My Eyes"

There are then a number of things that enter into an understanding of God's word *besides* the intellectual grasp of its language: a willingness to do God's will, humility, a sympathetic attitude toward God, love, sincerity, a single eye, a good conscience. If in no other way, the Holy Spirit, indwelling and enabling us to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19, 20), would thereby become the Interpreter of God's word to us, for the Spirit brings us into a likeness of mind and character with God, that so we may get His thoughts and meaning. And it is manifestly proper to pray, as did the Psalmist of old, "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." (Ps. 119:18). "For this cause I also . . . cease not to give thanks, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus, the Father of Glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your heart enlightened . . ." (Eph. 1:15-18).

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## MEDITATION: KEY FOR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Meditation is more than simply thinking about Scripture, it is a life-changing experience for the Christian, Dr. Doug McIntosh said during a Day of Prayer chapel in November.

Dr. McIntosh, pastor of Stone Mountain Community church in Stone Mountain, GA, said meditation is a key way to develop a passion for God. But, he warned, "Don't begin it, don't do it very long unless you want to be transformed. Meditation is a prolonged repeated thought upon God's Word with a view to applying it. It will make you stable, productive, a person with deep roots, wiser than your teachers."

Four steps are involved in true meditation, he said. The first is scripture **memorization**. He suggested memorizing scripture from one book of the Bible at a time, perhaps starting with Proverbs. Another method would be to learn verses relating to a topic. "If you see something in your life you are distressed about and want to work on, pick up a topical Bible and begin memorizing verses about that topic."

"The Word has this remarkable effect; it goes on having an impact on your life even when you are not consciously thinking about it. We may not know if anything important is going on, but God uses it." Scripture memorization is important because it gives God an opportunity to use it to shape our lives. "We're not going to stand an exam on how much scripture we memorized, but how much we applied," he said.

Once we have learned a passage, we need to "bombard the text with pertinent questions," Dr. McIntosh said.

"Is there something to lean on? Is there something to obey? Is there an invitation to trust God for something? Is there something about God's nature to learn? Is there something about God's heart to imitate?"

These questions should lead us to plan to apply that particular text to our lives, he suggested. "Is there somebody to encourage? Is there somebody who needs prayer? Is there something in my private life which needs changing? Is there something in my prayer life which needs expanding?"

Implementing a plan "doesn't have to be some gigantic project, but it may be what happens to be in the agenda of our week," he said. The "plan" simply may be to encourage someone, to render assistance, or to commit an area of our life to God's control. "God made us to serve; we are servants looking for a master worthy of our service. We have one in Jesus Christ."

The final step in the process of meditation is to turn Scripture into worship. If you see a blessing, say 'Thank you.' If you see a characteristic of God, say 'Thank you that You are that kind of God.' If you see a challenge, ask God to make you the kind of person to able to do that.

"When we realize we have failed in obedience to a verse, if it convicts you, turn it around and say, 'God, I have failed with the application of this verse. Help me apply it.' Turn failure into confidence."

--From *Bryan Life*, published by Bryan College, Dayton, TN.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE MEAN?

Alex V. Wilson

## Problems and Principles of Interpretation

Some years ago it became stylish for women to wear their hair in a top-knot, piled on top of their head. A certain preacher detested the new style and determined to denounce it from the pulpit. So one Sunday he preached a scorching sermon based on the text, "Top-knot, go down!" His hearers were overawed by the message, and some of the women decided that their top-knots would indeed go down. However, after the meeting one man asked, "Preacher, I've never heard that verse before; where is it found?" "Matthew 24:17," came the reply. On reaching home the man read the text for himself: "Let him who is on the housetop *not go down* to take what is in his house"!!!

The story is only fiction, of course, but its point is true: You can prove almost *anything* from the Bible if you try hard enough. Using the same Bible, various people arrive at entirely different conclusions. Amid the confusion many people say, "How can we know whose interpretation is right? *You* say the Bible teaches one thing, *he* says it teaches another thing, and *they* contradict each of you. Yet you all quote the Bible! How can I understand the Bible? What does it really mean?"

We should sympathize with people who feel that way. The problem is not an easy one. All kinds of ideas claim to be supported by proof-texts from Scripture. Let's notice some examples: 1) A tract asserts that you will be sinning if you use a Christmas tree this December. Why? Because God says, "Learn not the way of the nations . . . for the customs of the peoples are false. A tree from the forest is cut down . . . Men deck it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move" (Jeremiah 10:2-4). 2) The Mormons use 1 Corinthians 15:29 ("baptized for the dead") to build an elaborate doctrine of baptism-by-proxy for dead people who were not converted during their lifetime. 3) One prophecy teacher believes that the red horse of Revelation 6 stands for Communism--since red is the Marxists' color--and the white horse stands for the U.S.--since its president lives in the White House! 4) Jehovah's Witnesses claim it is sin to have blood transfusions since God says, "I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:10-12). 5) Some people believe science proves the Bible to be false, for Joshua told the sun to stand still (i.e. quit going around the earth) but

Copernicus proved the sun doesn't go around the earth, but vice versa.

Wisdom is needed in *applying* the Bible, as well as in *interpreting* it. In interpretation we ask, "What does this passage *mean*?" In application we ask, "What does it mean *to me*?" What shall I *do* about this truth?" Here too problems may arise, especially in the matter of personal guidance.

A guy was trying to find God's will, so he opened his Bible at random, put his finger down and read, "Judas went out and hanged himself." That didn't help him too much, so he tried again, and read, "Go thou and do likewise." That shook him terribly, so he tried one more time: "And what thou doest, do quickly."

—Paul Little, *Affirm the Will of God*

That case never really happened, of course, but here is one that did: A Christian young lady in Scotland could not make up her mind whether to attend Bible college at Lebanon or Glasgow. Then she read in 1 Kings 5 that Solomon obtained cedar trees for the temple from Lebanon--therefore the Lord must want her to attend Lebanon Bible College. The school in Glasgow never had a chance, for Scripture never mentions its name.

Having a "word from the Lord" is both justifiable and helpful if the word is first put into its original context and the true meaning grasped. For example, a fellow should not break off his engagement because he suddenly has a "word" from Jeremiah 16:2 ("You shall not take a wife") though this is known nearly to have happened. The perplexed inquirer should first try to discover if his circumstances are similar to those of Jeremiah's, that is, to put the verse into its context. (He should, incidentally, try to discover a few other things as well.)--John Balchin, "An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics" (a helpful essay to which this article is heavily indebted — A.V.W.)

