

THE WORD AND WORK

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God's Family

W. R. H.

Will A Man Rob God?

It was evident from the raised window and broken window rails and latch, that forceable entry had been gained to the premises. "Let me get inside quickly and see what has been carried out!" Two used air-conditioners that had been bought and not yet installed. (One was to replace one that was similarly stolen last year.) Also missing were an adding machine and a window fan that had been pressed into service just as the hot weather settled in. Drawers were open, but their contents did not entice the thieves, so the various papers remain.

The total haul, which might total \$200, surely brought nothing much on the open market, if it were sold at all. It is probably still in the trunk of some car nearby, mute witness to the depravity of man. So we have seen again, in a small way, a glimpse of man's inhumanity to man. Who would stoop to such a deed?

In the last book of the Old Testament, just sixteen verses from the end of the book, God's prophet denounces Israel for robbing *God*. Upon these men, God was turning His back and consigning them to 400 years of His silence. All the while they were oblivious to their own sins, and realized not that they were robbing God, which consisted of withholding of their tithes and offerings.

It is quite possible that we, naming the name of Jesus and living under the glorious new covenant, might also be guilty of such robbery. And the commodity is more precious than tithes and offerings, which are measured by gold. Many times we have failed to render unto God the praises due unto His name, or have followed with the nine lepers who failed to return and give thanks for their healing.

Oftentimes we act grudgingly with our time, that most precious possession that we have. We choose to be spectators in the assembly of the saints, and even when sitting in the pew, the hands of the clock have more notice than the raised hands of prayer.

"My son, give me thy heart." If we can begin to comprehend the love and mercy of our Heavenly Father, this will become a blessed privilege.



My Pilgrimage Toward A Premillennial Viewpoint

by David R. Reagan

I write as one who grew up in the mainline, A-Millennial wing of the Churches of Christ and who presently serves as the pulpit minister for a mainline Church of Christ whose membership is decidedly A-Millennial.

Like most people who have been “born and bred” in the Churches of Christ, I received almost no teaching concerning God’s Prophetic Word when I was growing up in the church.

Until I was about 25 years old, I could not have told you the difference in a millennium and an armadillo! I thought the “rapture” was a sensation you felt when your girlfriend kissed you. And, of course, the “Beast”—any beast in the Bible—was the Pope! I never heard much about the New Jerusalem, but I sure had a vivid image of what Hell was like.

The Old Testament was a book of children’s stories considered inappropriate for adult study - except, of course, the stories of Naaman dipping seven times and Uzzah being struck dead for touching the Ark. After all, the Old Testament had been “nailed to the cross,” a point I heard emphasized so much in so many sermons that I actually developed a very clear image in my mind of a man climbing up a ladder and nailing a big book to the cross, right above the Lord’s head! Old Testament prophecy was also ignored because it had all been fulfilled in the life of Christ and the establishment of the church.

The Book of Revelation was studied about once every ten years, and the announcement always brought audible groans of anticipated agony from the congregation. The book was presented as either an indecipherable code book written to encourage First Century Christians, or a pageant play about the apostasy of the Catholic Church, or an adult fairy tale - an Alice in Wonderland story - which means nothing more than that good will ultimately triumph over evil.

A couple of times I heard sermons about Pre-Millennialism, but I never really understood what the issue was all about. I just could not understand how the preacher could get so worked up over a one thousand year reign of Christ. My feeling was that if the Lord wanted to rule for one thousand years, that was fine; and if He didn’t,

that was fine too. And I told a preacher that when I was about 15 years old. He responded by severely scolding me and informed me that Pre-Mills believed in "second chance salvation." I didn't know what he meant, but it really didn't sound all that bad. After all, the Lord had given me more than one chance!

My first personal contact with a real, live Pre-Millennialist came in 1966 in Manila while I was teaching at the University of the Philippines. I kept hearing the mainline Church of Christ preachers grumbling about a Pre-Mill minister who was establishing churches like mad. Finally, I decided one day to seek out this man, and when I found him, I was most impressed. For one thing, he conducted services in three languages: Chinese, Tagalog, and English. But as I listened to him preach several times during the next few months, I was even more impressed by his commitment to the Word, his loving spirit, his open attitude, and his genuine feeling for the meaning of salvation by grace through faith. Incidentally, never once during all that time did I hear him speak on phophecy, a fact that caught me by suprise since I had been led to believe that all Pre-Mill preachers were "one-issue-obsessionists."

My personal study of God's Prophetic Word did not begin until several years later. It occurred during a transition period in my life when the Holy Spirit led me toward a career of full time work in the service of the Lord. As I was studying the Bible one evening, I noticed the blessing that is promised in Revelation 1:3 to any person who reads that book. Being the type who takes such promises literally, and being one who needs all the blessings he could get, I decided to read and study that "book of mystery." But before doing so, I prayed for a specificate blessing. I prayed that the Holy Spirit would guide me toward understanding.

I then started reading and making an outline as I went along. After reading Revelation in three different translations, I felt it had come alive before my very eyes. I had received a sense of comfort and hope and great anticipation. The outline I had prepared showed a period of great tribulation dominated by an Anti-Christ figure who would be defeated in a fierce battle that would climax with the return of Jesus in glory. The outline also showed that this victory of the Lord would be followed by His glorious reign upon the earth. The reign would end with another mighty battle in which Satan and his forces would be defeated completely, and then the Lord would usher in the eternal state by surrendering the kingdom to His Father.

As I looked over this outline, it seemed almost amusing to me that a book so notorious for its mysterious nature could come across with a message so straight forward and simple. It seemed to me that you really had to work hard to make it complex, confusing, and mysterious.

My next step was to start reading *about* Revelation. And the first book I picked up was a real blessing. It was called *Interpret-*

ing *Revelation* and was written by Merrill Tenney of Wheaton College. I have read many books on Revelation since that time, but never one as balanced, objective, and scholarly. It's a real gem. As I read Tenney's book, I discovered to my horror that the outline I had made of Revelation was Pre-Millennial in nature. So I hid my outline in an unmarked folder, and I became a "closet Pre-Millennialist while I vigorously pursued my studies to see where I had gone wrong.

I turned next to the Old Testament and began a study of the Major and Minor Prophets. It was a mind-boggling experience, for previously obscure passages suddenly took on new meaning and significance.

First, I was impressed by the number of passages concerned with the second coming of the Lord. Old Testament prophecy was still relevant! It had *not* all been fulfilled. The most impressive of these passages was Zechariah 14. It's what I call a real block-buster, particularly for a person who had been told all his life that the Lord will never set foot on this earth again.

The second thing that impressed me was the way Zechariah - and other prophets - tended to mix their prophecies concerning the first and second advent of Jesus. It suddenly occurred to me that if the prophecies concerning the first advent were literally fulfilled, then why shouldn't that be true of those concerning the second advent? For example, Zechariah said the Lord would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey - and He did. He said the Lord would be a Good Shepherd who would be rejected by His people - and He was. He said the Lord would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver - and He was. *And* he said the Lord would return to this earth at the Mount of Olives, defeat the enemies of Jerusalem, and then reign upon the earth. "Why," I asked myself, "should this last prophecy—and it only - be 'spiritualized' to mean something other than what it says?" It just didn't make sense to me.

The third thing that impressed me in my Old Testament studies was the number of passages which contained promises to Israel that have not been fulfilled. For example, Jeremiah 23:5 & 6 promises that the Lord will "reign as king in the land," and that just hasn't happened. In like manner, nations have not beat their swords into plowshares (figuratively or literally!), nor has the knowledge of the Lord covered the earth as the waters cover the seas, nor has history been graced by the new Jerusalem foreseen by Isaiah, nor has the lion lain down with the lamb. Nor could I find any refuge in the old argument that all these promises of God had been annulled by the sins of Israel.