## Principles of Interpretation

There are certain principles of interpretation which can help us discover the meaning of the Bible. This does not mean that the time will ever come in this life when all of us will agree about everything. Even the apostle Peter said that Paul's writings contained "some things hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:15, 16). But we can at least minimize the problems. Also, we do not mean to imply that if we use these principles we do not need prayer or the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Paul presents the proper balance: "*Think over* what I say, for *the Lord will grant you understanding* in everything" (2 Timothy 2:7). We must prayerfully depend on the Lord for enlightenment; but we must also think and study with diligence (2 Timothy 2:15).

Therefore let us notice some principles of interpretation, most of which are self-evident. We shall also see some specific examples of the principles.

1. *Interpret the Bible according to the PURPOSE of each passage.* Ask yourself, why did the author write this? What need was he trying to meet? This will help, e.g., to eliminate the seeming contradiction between Paul and James regarding faith and works.

Paul and James proclaimed the same gospel, but with a different emphasis, for they had a different set of false teachers in mind. Paul's opponents were the Jewish legalists; James' were the Jewish intellectualists. According to the legalists the way of salvation was "works"—acts performed in obedience to the law. According to the intellectualists the way of salvation was "faith," by which they meant mere orthodoxy of belief. To the legalists Paul argues that we are justified not by our own good works but through faith in Christ. To the intellectualists James argues that we are justified not by barren orthodoxy . . . but by works. We cannot be saved by works. Yet we cannot be saved without works. The place of works is not to earn salvation but evidence it, not to procure salvation but to prove it. The Holy Spirit uses Paul to stress the faith which results in works and James to stress the works which result from faith.

—John Stott, *Men with a Message*

Another example: The parable of the ten virgins does not prove that 1/2 of humanity will be saved and 1/2 will be lost. That was not Christ's purpose in telling it. He Himself reveals its main purpose at the conclusion: "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:13).

2. *Interpret according to the CONTEXT of the passage.* Jeremiah 10:5, for instance, shows that verses 1-4 are a denunciation of idols, not Christmas trees!

In John 15:2 Jesus said, "Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit." What kind of fruit-bearing is referred to in this passage? Does it mean soul-winning or godly character? Does "fruit" mean converts, or good works? The *immediate* context mentions keeping God's commands (v. 10) and loving one another (12ff). And from the context of *the entire Bible*, we see that fruit almost always represents holy character (Isaiah 5:1-7; Galatians 5:22,23; Colossians 1:10). For another example, Philippians 2:12 ("Work out your own salvation") and 2:13 ("for God is at work in you") belong together. To stress either part of the sentence while omitting the other is to put asunder what God has joined together.

3. *Interpret OBSCURE passages in the light of CLEAR passages.* Someone expressed it this way: "Let not that which is obscure rob you of that which is clear." For example, several cults teach "soul-sleep"—that there is no consciousness between death and the resurrection. They base this belief on these statements: "The dead know nothing." "His breath departs . . . on that very day his thoughts perish" (Ecclesiastes 9:5; Psalm 146:4, KJV). Yet Paul wrote, "We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). This passage plus Philippians 1:21-23; Luke 23:42-43; and Acts 7:59 clearly refute soul-sleep. A closer look at Ecclesiastes 9:5 and Psalm 146 *in context* shows there is no contradiction; but if there seemed to be one, the preference should be given to the clearer passages.

Another example of stressing an unclear verse and neglecting obvious ones is the Mormons' practice of baptism for the dead. They base this on 1 Corinthians 15:29, an obscure verse for which at least thirty different interpretations have been suggested! Their own interpretation offers salvation to those who lived and died unconverted. But this goes against many passages: Hebrews 5:9; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 20:11-15; etc.

4. *Interpret according to the UNDERSTANDING OF THE ORIGINAL READERS OR HEARERS of the passage.* For example, in studying the Sermon on the Mount, consider what Christ's audience would have understood His words to mean. In interpreting the book of Revelation, ask, "The disciples in the seven churches to whom this book was first sent--what would *they* have thought John meant by this statement or this symbol?" Of course it is true that this principle will produce only a *partial* explanation of some passages, especially prophetic ones. Sometimes the prophets themselves did not grasp the full meaning of their declarations (1 Peter 1:10-12). So we should not think that the original readers' interpretation exhausts the meaning of all passages, but it is an important place to begin.

For example, some think that "born of water" (John 3:5) means the same as being "cleansed by the washing of water with the word" (Ephesians 5:26). But could Nicodemus have possibly thought that was Jesus' meaning? What *would* Nicodemus think He meant? —that is the key to its interpretation. Edersheim, the famous Jewish-Christian scholar, points out that proselytes to Judaism were baptized as well as circumcised. They were "immersed completely, so that every part of the body was touched by the water." As the former Gentile "stepped out of these waters he was considered as 'born anew'—in the language of the Rabbis, as if he were 'a little child just born.' But this new birth was not 'a birth from above' in the sense of moral or spiritual renovation, but only as implying a new relationship to God,

to Israel, and to his own past, present, and future" (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* Vol. 2, Appendix 11). Since the term "born anew" was already thus used among the Jews, and since John the Baptist was creating a stir by baptizing (not Gentiles but *Jews!*) as a sign of repentance, it seems that this is what the term "born of water" would have brought to Nicodemus' mind. Jesus was saying, in effect, "Side-stepping John's baptism of confessed sinnerhood, you are coming to me as a student needing information from a teacher; instead, you must come to me as a repentant sinner needing a Lifegiver." It is true that God's word is an agent in regeneration (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23), but "born of water" does not refer to that fact.

Again, Herbert Armstrong denied that Lazarus, the beggar in Christ's story (Luke 16:19ff), went to Paradise or was even conscious after his death. Then what did our Lord mean when He said Lazarus died and was carried "to Abraham's bosom"? Here is Armstrong's explanation: "A 'bosom' is the breast of a human being, with the arms as an enclosure, or, an intimate relationship. So Lazarus was carried into an intimate relationship with Abraham. Lazarus is here pictured as a Gentile who received salvation," becoming a child of Abraham by faith (Galatians 3:7). But—is that what Christ's hearers would have understood Him to mean? Not at all, for to the Jews of His day, "Abraham's bosom" meant paradise. Christ obviously used it with its common meaning.

Next month we shall look at other principles, Lord willing. May the Lord give us understanding and help us to interpret His Word carefully.



## Scripture's Increasing Preciousness

"Our Bible reaches us today even richer than when it left the pens of Apostles and Prophets. It comes stained with the tears of a million contritions; steeped in the prayers of myriads of saints; breathing the blessings of untold souls recreated by the Holy Spirit; expounded by giant intellects, and fragrant with the faith of little children; worn by the fingers of agony and death; wet with the blood from the Colosseum's sands, or saints torn limb from limb. It is a Book more steeped in the Divine than even when it left the fingers of Apostles and Prophets." --D. M. Panton

# THOUGHT-PROVOKERS

## about GOD'S WORD

### More Precious than Gold?

I recently read this little story: A rare-book collector met a guy who said he'd just thrown out an old Bible that had been packed away for generations. "Somebody named Guten-something had printed it," the man explained.

"Not Gutenberg!" gasped the book lover. "You've just thrown away one of the most famous books ever printed. One copy recently sold at an auction for over \$4 million!"

The other man was still unmoved. "My copy wouldn't have brought a dime," he said. "Some guy named Martin Luther scribbled notes all over it."

The Gutenberg Bible in Latin is precious because of its rarity along with what it cost to produce it. It was printed in Germany in 1456 by Johann Gutenberg and is believed to be the first Bible printed with movable type. There are only 48 known copies of the Gutenberg Bible in existence. One of these is now owned by the Maruzen Book Co. in Tokyo. They purchased it in 1987 for \$5.4 million.

This caused me to ponder some thoughts. It is possible to hold a treasure in our hands and not realize how valuable it really is. It seemed that the Lord was asking me, "Dean, how precious is My Word to you?" I thought of martyrs like William Tyndale who literally laid down their lives to see the Bible translated into my language. I thought, too, of the 33 languages each with more than 5 million speakers yet with no published Bible. Then there are 77 more languages with more than 500,000 speakers yet with no published New Testament.

--Dean Van Vliet of New Tribes Mission (condensed)

### Scripture: A Means, Not an End in Itself

We are not so foolish as to suppose that eternal life is to be found in the Scriptures. It is rather in the Christ of the Scriptures. Let Christ never need to say to us as He said to the Pharisees: "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me: yet you refuse to come to

me that you may have life" (John 5:39-40). As someone has said, the Scriptures "do not give life; they lead to the Lifegiver." When we go to the doctor and are given a prescription, his purpose is that we should eat the medicine, not the prescription! The Bible is a prescription for sinners. It recommends the sick soul to find its medicine in Christ. Its purpose is to persuade sinners to go to Him.

A man who loves his wife will love her letters and her photographs because they speak to him of her. So if we love the Lord Jesus we shall love the Bible because it speaks to us of Him. The husband is not so stupid as to prefer his wife's letters to her voice, or her photographs to herself. He simply loves them because of her. So, too, we love the Bible because of Christ. It is His portrait. It is His love-letter.

*Christ is thus the key to the Scriptures. It is He who sets His seal of approval on them, and it is to Him that they bear their witness. Let Christ convince us of the truth of the Bible; and let the Bible reveal to us the glory of Christ.*

--John R.W. Stott

### **The Source of Spiritual Nourishment**

The modern scientist has lost God amid *the wonders of His world*; we Christians are in real danger of losing God amid *the wonders of His Word*. We have almost forgotten that God is a Person and, as such, can be cultivated as any person can.

The truth of Wesley's words is established before our eyes: "Orthodoxy, or right opinion, is at best a very slender part of religion. Though right attitudes cannot exist without right opinions, yet right opinions may exist without right attitudes. There may be a right opinion about God without...one right attitude toward Him. Satan is a proof of this."

Sound Bible exposition is a *must* in the Church of the Living God....But exposition may be carried on in such a way as to leave the hearers devoid of any true spiritual nourishment whatever. *For it is not mere words that nourish the soul, but God Himself, and unless the hearers find God in personal experience they are not the better for having heard the truth.* The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may delight in His Presence and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the center of their hearts.

--A.W. Tozer in *The Pursuit of God*

# THE BALANCE OF THE BIBLE

(From a Sermon Preached by John Stott)

My subject today is "BBC"! No, not British Broadcasting Corporation, but Balanced Biblical Christianity. "BBC" is one of the rarest phenomena in the history of the church or in Christendom today. It seems to be a weakness of our fallen human mind that it is easier for us to grasp a part than the whole of the truth. We Christians constantly manifest the tendency to hold firmly one aspect of the truth, while forgetting the truth that complements it and without which our truth becomes lopsided.

Yet this is a serious thing. To begin with, it is displeasing to God. For he has revealed himself in a progressive sequence which culminated in Christ, and his self-revelation is perfectly balanced. Moreover, he has caused it to be recorded, and has given his Spirit to his church to interpret it. We have no real excuse for imbalance. Lopsided thinking is also harmful to us, for it is bound to result in lopsided behavior, and then our whole Christian life is impoverished.

Let me suggest some polarities from 1 Peter 2, Verses 1-13, which we need to hold together.

## Individualism and Corporateness

It is striking that Peter likens his Christian readers both to "new born babies" (v. 2) and to "living stones" (v. 5), for babies are individuals, each having been born individually and separately, and possessing a distinct personality, while stones are mortared into a building and cannot escape from it. So the Christian life begins with the new birth and the responsibility of the individual Christian to grow up, while we also belong to one another in the church, which is the building of God.

Some Christians concentrate on private, individual religion and neglect the fellowship. For example, in the learning process they are diligent in private Bible study and prayer, but neglect the public exposition of Scripture by teachers God has called and the church has authorized. Similarly, they seek guidance direct from God and think it unspiritual to ask advice from parents, pastors or friends, forgetting the biblical statement that "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." They also bear the burden of their temptations, problems and sorrows alone, and think it a sign of weakness to admit that they need help. It seems to them more Christian to grit their teeth and endure in isolation. But this is not Christianity; it is stoicism. The way of Jesus is to admit our weakness and to bear one another's burdens.

Others concentrate on the fellowship and neglect their private devotional life. It is not unusual for Christians in a warm fellowship to allow themselves to be borne on the high tide of the church's faith. Then, when the tide ebbs, they are either left stranded on the beach or disappear with the ebbing tide. Changing the metaphor, they have been so completely supported by the Christian fellowship that, when the props are removed, they collapse. The reason is that they have relied exclusively on fellowship and allowed their personal Christian life to decay. "Religion" can be a substitute for the living God, and even an escape from him. It is possible to engage in public religious exercises and to allow one's spiritual life to wither and die. But it is quite unnecessary to polarize. For spiritual growth and health we need both a personal walk with God and membership of the Christian fellowship.

### Worship and Witness

Worship is our Godward responsibility in the church, and witness our manward responsibility in the world.