For the fourth thing that impressed me about my Old Testament studies was the unconditional nature of nearly all of God's promises to Israel. Only the Mosaic covenant was clearly conditional. The covenants with Abraham and David were both unconditional and everlasting (see, for example, Genesis 17:4-8). Likewise, the most

frequent promise of God in the Old Testament scriptures, the promise to regather Israel from a world-wide dispersion, seemed to me to be unconditional, as illustrated by Ezekiel 36:22-28.

The final thing that impressed me in my study of Old Testament prophecy was the remarkable dove-tailing of the prophecies of Daniel with those contained in Revelation - such things as seven years of tribulation, the terror of the Anti-Christ, the desecration of the Temple, and the battle of Armageddon. I might also add that I was additionally impressed by the convergence of Daniel's prophecies with those of Paul in Romans 9 & 11. I simply could not avoid the conclusions that God still has a purpose for the Jew, separate and apart from the church, and that God is working out His purpose in history through *both* spiritual and physical Israels.

The final step I took in my discovery of God's Prophetic Word was to read every book I could get my hands on written from Pre-Mill, Post-Mill, and A-Mill viewpoints.

In the process, it didn't take me long to dispense with the Post-Millennial view, because it seemed to me to be nothing more than a religious form of liberal humanism. After all, its basic thesis is that man is going to get better and better due to the improvement of his environment. In other words, the cornerstone of the Post-Millennial view is a belief in the inevitability of progress. But the Bible says to me that man is fallen and sinful and that things are going to steadily deteriorate until we reach the point where man will destroy himself, if the Lord doesn't suddenly intervene to stop the process (Matthew 23:31& 22).

The A-Millennial viewpoint, on the other hand, turned me off because it has to rest on a foundation that the Bible does not mean what it says. Its cornerstone is the spiritualization of scripture, and when one starts spiritualizing scripture, the question that immediately emerges is "Where do you stop?" Why not spiritualize the virgin birth or the miracles of Jesus (as William Barclay has done) or even Jesus Himself, as did the Gnostics?

I was also turned off by another aspect of the A-Millennial viewpoint. It's what I would call the anti-materialistic bias of the A-Millennialists. I'm not talking here about money. Rather, I'm talking about their attitude toward the material universe. Some A-Millennialists seem to have an almost pathological hatred of the creation. Their writings portray it as thoroughly evil and corrupt, and they seem to look forward with great anticipation to its dissolution by fire.

It seems to me that this attitude runs counter to the fact that one of the unique features of Christianity is its materialism; that is, its concern for the material universe and its convergence of the material with the spiritual. After all, *God materialized* - God became flesh. God in the flesh was always concerned about broken bodies,

hungry people, and sick people. God in the flesh prayed first for daily bread. The resurrected Lord had a glorified body of flesh and bone; he was not an ethereal spirit. Let us remember, too, that the Psalmists glorified the Creation in their poetry, and passages like Romans 8 tell us that *all* of Creation - not just Man, but also animals and plants - will some day be redeemed. Finally, the Bible indicates that at the end of time there will be a convergence of the material and the spiritual whereby the heavenly city will be placed upon a new earth (which I believe will be *this* earth, renovated by fire) and, as John puts it in Revelation 21:3, "God will begin to dwell with men."

Regarding the Pre-Millennial viewpoint, there were certain aspects of it I found distasteful. I was repulsed, for example by the tendency of those who call themselves Dispensationalists to engage in highly speculative theorizing to fulfill what appears to be an obsession on their part to provide hour by hour timetables and charts of what is going to happen once the Rapture occurs.

The doctrine of the Rapture brings to mind another tendency of Pre-Millennial writers that I found annoying. It is the tendency to convert inferences into iron-clad doctrines. Not that the Rapture itself is an inference; it is not. But the *timing* of it is purely inferential and speculative, and thus is seems almost cruel to me to promise people absolutely that the Rapture will occur before the Tribulation begins when, in fact, we as Christians may have to endure considerable suffering and persecution during the Tribulation period.

Another thing about Pre-Millennialism that bothered me was its tendency to be "other worldly" to the point that some of its proponents seem to have lost interest in attempting to redress the injustices and evils of our current society. There is a certain inherent pessimism in the Pre-Millennial viewpoint which says society is hopeless, only Christ can redeem it, so let's forget about it and just concentrate on winning souls.

On the positive side, there were certain things that appealed to me about each viewpoint. The thing I liked most about the Post-Millennial view is its noble goal of a world converted to Jesus Christ. The Post-Millennialist is a natural born evangelist seeking to proclaim the Gospel to all the world in order to speed up the arrival of the golden age of spiritual prosperity. The viewpoint may be utopian, but who can argue with its emphasis on the urgency of the Great Commission?

I found the A-Millennial view of the nature of man to be far more realistic than the Post-Millennial view. But what I particularly found appealing about the A-Millennial viewpoint is the emphasis which most A-Millennialists place on the role of the church in fulfilling the Great Commission. I realize this is not necessarily true of Church of Christ A-Millennialists, but it is true of A-Millen-

nialists in general. They have a greater sense of the responsibility of the church to reach out and help the downtrodden and oppressed in society. They are not willing to tell those suffering from misfortune and injustice that they should simply be patient and wait for Jesus Christ to return and establish a perfect government of peace and justice and plenty for all. I also liked the emphasis which the A-Millennialists place upon the *present* glory of the Lord as He reigns triumphant over His spiritual kingdom, the church.

I found the Pre-Millennial viewpoint to be the most attractive of all. First and foremost I liked it because *it allows the scriptures to mean what they say!* But I also found it appealing because it provides for the redemption of all creation, it provides for the justice of God to prevail upon the earth, it gives added dimension to the concept of Christian hope, it provides for a fuller and more glorious concept of the kingdom, and it provides for the consummation of God's promises to Israel. The latter point is particularly important, for if God doesn't keep His promises to literal Israel, how can I be sure that He will keep His promises to spiritual Israel?

My prophetic studies have had a profound impact upon my spiritual growth. They have reinforced my conviction that the Bible is the Word of God and that Jesus was who He said He was. I have come to a greater appreciation of the faithfulness and patience and love of God. Most of all, I have had created within me a real sense of the "Blessed Hope." and I find myself, for the first time, truly longing for the return of the Lord.

Those Christians who have a Pre-Millennial heritage have a pearl of great price that needs to be put on display unashamedly. They need to share their gift with Christianity at large and with a world that is crying out for justice. This does not mean condemning others for the prophetic viewpoints they have, or do not have. We must keep in mind that all the viewpoints of prophecy and the millennium are Biblical in the sense that they can be drawn from scripture. No person is going to be saved or lost on the basis of his millennial viewpoint. But one's prophetic viewpoint has a very definite impact on his attitudes right now. And the Pre-Millennial view brings the "Blessed Hope" into focus and imparts a renewed sense of hope. The Pre-Millennial view gives enriched meaning to the ancient prayer of the church: "Maranatha!"

"God, let me praise You by improving my corner of Your creation, by filling this little world of mine with light, warmth, goodwill, and happiness." —Dr. Albert Szent-Gyorgyi in *Prayer*

Love is that state of the will which we have *naturally* for ourselves, and must learn to have for other people. —C. S. Lewis

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THOUGHTS FROM ROMANS

Ernest E. Lyon

Are You "Eager"?

In verse 14 of Romans 1 Paul had stated one side of our continuing debt—the debt we owe to fellow men to bring to them the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The other side of that debt, of course, is the debt we owe to God for the great gift that He gave us—the Father giving His Son, the Son giving Himself to die for us, and the Holy Spirit coming to dwell in us to bring us faith in that good news and to guide us day by day.

As a consequence of realizing his debt to all mankind, the Apostle in verse 15 states that he is ready to preach the Good News even in Rome. Let us look with a little detail at the lessons we may have for ourselves from the different portions of this verse.