Peter describes the church as a "holy priesthood" (v. 5). In Old Testament days it was the prerogative of the priests to draw near to God and to offer the sacrifices of the people. The common people or laity were not allowed these privileges on pain of death. But Jesus Christ abolished this distinction. There is still a distinction between *pastor* and people (in that some are called to tend and feed God's flock), but there is no distinction between *priest* and people, no privileged elite with an access to God or a sacrificial ministry denied to the laity. On the contrary, through Jesus Christ, through his priesthood and sacrifice, all of us in the church have the same priestly privileges of access and sacrifice, that is, we may draw near to God, enter his very presence and offer the spiritual sacrifices of worship. This is why the church is called a "holy priesthood." It is a worshipping community, and we have a Christian duty to worship God together.

But the church is also a "holy nation," with the duty of spreading abroad in the world the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness into light, and had mercy upon us and made us His people (vv. 9, 10). Some Christians concentrate on worship and neglect witness. The church has often made this mistake and preoccupied itself with its own interior life. It has barricaded itself inside its churches and cathedrals, offered gorgeous ritual and music to God, and abandoned the secular world to its fate.

Others have made the opposite mistake, becoming preoccupied with service in the world and neglecting worship. This was the stance of the recent fashion known as "religionless Christianity." Its

advocates reinterpreted their duty to God in terms of our duty to our neighbor, and called Christian people out of the churches into the secular city to serve God there. In a different way evangelical Christians have tended not to take our duty of worship seriously. We have a reputation in other sections of the church for slovenly, superficial and even irreverent worship services. We certainly ought to take as much trouble with our worship as we do with our evangelistic responsibilities. For the church is both a worshipping community as "a holy priesthood," and a witnessing community as a "holy nation." Moreover each involves the other. For true worship leads to witness since we cannot truly recognize the worth of God (which is what "worship" means) if we do not long that others will do the same. Similarly, true witness leads to worship, because the ultimate reason we desire men's conversion to God is that they will give to him the glory which is due to his Name.

### Holiness and Worldliness

By these expressions I am referring to the Christian separation from the world on the one hand and of his involvement in the world on the other. Peter describes his Christian readers as "aliens and exiles" (v. 11). The "alien" has no rights and the "exile" has no home where he is living. This was the condition of Peter's readers literally, but it is also symbolical of our Christian status. For Christians have been born again into the kingdom of God, and then our heavenly citizenship becomes our first citizenship. For this reason we are to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." The soul is travelling to its eternal home, and must avoid all those "passions of the flesh" which hinder its progress. This is the call to holiness, to separation from everything hostile to our spiritual progress, and to live primarily for eternity.

At the same time, we are also citizens on earth. Christians have often so emphasized their pilgrim status as to neglect their earthly responsibility. Hence the sneer of Karl Marx about religion being "the opium of the people." He also wrote that, whereas the philosophers have tried to interpret the world, the real point was to change it. So in God's providence the apostle Peter moves in this passage direct from our duties as pilgrims to our duties as citizens. We are to maintain good conduct before unbelievers, to be subject to human institutions, to honor all men including rulers (vv. 12-17). Thus although our heavenly citizenship is primary, it is no excuse for neglecting our earthly duty. The rest of the New Testament emphasizes that we should pay our taxes, obey laws, be the salt of the earth and seek to commend throughout society the righteous standards of God.

Others emphasize their social citizenship and forget that this world is not the only world. Scripture emphasizes that there is an-

other unseen and eternal order to which we are going, and that we are "aliens and exiles" on earth.



To recapitulate, the apostle Peter indicates that we are both "new born babies" (living an individual life), and "living stones" (living a corporate life), both "a holy priesthood" (with the duty of worship) and "a holy nation" (with the duty of witness), both "pilgrims" (on our way to heaven) and "citizens" (with duties on earth).

It seems to me that one of the devil's favorite hobbies is tipping Christians off balance. If he cannot get us to *deny* Christ by unbelief or disobedience, he will try to get us to *distort* Christ by imbalance, extremism or fanaticism.

But God has given us *two* eyes (so that we may open them both to the truth and not develop a squint), *two* ears (so that we may listen to both sides of every question), *two* hands (so that we may lay hold of all truth, including both extremes), and *two* feet (so that we walk steadily and not go hopping or limping our way through life).

"BBC" is a beautiful thing. Let's determine to study Scripture as a whole, embrace the whole counsel of God and seek to live a balanced Christian life, to our own profit, the blessing of others and the greater glory of God.

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### Are You a HIM-Christian or just an IT-Christian?

Thank God that he did not give a book to save the world, but he gave himself in the form of a Person. That Person is the ground of our faith, the basis of our unity, and the source of our hope. There is a Book, a glorious revelation, that tells us of that Person. But it is the wonderful Person of the Bible rather than the Bible itself that unites us. That Book is like a map or a telescope by which or through which we see the Christ. We tragically err when we lose Christ in the Book, allowing some set of "faithful doctrines," which are often only the opinions of some sect, to eclipse the very one the Bible was intended to reveal.

--Leroy Garrett in **Restoration Review**

# THE LOGIC OF THE BIBLE

## 2nd Installment

Paul S. Knecht

### THE LOVE OF GOD

The structure of God's eternal purpose for man is a subtopic of a still grander theme of still grander complexity and beauty. God's intention for man to have dominion over the earth is an indication of the dignity God intended for man. It is a deep expression of the love of God that moved Him to create man in the first place. The theme we now turn our attention to is the love of God.

Most Christians know John 3:16 by heart and many have memorized 1 Corinthians 13 as well. These are perhaps the most popular passages on love. But the love of God constitutes the very fabric of scripture and must be seen permeating all of the word. It becomes intensely meaningful and makes the above mentioned passages more meaningful as well. Both of the passages just referred to, tell some of the things love *does*. Neither of them attempts to state what love *is*. And despite the difficulties inherent in defining "love," this writer will bravely attempt to do it.

Jesus once said, "Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be *with me* where I am". On another occasion, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me, and *where I am, there shall also my servant be ...*," and, "I come again and will receive you unto Myself: that *where I am there ye may be also*." (John 17:24; 12:26; 14:3) Other passages could be cited, but these will suffice for the present to show that "love," as demonstrated in the life of Jesus, is basically *the desire to be with others*. All the things that He did including His atoning death were done so that He might be with His people and they with Him. We can follow this beautiful theme through the scriptures. Beginning in Genesis, it is evident that God desired and intended to be an intimate part of man's life. God walked in the garden with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. He counseled Adam, He instructed Adam's children, and He remonstrated with Cain. His spirit "strove" with man, but man resisted and rejected the person of God.

At this point God altered His strategy. He singled out Abram and created through him a new nation to be the special object of His love and its avenue to the rest of the world. To the nation that eventually developed, He proposed a freewill offering be taken to build Him a

sanctuary "that He might dwell among them"(Exodus 25:8). But the relationship was difficult and the promise of the Christ arises out of God's effort to dwell with His people. He describes them as rebellious children. Finally, He pours out His deep hurt, His own pain, likening Israel to a beloved wife who is indifferent to Him while she tries to entice every passerby. The book of Chronicles describes the Glory of God moving into His sanctuary in the midst of Israel; the book of Ezekiel details God's painful departure, and the message of the prophets arouses awe and pathos in the reader. The Creator of Heaven and earth pleads with Israel to listen to Him, declaring His love and His determination to win her love to Himself. (Ezekiel 9:3; 10:4, 18, 19; 11:23)

## COMING OF THE CHRIST

Love is the desire to be with someone: so the God of heaven "became flesh and dwelt among us." Mary was told He would be called "Immanuel" which means "God is with us." Yet even His closest chosen followers failed to grasp His true identity as at the very hour of His betrayal they were asking to see "the Father." Jesus said; "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father: how sayest thou, Show us the Father?" And at His arrest they all left Him and fled. Israel clamored for His death, and Rome authorized it. He was despised and rejected of men . . .and as one from whom men hide their face. . . we esteemed Him not." So it was when God dwelt among men.

But love is persistent. Some people, both Jews and Gentiles, understood and believed. And on these, as the prophets foretold, God "poured out" His Spirit. They are described as "the Israel of God," their only qualification, faith in God and His word. In them the Holy Spirit lives and is accessible to the world. They are described as "living stones...built up a spiritual house," "a holy temple...a habitation of God in the Spirit." So God still dwells with His people. These believers, the "church," are now His sanctuary in the world; but like national Israel we often ignore and offend. It is to His own church that Jesus once had to request entry: "Behold I stand at the door and knock." Is there anything in scripture to indicate that He expected it to attract much attention in the world? "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there will I be in the midst," He said

But Jesus promised to return to the earth actually, physically, just as He left. He will complete the great task of restoring dominion to mankind, and mankind to fellowship with God. And when all things have finally been subjected to Him, the world will be prepared at last to receive its Creator. The Bible declares that He, God, will come, bringing His residence, the Holy City, to earth. That He will dwell among men, and they shall be His people, and God *Himself* shall be with them, their God. "He shall wipe away every tear from their

eyes...."(Revelation 21:3) The Bible demonstrates an untiring effort on the part of God to dwell among men, and predicts that it shall finally be happily accomplished through the ministry of the Christ. It is this love of God—His desire to be with us—that prompted creation and redemption. Reason enough, I suppose, to treat this theme as the major structure of the Bible. But its complexities are staggering.

## THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

If God really loves us, why did He allow the possibility of evil in the world? Why didn't He just make us all good? Philosophers continually explore this problem, but all of us must struggle with it at times. If love is God's value and commitment, then we must ask what the necessary conditions are for love to exist. It seems indisputable that love demands freedom. Action that is coerced or even psychologically manipulated—is not love. Freedom further implies choice, and choice demands alternatives—courses that lead to different, mutually exclusive outcomes.

As in the "natural world," we assume here the existence of order and relationships. A definite order and relationship exists between the direction chosen and the destination to which it leads, i.e., between our actions and their consequences. Thus, in the Biblical scheme of things, man's freedom is not freedom to be God and create a new order of things. It is the freedom to accept God's love or reject it, i.e., to choose between all that is good and all that is evil. Light and life versus darkness and death is the choice God offers to man. The reason there is evil in the world is simply because man in his shortsightedness or rebellion has chosen it.

In this connection a word is in order about the omnipotence of God. Whatever meaning we may attach to this popular attribute of the Deity, it should be very clear that if omnipotence has designed a system of order and relationship, the Divine Omnipotence is primarily expressed within this system. If the system was created to provide the necessary conditions for the existence of love, then the Divine Love is expressed in this system as well. A system that insures the option to love cannot withhold the option to reject the One who loves. The senseless jumble of events that we call our world is just the accumulating consequences of man's responses to this freedom of choice. And it is just consequences that distinguish reality from the world of make believe. Our actions have their effects and, like seeds, they germinate, bear fruit, and perpetuate good or evil. It is in this system that the choices and values of the Creator are expressed. He has not chosen the stance of omnipotence with mankind, but of love and freedom of choice in a world where choices have consequence. Nor was there any hope of escape from the consequences of poor choice—until

the Creator yielded Himself to the power of death, to take away the sins of the world! God indeed loves this world.

## THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

But we are already moving into a new system: the righteousness of God. Responsibility is an integral part of human dignity. Having given man both the freedom to choose, *and* the privilege of redemption, God must call man to account for the deeds that he does. This theme is comprehensively and beautifully set forth in the allegory of God's vineyard. Psalms 80:8 describes Israel as a choice vine brought out of Egypt but broken eventually. It was left untended to be ravaged by wild animals. Isaiah 5:1-7 tells why: God looked for the good fruit of righteousness from His vineyard but found only oppression and injustice. Against this backdrop Jesus claims to be the *true* vine (John 15).

Paul (Galatians 5:22) describes the fruit of the true vine as love, joy, peace, etc. Finally, at the end of this age, God commissions His angels to gather the clusters of His oldest vine--the vine of the earth (Revelation 14:18), "for her grapes are fully ripe," and the harvest must be reaped. The treader of the winepress in anger tramples the overripe fruit, "making them drunk in His wrath and pouring out their lifeblood on the earth." John, as did Isaiah (63:1-6), saw the winepress and the treader of the grapes, now clearly identified as *Jesus* (who once drank the cup of the wine of the wrath of God that we might not have to). He as executor of God's justice, finally treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty (Revelation 19:15).

It is part of love to avenge injustice and God is presented throughout the scriptures as the avenger of wrongdoing--patient, pleading, even paying the awful penalty for man's misdeeds in His own Person. He will finally mete out justice to those who have persisted in the course of evil. In the vineyard theme, we see humanity classified on the basis of God's major efforts to relate to man: Adam's race is the vine of the earth, Israel follows, and the true vine appears at last in the Person of the Christ.

[To be continued. The author welcomes feedback: 8013 Circle Dr., Georgetown, IN 47122.]

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"It shall greatly help you to understand Scripture if you mark not only *what* is spoken or written, but *of* whom and *to* whom, with what *words*, at what *time*, *where*, to what *intent*, with what *circumstances*, considering what goes *before* and what *follows*." --John Wycliffe (1324 - 1384), Bible translator

## [A Case Study in Interpretations]

# THE NEW WOMAN

C. Leonard Allen

In March of 1888 a man wrote to David Lipscomb, editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, suggesting that the command, "Let your women keep silence in the churches" (1 Cor. 14:34), prohibited women even from teaching children in the Sunday school. Lipscomb responded that they could teach children and even their husbands but only in a "modest deferential manner," not in "an assuming, authoritative way." And certainly, he added, women must never stand "before promiscuous [or mixed] assemblies" but rather teach only in private.