"I am ready," said the apostle. "I am eager" would probably translate Paul's feelings here better than the conventional "ready" does. Paul had one great obsession that directed his life—the intense desire to see that every man in the world had the opportunity to hear the good news of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection and the consequences to sinful mankind. Paul was more than ready, he was eager, filled with desire to carry out the work to which he had dedicated his life. But remember that Paul had no more of the gospel than you and I have. We are just as much in debt to men to deliver that message to them and we should be just as anxious to deliver that message to every man on the face of the earth and to deliver it in such a way that many will believe. How are we living up to that standard?

"To preach the Gospel" is better translated in the ASV margin "to bring the good tidings." The translation "preach" is unfortunate since most Christians are so accustomed to one man's doing the preaching for a congregation that they don't realize this applies to them. The RSV and New English Bible translated the word "preach" as simply "declare," which is much closer to Paul's idea here than "preach." Paul is simply telling us that he is ready to tell men the good news about Jesus as we listed above. That takes no "preaching" ability, no "call to pulpit," no setting aside as a

“minister;” it simply takes the love of God and man in our hearts so we can tell men that Christ’s death and resurrection can turn them aside from their road to the lake of fire and assure them a place in God’s family in Heaven. The Holy Spirit has shed God’s love abroad in our hearts so it can outflow to others. Let us let it flow out.

For this particular letter Paul identifies the ones that he is especially looking forward to telling about the Lord, “you also that are in Rome.” Rome was one of the places that Paul wanted to take the good news and it should be one of the places that we would like to have the good news told today. But the significant thing about Paul’s desire to witness for Christ in Rome is that Rome was the center of the worship of power. Can you imagine the derision that would come to a person who told in Rome that a member of a subject nation, a lowly Jewish worker without specialized education, who had been rejected by His people and crucified (a death too lowly for a Roman citizen to die that way!) by the Roman government was the Son of God? It would be a much worse derision than that neighbor of yours could possibly give you, regardless of whether he is a philosopher, a laborer, a teacher, an industrialist, or any other kind of American. Emulate Paul and be anxious to tell him the good news.

To understand what Paul meant then by the expression in which he showed how anxious he was to bring that good news, look at these translations: “To my uttermost,” “to the fullest extent of my ability” (Living Bible), “as far as my ability will carry me” (Phillips). Paul intended to use every bit of his capacity to bring the joyful tidings to others. It is no wonder that he helped take the gospel to the whole world of his day. If we will have that same desire and carry it out as fully as he did, the whole world of our generation can hear the good news—which is exactly what we owe them.



Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

At what age should a child be encouraged to turn to the Lord?

The word of God does not always give us some of the specific answers we seek. Or, sometimes it does not provide the specific detail that we would like. We are told how people can become Christians and of the universal need of man the sinner. This is

largely a matter of believing and accepting what God has said. But at what age is a child ready to act by faith? When is a child's conversion a true act of faith in Christ so that there is new life, and when is it merely a fiction, or even an inoculation against a new life?

Let it be said that there is need for a measure of wisdom in trying to reach *anyone* for the Lord. Even in dealing with adults, it is possible for us to pressure some people into being baptized when they are not ready for it. There is no conversion — only a statistic, another “notch” on someone's counting stick, another powerless “Christian.” Of course there is an urgency we must not lose. Of course we do not want to let people put off a decision they are ready for if we can help them realize their need. But it is the individual's faith — not our own which must motivate the action. We who know the Lord and the blessings of sins forgiven would believe for everyone in the world, if we could! But we cannot! In some respects salvation is a very personal matter and any attempt on our part to make it otherwise is to destroy it. Preachers need a measure of wisdom that they do not, via oratory, present a strong emotional appeal, or in some other way cause people to respond when it is not the Spirit of God who is convicting of sin and begetting new life. All of us need to be careful that we do not unduly influence the actions of others so that they are really trying to please us.

Communication and methods of getting response from people are today organized fields of study, the use of which in reaching people for the Lord may be overdone. A salesman may be so persuasive that some people buy that vacuum cleaner, only to regret it the next day when they weigh everything in the light of saner reasoning. Our government, aware of this weakness in some and of the power of persuasion, now insists that there must be a time during which the contract can be legally cancelled. Men may handle the gospel after the fashion of the high-pressure salesman, so that the formalities are carried out and a “sale” is reported but about the only birth is a stillborn one. Christians are not just salesmen, and the gospel is not merchandise. Salvation deals with the heart, the inner being. God uses human vessels for carrying His message, but life is from Him, and there is no new life until the Spirit of God effects it. So we repeat, even in dealing with adults we need a measure of divine wisdom so that we may be God's instruments for true conversion rather than peddlers of religion. Paul told the Corinthians that his method with them was such that their “faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

Since improperly motivated actions can be obtained from adults, it is evident that they can be obtained from children more easily. Children are often eager to please their parents, their teachers, or a “hero” they may have established. Belief in some human may be mistaken for belief in the Lord or in His word. It is not necessarily a mark of a good Sunday School teacher that several small children

in his or her class are all upset and want to be baptized, even having bad dreams at night from fear that they might go to hell. Anyone can do that, given enough teaching opportunity. Children are easily molded and can be taught, for example, to say "I love you," long before they have much of a concept of what it really means. It is not enough in spiritual matters to deal with externals. Parents, teachers, anyone dealing with children should seek the wisdom of the Lord in trying to bring them to salvation, so that when the effort is made it will result in genuine conversion, not some soon-to-be-forgotten fantasy.

At what age should this process begin? In the sense that Bible training is foundational, it should begin just as soon as the child can learn the word of God. Timothy, taught by mother and grandmother, had known the scriptures from a babe (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). Bible teaching should begin quite early. I am persuaded there is value in reading the Bible to a child (in child-sized doses) even before he is able to comprehend much that is read. There is much that he needs for a foundation for faith before the consciousness of sin and an intelligent awareness of his need of salvation takes place. It seems to me that when a diligent and sensible program of Bible study is followed the child arrives at an awareness of his need of salvation without some special evangelistic effort being directed at him. At the right time, when he understands what it is to be a sinner and what it means to believe on the Lord Jesus, he will become concerned about salvation.

While Bible teaching should begin quite early, this does not mean that an effort to get some kind of profession of faith or to get the child baptized should begin quite early. If we are after responses, so we can report what great soul winners we are and how many we have won to the Lord, then indiscriminate child evangelism will be the easiest way to get such results. But if we are concerned about building the temple of God with gold, silver, and precious stones (1 Cor. 3:10-15), if we are interested in true conversion, then we will not try to get the child to accept the externals of conversion until he is able to believe and respond in a truly scriptural way.

It would be nice if we could set a certain age of accountability and as the age for gospel response, but the Lord just has not made it that simple. The Bible nowhere tells us at what age the child is able to believe. A bit of reflection will help us understand why. Children are not identical gadgets all stamped out of a manufacturing machine. They vary, both in their ability to know and in opportunity for development. The child who has grown up in Bible training will likely have an awareness of sin and understand what it means to repent of sin and to believe on the Lord much earlier than one who has never had any Bible training. Some children are much quicker than others to grasp any kind of teaching. The child reared in the Christian home and "in the church" is likely to under-

stand what being a Christian is all about much sooner than the one who is bused in to the church from an ungodly home and whose religious teaching has probably been mostly negative.

We will have to use some sanctified judgment about how far or how fast to push both children and adults. We must not fail or refuse to act out of fear that we might do the wrong thing, and we must not let zeal and enthusiasm, or even youthful stupidity, cause us to "pull the plums while they are still green." Not all of us will be of the same judgment, for a variety of reasons — our own experiences, the influences of religious teaching we may have had, our own maturity or immaturity, etc. All of us need to seek the wisdom of God, however. Paul was concerned that he be a wise masterbuilder. You and I need that same concern. We must not let our standards be set by the word of God and the principles therein. We must be servants of God.