Silena Moore Holman (1850-1915), an elder's wife from Fayetteville, Tennessee, and mother of eight children responded to Lipscomb and the question of woman's place. She boldly challenged some of the traditional assumptions provoking sharp and lively exchanges with Lipscomb that continued on and off for many years.

In an article entitled "Let Your Women Keep Silence," published in August 1888, Holman admitted that there would be little doubt about Paul's view of women in the church if all we had was his injunction in 1 Cor. 14:34-35. But there are other passages indicating that women were prominent workers in the early church, "and others still, *seeming* to teach differently from 1 Cor. 14:34." It is these passages, she said, that raise doubts about the traditional view of Paul's meaning.

In several lengthy articles she examined these passages, underscoring the active and public ministries of women like Deborah the judge of Israel (Judges 4-6), Anna the prophetess (Luke 2:37-38), Priscilla who taught Apollos (Acts 18:26), the women assembled with the apostles on Pentecost (Acts 2), and Phillip's four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9). All of these provided biblical examples, she thought, of a public role for women that did not "usurp authority" over men.

She made clear her agreement with Lipscomb on one thing: "the man is the head of the woman, and should take the lead, most especially in the family relation." But she strongly disagreed that women were thereby completely removed from public leadership roles and confined entirely to the private and domestic sphere. The home was a woman's primary focus, she agreed, and public activity should never displace that; but women who possessed the God-given gifts should be allowed "to go out in the world and tell of the unsearchable

riches of the gospel" and to combat the social evils that threatened the home.

Holman in fact rejected the distinction between private and public spheres that Lipscomb and most others sought to maintain. A woman could teach a man privately, they insisted, but not publicly, in her parlor but not in the assembly. Such a distinction, she argued, was much more cultural than scriptural. "Suppose a dozen men and women were in my parlor and I talked to them of the gospel and exhorted them to obey it? Exactly how many would have to be added to the number," she asked, "to make my talk and exhortation a public instead of private one?"

In numerous articles, Holman developed her views with considerable skill and verve. She dealt extensively with biblical passages, and often affirmed her commitment to biblical authority. Lipscomb's responses were usually sharp, sometimes patronizing, and occasionally marked by exasperation. Her responses to him—and to other male critics—were firm, carefully reasoned, and respectful.

Lipscomb's basic response was that God assigned woman to the domestic sphere, and when she oversteps that realm she rebels against God and threatens the stability of society. By nature and temperament, Lipscomb believed, woman was suited to this realm and no other. God had made her more emotional and less rational than man. As a result, she was wonderfully suited for nurturing children but not for public teaching or leadership.

Eve's attempt to instruct Adam in the Garden of Eden provided proof. In that story, Lipscomb asserted, the Holy Spirit was saying, "I suffered you to take the lead once; your strong emotional nature led you to violate God's word and to shipwreck a world. I cannot again trust you to lead."

God gave woman "heart-power" to fit her for being a wife and mother. But this very trait unfit her for leadership in society and church, Lipscomb stated, for it tends to "blind her to facts, shut out reason and lead her headlong where her emotions prompt her."

In his exchanges with Holman, Lipscomb revealed clearly his deep allegiance to what historians of the period have called the "cult of true womanhood" or the "cult of domesticity." This vision of the ideal woman emerged in America between 1820 and 1860 and remained dominant until near the end of the century.

As America became industrialized, fathers steadily left the home or the farm for the workplace. With men newly caught up in careers, women were left with the chief responsibility for maintaining the home and providing spiritual and moral training for the children. As a result, the roles of wife, mother, and homemaker were heightened and idealized, and the model of "true womanhood" emerged.

This ideal permeated the women's magazines, popular books, and religious literature of the period. Four attributes stood out: purity, piety, submissiveness and domesticity. With their superior moral purity and spiritual sensibilities, women were to restrain the natural lust and aggressiveness of husbands and sons. They were to make their homes havens of stability and nurture.

At the same time, the ideal woman was passive, dependent, deferential and childlike. As one Christian woman put it in 1870, "God has so made the sexes that women, like children, cling to men; lean upon them as though they were superior in mind and body." Women could exert an enormous leavening, uplifting and nurturing influence, but only by remaining properly submissive. Indeed, by remaining strictly within their ordained sphere, women served as the backbone of society.

David Lipscomb and many other leaders of the restoration movement in the 1880's held this ideal of "true womanhood" without question. It deeply shaped their interpretation of biblical teaching about the role of women.

On this basis, for example, Lipscomb, his co-editor Sewell, and most other leaders condemned the "strong-minded women" who sought the right to vote. Women voting, Sewell wrote, was based on "a principle which, if allowed to spread, threatens to destroy the most sacred of all institutions, and make America a homeless nation." Women who sought the vote, he warned, would "break the 'bond of subjection' divinely laid upon them and assert their independence; vote, hold office, electioneer, and, if necessary, fight their way to the ballot box."

By stepping beyond their divinely ordained sphere, women threatened the whole moral order of things. When women entered the public sphere, Lipscomb proclaimed chaos resulted—"loose marriage, easy divorce, indisposition to bear children, and . . . attendant social impurity."

Silena Holman also assumed the cultural ideal of "true womanhood" in certain ways but begged to differ with Lipscomb at major

points. Against Lipscomb, she denied that women were unfit for leadership due to their emotional nature. "The Bible nowhere intimates," she retorted, "that the mind of woman is inferior to that of man (and it is the mind that makes the leader)." Indeed, in the fields of science, the arts, education, literature, journalism, business and the professions, "woman has come to the front and proven her ability to cope with man, in anything she may undertake."

With such critique, Silena Holman stood among those who in the 1890's promoted the ideal of what they called the "new woman." Proponents of the "new woman" accepted **neither** the passivity of the "true woman" nor the militancy of the emerging "women's rights" movement. They supported women's suffrage, women's reform societies (like the Women's Christian Temperance Union), higher education for women, and a more public role for women in the churches. They stressed loyalty to home and family and did not reject male headship. They did not promote a feminist refection of the domestic sphere, but rather believed that more opportunities for women would make better wives and mothers.