Some regard age twelve as the "age of accountability." We have already indicated that there is nothing in the Bible which teaches this directly. Presumably this age was chosen because at age twelve Jewish boys became responsible for practising the Jewish religion, and maybe because of the mention of Jesus in the temple at age twelve. Or, maybe in experience, it was discovered that an awareness of sin and of need seems to come to many children at about this age. I personally believe it is a mistake to settle on this as the age for concern. Nevertheless, in my experience, I find that the average child probably reaches a stage of development along about the years of ten to twelve which makes it an ideal time for turning to the Lord. I know that many will respond during these years.

We do not practice infant baptism, declaring that faith is an essential prerequisite to scriptural baptism. It is! For the same reason we must avoid a too-early religious response and baptism. Faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah of God requires some understanding, and the action taken should not just be to please some person who has shown interest in or attention to the child.

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Reflections On The Restoration Movement

TRACING OUR HERITAGE

Larry Miles

WE ARE A PART OF THE BODY OF CHRIST!

Praise God that we are a part of the majestic body of Christ! If we have obeyed the Gospel and have been obedient to the Word of God concerning salvation, we can be assured that the Father in heaven numbers us in the church of Christ. In the last few years, we have heard a lot about the hobby of genealogy, that is, tracing

one's roots. It can be profitable to know what one's background historically is. To the Christian it is also profitable that we know from whence we came. We hope that these writings will encourage us to study about the heritage we share both biblically and historically.

In Matthew 16:18, we read the words of Christ, "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." The church of Christ never existed in the lifetime of the Savior. Only after Jesus died on the cross could there ever be any church. Why? Because the debt that was owed God because of the sin of Adam could only be paid by Christ's death (Ileb. 9:11-18).

The church of Christ began on the Day of Pentecost when Peter, inspired of the Holy Spirit, preached the first gospel message and proclaimed the terms of salvation under the New Covenant. When the Jews on that day asked Peter what to do to be saved he gave them the answer. It is the same answer that should be given today to a sinful world. In Acts 2:38, we read these words, "And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." We read in the Book of Acts about the spreading of the Gospel and the establishment of many congregations. We read also in the New Testament of exhortations to the Christian on how to live for Him who died for us. You would think that there could never enter into Christianity any apostasy. But remember, the Devil is still on the scene. He was active then and is still active today. He is not bound today as some of our brethren would have us to believe. But even while the apostles lived, apostasy entered in. So, where do we go from here? True, apostasy is here to stay but there will always be those who are true to the Ancient Order of things.

THE RESULTS OF APOSTASY

Apostasy entered Christianity and has to this day stayed with us. Christianity which was once pure was now polluted with the influence of a sinful world. We do not have time to mention all the results of apostasy and how it changed some of the key doctrines of the church. We want to mention two examples at this time. First of all, we see the emergence of the universal Bishop concept. This was then, and is still today contrary to the Word. The Word of God tells us that there is to be no authority in the local congregation higher than the Elders. To have a universal Bishop over all "Christianity" is contrary to Local Autonomy. Also we see how false teachers changed the doctrines and mode of Baptism which was God-given, Biblical baptism is by immersion. In immersion, we identify with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection and are added to the church of Christ. How can one be buried with Christ in baptism by being sprinkled or poured? This and many other false teachings brought about the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Church

claims to be the true Church, but during this time of the Dark Ages or Middle Ages instead of being the one who distributed the Word to the people, they were the jailkeepers of the Word of God. They instituted many practices contrary to the Word. So, as the years around the early 1500's came into view, the situation looked dark. Was there hope on the horizon?

EFFORTS OF REFORMATION FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT

There arrived from within the midst of the apostasy of the Roman Catholic Church men who wanted to reform it. We are thankful that these men saw the gross abuses that were going on. But some of these wanted to just reform the Roman Church and not go back to the Bible to completely restore the practices of New Testament Christianity as was practiced by the primitive church.

We would like to mention a few of these reformers. We read of Martin Luther's effort to reform the Roman Church. We read also of John Calvin, the founder of Presbyterianism. As far as he went, he had some good teaching, but he also taught things contrary to the Word such as the doctrine of pre-destination. There were many others who strove to reform the existing Churches, such as John Wesley. One might begin to think that there never will come men who will look beyond the apostasy of the Roman Catholics and the many Protestant Denominations and get back to a "thus saith the Lord" concerning true New Testament worship. Is that too much to ask for?

RESTORING THE PRINCIPLES OF NEW TESTAMENT WORSHIP

Thomas Campbell, in writing the *Declaration and Address*, wrote these words to the Christian Association of Washington, Pa. in 1809, "Call Bible things by Bible names." Also he wrote, "We speak where the scriptures speak and are silent where they are silent." We want to bring out the point that the brethren that we are about to talk about believed that the church of Christ comprised all Christians in the world. Their aim was to teach and preach that we should all be united upon Christ and conformity to New Testament pattern.

This is the beginning of what we today call the Restoration Movement. This was as Thomas Campbell said, "A movement to unite the Christians in all the sects." The aim of these men was to look beyond the many centuries of apostasy and go back and try to reinstitute true New Testament worship.

Is there any value in studying about the Restoration Pioneers? Some would say no, and they are right if we are going to take their words and give them the same value as the Word of God. But, if we remember that these men were not inspired of God as the writers of the Bible were, we can reap the rewards of their experiences concerning the work of restoration. Restoration is a continuing work. Let us not only teach restoration but practice it. May we get the restoration fever of the pioneers and do our best to teach and practice New Testament Christianity in our day and age.

We want to repeat one important fact. All these men believed that they were not restoring a church that had disappeared. There have since Pentecost been faithful Christians on the earth. They realized that there were Christians, however, in the sects. It was the aim of such brethren as Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, and Walter Scott to try to teach these people and groups that they should forsake all their traditions and return to the ancient order of things concerning New Testament worship. Thomas Campbell wrote in the *Declaration and Address* in 1809 these words, "That the church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and none else, as none else can be truly and properly called Christians." May we take the words of Bro. Campbell to heart. May we, as we continue our study of our heritage, take these experiences of the pioneer preachers of the Restoration Movement—seriously and apply them to our efforts to unite all the Christians of the world under the unity Christ prayed for in John 17. Although there is but one church, the body of Christ has been splintered into many factions. Even in the churches of Christ we see divisions based on opinions. May we truly accept the words of Thomas Campbell, "IN ESSENTIALS UNITY, IN OPINIONS LIBERTY, AND IN ALL THINGS CHARITY." Until next time, may we always be looking for the return of the Lord of Glory and be trying to reach the whole world with the gospel before He comes. MARANATHA! (1 Cor. 16:22)

Jack Blaes preaches at the Antioch Church, Frankfort, Ky. and teaches at the Portland Christian School in Louisville.



Viewing the News

Jack Blaes

WHAT IS HIS BUSINESS? All told, Kenneth Guarino, president of The Imperial Distributors, Inc., Providence, R. I., does a wholesale business of at least \$1 million a month. The buying public pays 10 times that amount on the retail level. He has run into some slight difficulties with the authorities, however, since the "direct object" of the verb "distribute" in his case is pornography. A R. I. grand jury in-

dicted him on 42 pornography peddling counts, 12 of them for allegedly distributing "kiddie porn" films. He is evidently out to get the little ones. I don't know what the State of Rhode Island will do with him, but he is under indictment before God for "causing one of these little ones to stumble." Whatever the penalty, it would be better for him "if a millstone were hanged about his neck and

he were thrown into the depths of the sea." The Rhode Island law enforcement officials at about the same time arrested another "big man in the industry" but said raids at these warehouses and their arrests haven't put a damper in the booming smut business in the state. Evidently there is a lot of it going on.

MANCHESTER UNION LEADER CONDUCTS POLL. By an overwhelming 22 to 1 margin, readers expressed their rejection of the proposal that this country should change its standard of measurements to the metric system. The main theme of those rejecting the proposal was the thought that it would cost the average American taxpayer, and the American businessman, untold billions of dollars to convert their machines and tools to the European metric system. One woman expressed it: "My husband is an auto mechanic who has to supply his tools to work. It will cost him over \$1,000 to make the change." I have never heard an explanation given as to why we are intent on making this change. What we have been using has served us better than what the Europeans have been using has served them. Maybe they are the ones to change. Now that is just too much! You can see why they call me a radical.

EMMET C. BARR IS PRESIDENT OF THE SOUND MONEY FOUNDATION. He says, "Every straight thinking American should keep in mind two obvious facts: (1) Every dollar face amount of America's irredeemable paper currency is a promise to pay a U.S. gold dollar on demand. (2) Forcing the American people to use Federal Reserve Notes as a substitute for sound money is a multi-billion dollar fraud. Since there are not any U.S. dollars in circulation, it follows that all contracts, all obligations, and all savings accounts payable in U.S. dollars are tainted with fraud. Admittedly, Jimmy Carter's administration inherited the financial mess that is Washington, but he told us with a straight but toothy face that he would not lie to us. Keeping on with the big basic lie he inherited is not keeping his word. People voted for a change.

EARL DOUGLAS IS A WELL KNOWN NEGRO NEWSMAN. In a recent column he says: The NAACP finally got the message which black conservatives have been trying to convey to them for over half a century, that the black's worst enemy is a white liberal. This is how they got the message: The moment the NAACP didn't kowtow to the Carter administration's concept of an energy solution the three major liberal newspapers in America, the New York Times, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times, came down on the NAACP's leadership with all "four feet." And the message of the liberal press was loud and clear, and directed to every black organization in America. "Don't you negroes dare start thinking for yourselves." "Of course," said Douglas, "they have been saying the very same thing for a long time and blaming it on the white conservatives." And later on in the column he said: "It may be difficult for most black Americans to understand, but those whites which most blacks classify as racists, and ultra conservatives, including the KKK, the Saints of the White Camelia, the Mississippi and Georgia Crackers and the White Citizens Councils, are more interested in the true welfare of blacks than the most liberal of white liberals." Too few know it, but there are blacks who think for themselves, and they think straight. They need to be heard.

"IT'S MUCH LATER THAN WE THOUGHT," said Congressman John D. Breckinridge (D.-KY) to reporters after spending ten days in the Soviet Union with a delegation of the House Armed Services Committee. The Congressman noted that it is time America concerned itself less with Soviet intentions and more with Soviet capabilities. Stirling Rep. Breckinridge deeply was this message from First Deputy Minister of Defense N. V. Ogarkov: "The U.S. has always been in a position where it could not be threatened by foreign powers. That is no longer true. Today the Soviet Union has military superiority over the U.S. and henceforth the U.S. will be threatened. You had better get used to it."

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM. You can expect to be hearing a great deal

more of Democratic Socialism in the near future. And a personality pushing this political concept will be William Winpisinger, president of the 900,000 member International Association of Machinists and a member of the powerful A.F.L. - C.I.O. executive council. He has already sparkplugged a newly formed radical group to be called the Citizens-Labor Energy Coalition or the National Energy Coalition. Columnist David S. Broder reports that the objective of this coalition is to "create a new political force which can challenge the dominant conservative political mood by a mobilization of the left." Soviet strategists have discovered that Communism, when called Democratic Socialism, is far more acceptable and effective than pure, unadulterated Soviet Communism. The important lesson here is: It is not what is printed on the label, but what is in the bottle that counts.

BOB HOPE, having read the complaint of the Speaker of the House Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill that his net worth is less than \$200,000, has offered to put on a fund-raising benefit for the Speaker. I would suggest that in the mean time he apply for food stamps.

SECURITY FOR ITS CITIZENS. What is our government's concern? The United States Army does have crack troops and contingency plans for dealing with terrorists after they commit some atrocity. But F.B.I. Direc-

tor William Webster is very concerned, noting that the Bureau does not now even have one paid informant per state involved in watching persons likely to engage in terrorism. There are but 42 undercover operatives in the National security field according to Webster.

In fact the F.B.I. no longer runs security checks on government workers when they are hired. That is handled by the Civil Service Commission, which does not even ask applicants if they belong to the Communist Party. Testifying before the Senate Subcommittee on Criminal Laws and Procedures, Civil Service Chairman Alan Campbell said that their investigators are instructed to inform each source of information that the identity of the person and/or organization will be furnished to the person being investigated. If you happen to know that your neighbor who has recently applied for a federal job is a bomb-thrower, and you inform the federal government about him, the Civil Service will tell the terrorist who informed on him. Why? Why? Why? Can't you see how this arrangement multiplies the numbers of citizens willing to inform on terrorists? Or maybe you see how it will have the opposite effect.

MANY STATE AND LOCAL police forces, citing the Privacy Act, refuse to release criminal records of federal job applicants. And the Commission itself soon will destroy 2,200 files on suspected subversive organizations. Why? Why? Why?

"The Catholics are now battling over the issue of infant baptism, and the Jesuits are determined to go back to believer's baptism. They insist that infant baptism no longer has—if it ever had—the meaning that's attributed to it. They say that the newborn child cannot believe, the parents often do not believe, and sometimes even the priest doesn't believe. How can it be called a baptism? What has God got to do with the whole thing? In 1972 Pope Paul issued the directive that Catholic priests and missionaries henceforth baptize adult converts by immersion. So they started immersing again . . . They already have the liturgy for the new rite for believer's baptism . . ."

—*Christian Herald*, Sept. 1977

Amite, La. Prophecy Conference

David R. Reagan

The Southeastern Louisiana Prophecy Conference was held in Amite, Louisiana on June 10. The conference was jointly sponsored by five churches in the area and was well attended. The sponsoring congregations included the churches located in Amite, Hayden's Grove, Roseland, Big Creek, and Shiloh.

George Fulda, minister for the Shiloh Church of Christ, served as coordinator of the conference. He was assisted by Stan Broussard and Kenneth Istre. Bro. Broussard, minister for the Bayou Jacque congregation, led the singing. The Amite congregation, where Bro. Istre serves as minister, provided the site for the conference.

The conference began with a lecture by Dr. David Reagan, pulpit minister for the Central Church of Christ in Irving, Texas. Dr. Reagan presented a talk on "The Importance of Prophetic Study" in which he reviewed the reasons for the neglect of God's prophetic word and then presented seven reasons why prophecy should be given more emphasis in Bible study.

Dr. Reagan was followed by Dr. Paul S. Knecht, professor of Systematic Theology and Practical Ministries at John Wesley College in Owosso, Michigan. Dr. Knecht spoke on "God's Eternal Purpose." He attempted to show that God's purpose for Man is for Man to have "dominion over the earth," but that Man has yet to realize this dominion because of his sin against God. The dominion which God intended for the first Adam and his descendants will someday be realized by the second Adam and those who trust in Him, for God has promised that this second Adam shall have "all things put in subjection under His feet."

Dr. Leroy Garrett of Denton, Texas—the editor of *Restoration Review*—was the next speaker. Dr. Garrett is currently writing a history of the Restoration Movement that is to be published by College Press, and he drew on his vast research to present a captivating, anecdotal talk on the prophetic viewpoint of Alexander Campbell. He pointed out that Campbell was a Post-Millennialist, as were nearly all the American religious leaders of that day. Campbell believed that the United States would provide the cradle for the birth of a revitalized, non-denominational Christianity which would sweep the world and usher in the millennial age—this being the reason he named his journal *The Millennial Harbinger*. Campbell also believed that the Jews would be re-gathered in Palestine and would be converted to the Lord.

Bro. Randy Kea, a recent graduate of Freed-Hardeman College, presented the A-Millennial viewpoint. His talk was entitled "Why I Believe There Will Be No Thousand Year Reign of Christ on This Earth." Bro. Kea is minister to the Brookway Church of

Christ in Brookhaven, Mississippi. His presentation was positive in tone and scripturally based. He focused his efforts on an attempt to prove that the church is the kingdom and that therefore the kingdom prophecies have been fulfilled spiritually in the church.