In 1895 the *Gospel Advocate* printed an attack on the "new woman." Six months later Holman published a spirited reply. "The days of the 'clinging vine woman' are gone forever," she proclaimed. In her place a "husband will find walking by his side the bright, wide-awake companion, . . . a helpmeet in the best possible sense of the term."

The "new woman" is well educated, and her education has not "impaired her feminine grace or lovable qualities in the slightest degree." She will probably marry, but will not have to "marry for a living." She knows the world around her and takes an active part in it. And she will vote when that right is granted her (only three states gave full suffrage to women at the time). "When the 'new woman' . . . comes into her kingdom, wide-awake, alert, thoughtful and up to date," Holman wrote, "she will not depreciate, but . . . magnify and glorify the profession of motherhood."

David Lipscomb and the *Advocate* remained a staunch foe of this "new woman." She was a "usurper" of male prerogatives and dangerous to society, he said in 1897. As for Silena Holman, he wrote: "It gives a body the blues to read Sister Holman's article[s]."

Holman herself modeled the "new woman" in many ways. Besides raising eight children, she worked faithfully in her church, wrote many articles for publication and served for fifteen years as president of the Tennessee Women's Christian Temperance Union.

Under her dynamic leadership the membership of that organization grew from less than 200 to over 4,000.

When she died in 1915, well-known evangelist T. B. Larimore preached her funeral. She had requested Larimore, she said, because "I want no man to apologize for my work, and I know he will never do that." Larimore didn't apologize. He praised her "honorable and industrious life," mentioning both her devotion to her family and her "wonderful intelligence" as a public leader.

"In her last conversation with me," Larimore concluded, "she spoke of men who had been bitter foes of her work, speaking not unkindly, but in the spirit of charity, and I want to commend that spirit to all who are here."

Two years later a portrait of Silena Holman was hung in the Tennessee State Capitol. It was only the second time a woman had been granted that honor.

[Reprinted and condensed by permission of the publisher from *Distant Voices: Discovering a Forgotten Past for a Changing Church* (Abilene Christian University Press, 1993)]

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## VOICES from the FIELDS

Karen Ashley

Solomon Islands

Dec. 20, 1994

The Sa'a translation project continues to progress, though sometimes with hair-pulling and a few groans. This year has seen the beginnings of spiritual renewal in Sa'a village, the publication of five Genesis story booklets, and the publication and distribution of a Sa'a language hymnal. Meanwhile the New Testament is moving onwards toward completion, albeit not very quickly since James has been involved in administration since the beginning of June. Just last month he did have the joy of continuing translation work during a 1 Corinthians workshop. His father had come for a one month visit, and together they shared a dream come true as they worked in translation together.

We anticipate returning full-time to the translation work in 1995 after our director comes back from furlough in March and takes over the administration from James. We trust that we will be able to see much more progress made towards the completion of the Sa'a New Testament.

# HISTORY OF MAPLE MANOR (ALMOST 50 YEARS)

Bud Ridgeway

It is important for all of us to know some history concerning the home. Bro. E.C. Ringer left us a brief history about Maple Manor Christian Homes:

In 1945, the Sellersburg Children's Home began when Ed Haas sold his two-story house and twenty acres of land to the trustees of the Sellersburg Church of Christ. The purpose of the land and home was, and still is, to care for homeless, neglected, abused and needy children. The first children came to the home in 1946. The Sellersburg Children's Home was transferred from the trustees of the Sellersburg Church of Christ to the Directors of the Home, June 1, 1949.

In the forty-nine year history of the children's home, there have been four administrators; F.S. Spalding (1952-1955), E.C. Ringer (1955-1958), H.T. Marsh (1958-1978) and Robert Istre (1978-present). Under their leadership and the Board of Directors, the home has grown to where it is today.

Through the years more than 500 children have been taught Christian values, and many have obeyed the gospel while living in the home. Some of the children have gone from here to become social workers, a police chief, a Vice President of a bank, a jet pilot and teachers. Not in the least many have established sound Christian families. These are some of the things you have been a part of doing for the Lord.

In 1971, an Adult Home was built and is in operation serving the needs of the elderly. Bro. Joe Blansett was the first administrator of the Adult Home. Ray Naugle currently serves in that position. The future looks bright for both the children and adult homes.

That brings us to the here and now. We are looking at a 50th year for the Children's Home in 1995. Fifty years of serving the needs of children. Fifty years of caring and sharing Jesus with children that otherwise may not have heard of the saving grace of Jesus. We want to have a special Open House on Oct. 14, 1995, with as many of you in attendance as we can possibly have. We know it is a year away but please start making plans now for that special day. Think of all you have helped to accomplish for God in the last 50 years by your support and prayers.

-- From The Horizon

# NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaes

## A Good Meeting In '94, A Better One In '95

Because it will be HERE!

The 12th Restoration Forum was held in Abilene Christian University, Tex. last Nov. 1-3. People came from 17 states + Mexico and Puerto Rico to attend this annual unity meeting between a *cappella* Churches of Christ and Christian Churches.

Douglas Foster of ACU served as host. "We have too much in common not to be talking to each other," he said. "In light of John 17, one of the last things on Jesus' mind before He was crucified was the unity of His followers. Somehow we've got to deal with these things."

Speakers from each group spoke on topics such as "How Do We Regard the Differences Among Us?," and "Reconciled Through the Cross of Christ." Frank and open discussion periods were held after each major session. Rubel Shelley spoke on "A Call to Biblical Action," which one editor called "a watershed mark in these historical gatherings. Never have we been issued such a clear & convincing challenge to set aside our differences and link arms together in fighting our real enemy."

Julius Hovan, Nathan Burks, Henry Ott & I, plus some others from our group of churches, have attended past Forums and found them to be loving, challenging, & encouraging experiences. And here's great news: RESTORATION FORUM XIII WILL OCCUR IN LOUISVILLE, KY FROM NOV.

8-10 THIS YEAR. THE THEME WILL BE, "ONE . . . THAT THEY MAY BE WON." The forum will conclude with a fri. afternoon prayer service at the Cane Ridge Meeting House in Cane Ridge, Ky., where the great revival of 1801 burst into flame. plan to be here NOV. 8-10. --AVW

## Closed Doors But Wide Cracks, & A Sovereign God

In Asia now there are only 4 countries that accept "fullfledged" missionaries. Thailand, Korea, Japan & the Philippines accept fulltime foreign missionaries. But to enter & live in other Asian lands, one must go as a teacher, doctor, businessman/woman, scientist, etc. Pray that Christian professionals will hear God's call to evangelize Asia. Over 1/2 of the world's population are Asians!