The Pre-Millennial viewpoint was presented most ably in a thought-provoking and humorous talk by Kenneth Istre. He began by carefully defining his personal concept of Pre-Millennialism in order to distinguish it from other Pre-Millennial viewpoints, such as those of the Dispensationalists. He then proceeded to focus on the principles of Biblical interpretation which are used by the Literalists and Figurativists, showing why he prefers the literalist approach.

The conference ended with a second lecture by Dr. Reagan which he entitled "The Confusion, Conflict, and Compatibility of the Prophetic Viewpoints." He began by defining the differences between the various prophetic viewpoints, emphasizing in particular the differences between Historic Pre-Millennialism (the oldest prophetic viewpoint that was characteristic of the Church Fathers until the fourth century) and Dispensationalism (which was pioneered by the Plymouth Brethren in the 19th century). He then reviewed the conflict between the various viewpoints, particularly within the heritage of the Restoration Movement. He produced evidence that the mainline Churches of Christ have launched a renewed effort within the last year to denounce and condemn the Pre-Millennial viewpoint, this effort being prompted primarily by the popularity of Dispensational authors like Tim LaHaye and Hal Lindsey. Dr. Reagan concluded his remarks by emphasizing that all the prophetic viewpoints are Biblically based and should therefore be respected as being manifestations of honest differences in Biblical interpretation. He called for Christians of all prophetic viewpoints to stop their bickering over prophecy and emphasize, instead, the things they agree on; namely, that Jesus will return personally, visibly, and in great glory and will then at some point raise the dead, execute judgment, and usher in the eternal state.

This was the finest prophecy conference which this writer has ever attended. Bro. Fulda hopes to make the lectures available on cassette tape and in book form. Those interested in securing copies should write to him at Rt. 2, Box 69-A, Amite, Louisiana 70422.

Whenever we find that our religion is making us feel that we are good—above all, that we are better than someone else—I think that we may be sure we are being acted on, not by God, but by the devil. —C. S. Lewis

Missionary Messenger

"Greater things for God"

Joy Garrett

Salisbury, Rhodesia

June, 1978

As Mother Garrett's passport was expiring, and we cannot obtain one in Rhodesia these days, Robert and I and Mother traveled down to South Africa and had a little holiday while she and I obtained new passports. Through most of Rhodesia we traveled by armed convoy. The Lord watched over and we had a peaceful journey.

The churches have been having one-week meetings held by either Bro. Patrick Machaya or Bro. Agrippa Chisengwa. They need the spiritual food and revival in these difficult days. A big camp meeting is planned soon, too.

The last couple of weeks Robert has been doing carpentry work at Mufakose. He bought some double doors at auction sales, which saved considerably.

Continue to remember us in your prayers, that the Lord may heal our land.

Donald Harris

Salisbury, Rhodesia

May 31, 1978

The Arcadia Children's Home has another little boy by the name of Lennon Field, who is four-and-one-half years old. This makes us now have 16, and another little girl should be here by the end of next week.

Please pray for the leaders here to be filled with the Spirit according to the Lord's will and not their own.

David Brown

Salisbury, Rhodesia

May 30, '78

An air of uncertainty hangs over Rhodesia as to just what the future holds for the country. Pray for Rhodesia, but the U.S. certainly needs much prayer, too. It would appear from here that the U.S. is quite willing for the Communists to take the country.

Last month Bro. Nandara, an elder in the Wuyu Wuyu church, was murdered by terrorists. Bro. Mugani, who is also an elder in the same congregation, has twice been warned by terrorists to burn his Bible, which he hasn't done. Because of terrorist activities, the Wuyu Wuyu church no longer meets collectively for worship. They meet in their homes to worship and remember the Lord in the breaking of bread.

Uncertainty and troublous times do not hinder God's working in the lives of people. Recently, four more people accepted Christ here at Waterfalls and were baptized. Other congregations are also experiencing growth, for which we praise God.

Our sincere thanks to the Cherry St. church for the used hymn books. They finally arrived and will be put to good use.

We are looking to the Lord to build a strong indigenous work that will communicate the life and light of the Gospel long after we may be gone. Pray with us to this end.

Thank you for your prayers. God bless you.

Addie Brown

Salisbury, Rhodesia

May 30, '78

When I got home at noon today from the ladies' Bible study I found four overseas letters! There was one from Sis. Ethel Campbell. She has written to us regularly for years. When we read Sis. Allen's letter we were shocked to hear that Sis. Campbell had passed away two days after writing this letter. We will miss her good letters. While we are sad to hear that she has gone, we do rejoice to know she is now with the Lord whom she loved and served so well. We can look forward to meeting her soon.

Sis. Campbell was a true friend and sister in the Lord. She was a good student of God's Word and a capable teacher. She taught classes for women for many years. For a number of years she taught in Searcy, Arkansas, where I attended classes. She was a student of the prophetic word also, and I learned much from her concerning unfulfilled prophecy. She had a love for truth, and her example in word and deed were excellent. I loved her.

Things are unsettled here; however, we still have good meetings. There were 14 responses to the invitation on Sunday morning.

J. R. Stewart-Brown

Cape Town, R.S.A.

May 2, '78

We have had a long and beautiful summer, but now we can feel winter is very close. We have to be getting out our winter woolies.

The church here had a youth camp during the Easter holidays. The campers came from all over to attend this camp. God just did some wonderful things during this camp meeting. Thirty-six youths were baptized into Christ; now they are getting more teaching in Bible study. Your prayers are very badly needed for these youngsters, for God to keep them faithful through the years lying ahead of them. In the church at Bellville there were some new souls baptized into Christ. Pray for them also.

Please pray for some of our young men who are on our borders defending our country, and for their families at home. It would be just too wonderful if we could have peace again. God still holds the whole world in His hands; His will only will be done.

Alvin Hobby

Livingstone, Zambia

May 22, 1978

Our weather here is cool but not really cold yet. It does feel almost cold, early in the morning, with no heat in the house.

Georgia left for school about 7:20 this morning. Monday is her longest day, 7:30 a.m. to 1:25 p.m., with some breaks in between.

I am reading, correcting and criticizing a Tonga typescript of 1 Kings, and hope to have that finished this week.

Our church work here in town and in the villages continues

about as usual. Yesterday, at the close of the service, here next door to us, there were 11 who came forward asking to be baptized and three who requested the prayers of the church.

Georgia is getting stronger. Yesterday she walked up to the general hospital, about 4 or 5 blocks away, to visit some sick people, and then walked back again.



Counsel The Convicted

Alex V. Wilson

There is great need for detailed counseling with people who respond to the invitation in church meetings. To have a public prayer for them, and nothing more, may at times be dangerous trifling with souls.

One Sunday during the invitation song a young man and woman came forward and said, "We want to be better Christians--closer to God." In some churches the preacher would have merely prayed for them, and afterwards say he was glad they had rededicated themselves to the Lord. But this time the preacher said, "I want to talk with you right after this meeting." Result: he discovered they were living in adultery and needed specific advice regarding a terribly tangled-up situation.

Counseling is also important before baptizing professing converts. A man once accused some preachers of "rushing converts past the Cross to the baptismal pool." If we do that, we shall produce members who trust their baptism more than Christ and Him crucified.

This article is not a plea for having a probation period before baptizing converts. The Bible gives no warrant for that. True, John the Baptizer thundered forth the demand, "Bear fruits that benefit repentance" (Luke 3:8a). We likewise need to probe those who request baptism, to see (as best we can) whether they are truly penitent. Yet the New Testament example is to immerse people the day (Acts 2:41) or even the hour (Acts 16:33) that they repent and trust in Christ.

Many churches and missionary groups wait for months before baptizing people who respond to the gospel. But some of them have recently changed their practice, and now baptize as soon as there is a clear profession of repentance and faith. Their reasons for the

change are two, doctrinal and practical. First, they see that the Scripture's teaching on the significance of baptism leaves no room for long delay. Baptism symbolizes Christ's death/burial/resurrection of redemption and our death/burial/resurrection of conversion (Rom. 6). Therefore it should follow right after conversion. Second, they discovered that having a probation period leaves the convert suspended in a sort of limbo. He is no longer considered to be in "the world," but neither is he considered to be fully in the local church. This tends to discourage the convert and make him feel useless at the very time that normally he is full of burning zeal to share his new faith and joy.