Joseph Lee, a former student of ours at CBI in Manila, has been a missionary among tribespeople in the Philippines for years. In light of the situation mentioned above, he is now considering completing his M.A. in education, then going to Communist China--probably as a teacher of tribal people there! Joseph is Chinese by race, Filipino by citizenship, & Missionary by divine call. Pray that if this vision is indeed from the Lord, He will supply every need & open every door.

--AVW

## VBS Convert Becomes Missionary To Africa

Many years ago a little girl attended VBS in Manila. It was the first she'd ever heard of salvation &

Jesus, and the Lord drew her to Himself. Later she became a student at Central Bible Institute, a nurse, & then a staff member of Nurses Christian Fellowship (working on nursing school campuses). Now word has come that she has been accepted as a missionary nurse in Africa.

Working hard in that VBS years ago was well worth it after all!

### **Add Insights, Stretch Thinking**

Leroy Garrett's monumental history book, *The Stone-Campbell Movement*, newly revised, is just off the press. Anyone ordering it from W & W before March 10 can get it for the pre-publication price of \$20 + postage, or 2 copies for \$35 + postage. After that the price will be \$25, which is still very reasonable for a 573-page, illustrated book, hardbound. The first edition was a gem. Now some chapters are totally rewritten, including those on the 3 churches of the Movement, along with a concluding chapter on the Movement's future. This would make a great gift for your preacher or elders. Put one in your church's library, too.

### **Book on R. H. Boll To Be Published**

Lord willing, during this year W & W will publish a book about its outstanding former editor & Bible teacher, R. H. Boll. Tom Bradshaw wrote it as his thesis while earning his Master of Divinity degree from Emmanuel School of Religion in 1992. The subtitle is, *"Controversy & Accomplishment among Churches of Christ."*

We are not sure how many copies to print. It will depend on some

extent on how much interest is expressed by potential buyers. Many who knew Bro. Boll have passed on to Glory, and the rising generation knows him only by name--if at all. Should we print 500? 1000? 2000? Give us your input if you will. Some folks may want to contribute financially to this project too. That could be a determining factor as well. This book will probably contain 150-175 pages and cost \$5-7 or so. Send your order in before May and when it comes out we'll send it to you and bill you for \$1 cheaper than its final price.

### **Antioch Christian Camp**

Out of the five camping programs held last summer, we had a total of 138 young people. The age of our campers started at 6, and ran through young adult. It was wonderful to see our Lord worked in each group. Some of our campers were introduced to the Lord for the first time. Some of these were reborn. Many others were able to renew their commitment to Christ. Everyone was exposed to the Gospel of our Lord. Yes, there were those who broke your heart, leaving us wondering if they would ever find peace with God. It is our prayer that what they saw and heard in this place will enable them someday to come to terms with Christ. The seed was planted, may God cause it to grow.

Now we look forward to the '95 season: Thanks to a young couple living in California, we have 25 new mattresses to add to the 20 we started with last year. God has blessed us greatly for without these mattresses we would not be able to open this season. Also, the Lord willing, we will have a new cabin ready for this season. This money

was raised and donated to the camp as a memorial for Kevin Bingham, a two year old who died suddenly last year. The family and friends of Kevin have taken a tragic event and turned it into an opportunity to glorify God. —Lyle Baker, Mgr.

### **Southeast Church of Christ**

Under the direction of Alan Woodward our youth are praying and planning a missions trip to Mexico in July 1995. We are expecting another wonderful year of spiritual growth of our youth through summer Bible camp and Vacation Bible School.

Under the direction of Bonnie Colwick our Mixed Adult Choir sang in several churches in Louisiana in 1994. Good reports were received for their efforts.

We enjoyed the preaching of Paul Estes in our September 1994 revival with several responses.

We give God the glory for those who made commitments to our Lord and His church at Southeast during 1994. During the year we had 44 responses with 20 additions, including 9 baptisms.

—Nathan Burks, Minister

### **Linton, Ind. Church**

The Linton Church of Christ was blessed in October by having Brother Dennis Pollock with us for a series of Lessons in Bible Prophecy. Brother Dennis is a gifted

speaker. He shared with us many insights into the fulfillment of Bible prophecies in our day, and challenged us to study the Word of God for future prophecies yet to be fulfilled. We heard messages on the soon coming of Jesus and other end-time events. There were visitors from Vincennes, Worthington, Indianapolis, and even Louisville who came to share with us, plus we had good support from our sister churches in this area.

We appreciate Brother Dennis and recommend him to you. He is associate minister with Lamb & Lion ministries. We have already contacted Dennis to come back to Linton in October, 1995. Tapes of the messages can be obtained by contacting Jerry Carmichael.

### **Highland Community Church**

We have begun a twelve week seminar titled: *"How To Manage Your Money."* This indepth seminar will teach you how to apply biblical principles for effective money management. We will be coupling videos featuring the president and founder of "Christian Financial Concepts," Larry Burkett, with workbook lessons that will give you an in-depth look at the subject from a Christian perspective. Whether you feel trapped in financial slavery, or simply want to do more with the resources God has given you, this seminar is for you! —Thomas Kelley, Pastor

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**SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS, Don't miss this!**  
**VBS TEACHERS, It's for you too.**  
**"CHILDREN'S CHURCH" TEACHERS, It'll help you lots.**  
**HOME-SCHOOL TEACHERS, Take advantage of it.**  
**YOU'VE NEVER TAUGHT YET BUT YOU'RE INTERESTED? Grab it!**  
**STILL NEW AT TEACHING? Just what you need.**  
**VETERAN TEACHER? You can get better yet.**

# "EFFECTIVE TEACHING"

## Helping Bible Teachers Improve

You, your family and your church can benefit from this year's SBS Training Conference. Learn more from experienced trainers about how to teach the Bible and how to teach your pupils.

**WHERE:** Southeast Church of Christ,  
1210 Taylorsville Rd., Louisville, KY.  
**WHEN:** March 17 & 18--Fri. night & Sat. morning  
**COST:** It's Free for all, because your School of  
Biblical Studies is sponsoring it.

### Fri. March 17:

7:00 "Teach with Excellence: Lives Depend Upon It"  
-- Nathan Burks  
8:00 "How to be an Inspiring Teacher"  
-- Mark Taylor, Teacher-training specialist  
with Standard Publishing Co., Cincinnati  
(Titles are tentative)

### Sat. March 18:

9:15 - 11:45 **Three Simultaneous Workshops on Teaching  
Various Age Groups:**

- 1) **Molding Children** -- led by Frank Mosley of *Standard Publishing Co.*
- 2) **Connecting with Teens** -- led by Richie Curtis of *GROUP Publishing Co., Colorado*
- 3) **Teaching Adults** -- led by Mark Taylor of *Standard*