But though baptism is meant to follow right after conversion (i.e., repentance and faith), that does not justify our rushing into it carelessly. Paul baptized the Philippian jailer "the same hour of the night," but *first* he "spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house" (Acts 16:29-34).

Some Suggested Questions

Some years ago in Manila we found that we needed to deal more thoroughly with people before baptizing them. So we began the policy of not baptizing anyone unless one of the pastors first counseled him or her.

Recently when we discussed our pre-baptismal counseling, the following questions were suggested as guidelines.

1. *Why* do you need a Savior?
2. What *sins* are you repenting of?
3. *What makes you think God will forgive you?* What right do you have to think He will give you salvation?
4. Do you need to make *restitution* in any way? (Have you stolen items which you need to return? Lies or gossip to confess? Bad debts to pay or at least make arrangements about? Grudges or bad personal relationships to straighten out? Marital or sexual difficulties to try to untangle?)
5. What *differences* will there be in your life from now on, since you have now decided to follow Jesus Christ? What *positive* changes, in other words (in contrast to the negative changes dealt with in questions no. 2 and 4).
6. Are you willing to *suffer* for Christ? To *serve* Him? In what ways can you serve Him—look for spiritual gifts that will develop in your life.
7. What do other members of *your family* think of your being baptized?
8. The Counselor should explain the *meaning of baptism*, and then give *practical information* and advice, as needed, regarding the time, place, procedure, what to bring, etc.

Dangers to Avoid

In this counseling we must try to avoid two opposite errors, legalism and easy-believism. The above questions, especially no. 2, 4, 5, and 6, could possibly be used in a legalistic way, and thus center the person's attention primarily on what he does. He might get the impression he is earning his salvation, or else contributing a lot towards it! We must avoid this, and the third question is intended to emphasize that we can be saved only by the grace of God. We stand before Him "without one plea," without any rights or merit-points. We must renounce all our *goodness*, so far as dependence upon it is concerned, for even our righteous acts are like filthy rags. We must put all our trust in the Lamb of God.

On the other hand, a sinner must renounce his *sins* too. The call to repent sounds loud and clear throughout Scripture. Our Lord Jesus urged His would-be followers to count the cost of being His disciples (Luke 14:25 ff.), and we should do the same. That is the purpose of such questions as no. 4-6. We need to see, so far as possible, if the professed convert is truly repentant of sins.

More than that, is he even really *convicted* of sin? Deep conviction is rare nowadays. Too often people seem to think they are doing God a favor by coming to Him! If someone's answer to question No. 1 seems shallow ("Well, I'm a sinner like everybody else; we've all sinned, of course"), then no. 2 is intended to shut him up before the Holy One (Rom. 3:19). The Lord says, "This is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word" (Isa. 66:2). So we might say to our "casual convert" something like this: "Yes, we all have sinned. But what are some of the specific sins you are repenting of and asking God to forgive? It's not hard for anyone to say 'I've sinned' or even 'I'm a sinner,' but it is hard (but helpful) to say 'I am a liar, and a proud person, and bitterly envious,' etc."

Of course our purpose is not to try to get him to uncover to us all the dirt in his past life. We are aiming to help him by bringing him to a proper contrition before the Almighty. Only thus will he adequately value the grace of God provided in Christ Jesus. At the same time we should realize that people's temperaments and experiences differ widely. We must not insist upon any set pattern of feelings nor try to force people into a common mold.

James Packer's book, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, provides much food for thought. Here are some of his helpful observations:

The bad conscience of the natural man is not at all the same thing as conviction of sin. It is not conviction of sin just to feel miserable about yourself and your failures and your inadequacy to meet life's demands. Nor would it be saving faith if a man in that condition called on the Lord Jesus Christ just to soothe

him, and cheer him up, and make him feel confident again. Nor should we be preaching the gospel (though we might imagine we were) if all that we did was to present Christ in terms of a man's wants. ("Are you happy? Are you satisfied? Do you want peace of mind? Do you feel that you have failed? Are you fed up with yourself? Do you want a friend? Then come to Christ; He will meet your every need..."--as if the Lord Jesus Christ were to be thought of as a fairy godmother, or a super-psychiatrist.) No; we have to go deeper than this.

To preach against sin means to measure men's lives by the holy law of God. To be convicted of sin means, not just to feel that one is an allaround flop, but to realize that one has offended God, and flouted His authority, and defied Him, and gone against Him, and put oneself in the wrong with Him. To preach Christ means to set Him forth as the One who through His cross sets men right with God again. To put faith in Christ means relying on Him, and Him alone, to restore us to God's fellowship and favor.

God help us in our preaching and counseling to deal specifically and thoroughly with people, that they might receive complete healing from the Great Physician.

BOOK REVIEW:

Dennis L. Allen

BATTLE FOR AFRICA, Brother Andrew, Revell, 156 p. \$6.95, Hard Cover.

This book points up the fact that the great powers are locked in a great struggle in Africa. Although this is true politically, economically, militarily, and racially, the conflict the author presses upon our attention is the spiritual battle which is the most crucial and which we cannot afford to ignore. If the battle is basically spiritual, then Christians have the weapons to fight it--weapons which are mighty before God. Brother Andrew challenges us all to get involved in this conflict. Southeast Asia has already fallen to the Communists, and now their attention is turned to the continent of Africa. Today the battleground is Africa.

Brother Andrew has done much traveling and ministry in Africa and is convinced the time is very short if Christians would turn the tide in this great continent. In country after country Christians are losing their freedom and enduring great persecution and suffering. Prisons are filled with men whose only crime is to belong to the wrong tribe or church. How can this be when so much missionary work has been done in Africa and so many Africans are nominally Christian? Because of the way the Gospel has been presented, too often the Christian faith becomes an easy target. If Christianity is iden-

tified in the minds of people with western civilization and western governments, then the communists gain a wedge to alienate people from it. "What have the Christians done for you," they say. "They put you in ships and sold you as slaves in Christian America." Even the patronizing, superior attitude of many white missionaries has been used as a wedge to turn away people's hearts from the Gospel toward Revolution. The African can see if he is looked down upon and treated differently from the way Europeans treat one another.

Brother Andrew says perhaps the greatest failure has been the failure to develop leadership among native Christians. As missionaries are being driven from one country after another the church is being left in the hands of local Christians who have not been prepared for the responsibility.

One of the great values of the book is that it gives an overall picture of what is happening to the church in Africa today and alerts Christians to pray and to act. The following list of countries in Africa undergoing persecution is not complete but is indicative of the seriousness of the situation: Uganda, Angola, Tanzania, Mozambique, the Sudan and Equatorial Guinea. In Uganda, which is 60% Christian, seven million Christians are living in a nightmare of terror because of the ruthless persecutions of the Muslim dictator, Idi Amin, who overthrew the legitimate government in 1971.

The response suggested by Brother Andrew to the crisis of Africa is not a cheap, easy one. We must suffer with our suffering brethren before our prayers can avail. We must be willing to give sacrificially whatever God wants us to give. We must be willing to go. In Peking youth were seen carrying banners with the slogan, "GO WHERE THE REVOLUTION NEEDS YOU MOST!" Should it not be the challenge of the Gospel. "GO WHERE THE KINGDOM NEEDS YOU MOST!"?

SIPPING SAINTS

By David Wilkerson

AN OUTCRY AGAINST THE ALARMING SPREAD OF DRINKING AMONG CHRISTIANS—

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1).

This nation is fast becoming a sodden society of too many intoxicated citizens. Alcohol is now the modern golden calf, and millions of people, young and old, male and female, have been seduced by it.

The teetotaller, the prohibitionists, and all the others who have for years fought against this flood of booze have been laughed out of existence. We laugh to scorn those old-fashioned little ladies who went around smashing barrels of whiskey and shutting down bars

and honky-tonks, and taking pledges of abstinence. We liberated moderns have made it fashionable to drink. It is now considered sophisticated, urbane, cool—to drink socially. Try saying “No” to the airline stewardess who keeps pushing drinks at you from the time you get on the airplane till you deplane. “What do you mean, no drinks?” She looks at you as some kind of kook for refusing free drinks. People are offended nowadays when you refuse their offer of a complimentary drink. They try to make you feel unneighborly for not joining them, or that you are putting on a “holier than thou” attitude. Even President Carter couldn’t keep drinks out of the White House.

“Be not among winebibbers . . .” (Proverbs 23:20).

To me, the real tragedy is that so many who call themselves “Christian” are now drinking. I call them “sipping saints”—because that is how it all begins, one sip at a time. A recent poll revealed that 81% of all Catholics now drink and that 64% of all Protestants. These shocking figures keep mounting higher each month. The permissive attitude toward social drinking is fast creeping even into the most conservative, evangelical church circles.

A fine Christian lady wrote to me saying: “We are good church-going Christians. We love the Lord, and we see nothing at all wrong with serving wine in our home. We drink moderately, and our children are learning to drink under our supervision. They do not overindulge. We have never seen anyone drunk in our home. You are simply trying to make us feel guilty and are pushing your fundamentalist morals on us. We were not raised under the legalistic taboos like you evidently were. Frankly, sir, our drinking habits are none of your concern.”

God bless that dear lady—but one of these days it will be my business. It starts becoming my business when those teenagers go out with their friends and get stoned. Just today, one of my students, a converted alcoholic, told me how she became a drunkard. Her parents taught her how to drink moderately. At parties, birthdays, and when company came, everybody took a social drink. It was served at meals. She admired and loved her parents. They despised drunkenness, yet they had a bar in the house. This young lady started going to teenage parties and began to drink socially with her crowd. That led to drinking in clubs. Soon she was getting stoned in parked vans. Finally, when problems began to pile up, she began to lean on wine heavily. She ended up in a mental institution, a hard-core alcoholic. That same story is repeated to me over and over again from coast to coast. How many, many times I’ve heard it, “My parents were considered good Christians. They went to church. But we always served wine or beer at our house. My big brother drank moderately and he was my hero. I drank to be like my parents and big brother, but I couldn’t handle it. But they made me think drinking was the thing all good people do.”

Am I prejudiced? Narrow-minded on the subject? You bet I am! And I have reason to be. My own brother, a minister's son, started drinking beer moderately—just to be sociable with friends. He wound up a heavy drinker, leaving his wife and lovely children to pursue his habit. Thank God he is saved today and back with his family. But I sent my brother Jerry with a team of converts to Europe to testify about what Christ did in delivering him from the power of alcohol. The Christians in Europe gladly rejoiced in the testimonies of deliverance from dope and prostitution—but they didn't want to hear a word about Jerry's deliverance from alcohol. Why? Because European Christians guzzle wine and beer like water. It broke his heart. I have heard all the excuses for drinking among Christians in Europe—and I can't accept any of them. They blame it on impure water. They talk about it being rooted in their culture and customs. They drink "because they have always done it." How deeply offended some of the pastors were in Paris, France, when I refused to drink their wine. American missionaries, who themselves easily adopted the European customs, told me I should "do as the Parisians do, while in Paris!" Yet, how deeply offended I was when some of these ministers were so stoned they couldn't stay awake during my crusade. There is an alarming rate of alcoholism and heavy drinking in Christian circles in Europe. They do get drunk! They are not all moderate! None of their excuses make it right. And what phoniness for American Christians to drink "only in Europe." They won't touch a drop here in the states, but they think it's "cute" to join the brethren over there in sipping a few.

I am deeply offended by drinking Christians because of the terrible example it sets for young people! This nation is now facing a plague of drinking among teenagers. The two most popular words in school today are "cruising and boozing." Drunkenness is spreading in our schools like wildfire out of control. Kids tell me that as many as 80% of their class not only drink, but get stone drunk. We face the possibility of having over *one million* young alcoholics next year. I've been helping drug addicts for 20 years. But this drinking rage now sweeping our nation frightens me. They drink now because they think alcohol won't "waste" them like drugs! Booze is now the preferred "liquid pot." Everywhere you see teenagers getting stoned. They tell you—"No cops, no parents, no politicians can hassle us now—because they are all doing it, too. We finally found a kick that won't put us behind bars!"

I refuse to give in to the mounting pressures of worldiness—in the disguise of spiritual freedom! What has happened to us, saints of God—when we can sit idly by and not rebuke the fast eroding morals in the house of God? I believe in free grace, but not licentiousness. I believe in the imputed righteousness of Christ, by faith. But I also believe the holiness of God demands that we "touch not that which is unclean." I also believe that smoking ministers are not being honest with God. These "puffing prophets" refuse to practice

what they preach. And drinking ministers are a reproach to the name and power of God. It is not an effort to condemn true ministers of the gospel. But how can we as ministers and parents ask our kids to quit using drugs and alcohol, if we will not clean up our own lives—and set a Christ-like example?

At times, just for a fleeting moment, I think to myself, “Maybe I’m the one who is wrong. Maybe these new Christians who rock, roll, smoke, drink, and who go back to their old haunts to sing, entertain, and perform—maybe they have seen something in God I haven’t yet seen. Maybe all these fast changes aren’t compromise, but a sign of maturity and growth. Maybe I am too old-fashioned—too out of it to recognize some new thing God is doing.” But then I begin to compare the rollicking, boisterous sounds of their music with the old songs like “The Old Rugged Cross,” and “Holy, Holy, Holy.” Then I want to cry! I look at them going back into those smoke-filled clubs to entertain the drinking crowd on the pretense of taking Jesus with them, and then I compare them with all the millions of God’s people over the centuries from the martyrs on down to the converted addicts and gangs of today, who forsook the world and all its associations to take on the reproach of Christ. I begin to weep for those compromised Christians. I know I am not wrong.

Please don’t get mad at me! If you are one of the sipping saints—don’t allow your hurt or anger to rob you of the truth. If you find yourself resenting this message of separation—it is probably because God has already convicted you—and He is now wanting you to enjoy complete freedom.

Pray also that God will lay it on the hearts of ministers all over the nation—to take a bold stand in their pulpits against these insidious trends.

Pray for our teenagers! The pressures on them to drink with the crowd are getting worse daily. They need to be encouraged to stand up and resist, lest they be drawn into this whirlpool of drunkenness.

Even if you don’t “feel convicted”—abstain for the simple but powerful reason of setting an example for the youth!

“Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things” (Proverbs 23:29-33).

"WINE IN THE BIBLE"

For a long time there has been debate over the kind of wine mentioned in the New Testament. Our Lord made over 100 gallons of wine at the wedding feast in Cana (John 2: 1-11, RSV)! (Such feasts often lasted several days.) And Paul advised Timothy, ". . . use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments" (1 Tim. 5:23). Was the wine in those instances the same as modern, intoxicating wine?

Recent research, as reported in *Christianity Today*, shows that the answer is Yes and No. The wine was not simply unfermented grapejuice. It could cause drunkenness—remember the accusation made on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:13-15—but only if drunk in vast amounts.

Yet it was not nearly so strong as modern wine. The Old Testament distinguishes between "wine" and "strong drink" (for example, in Lev. 10:8,9; Num. 6:3). The "strong drink" was similar to modern wine, while Biblical "wine" was like today's wine diluted *with high proportions of water*. For example, the Talmud (writings by Jewish scribes) says that the "wine" drunk at the Passover, and thus also used in the original "Lord's Supper," was one part wine mixed with three parts water.

"There's a striking difference between the drinking of alcoholic beverages today and the drinking of wine in New Testament times. If the drinking of unmixed wine mixed in the ratio of one to one with water (that is, half wine and half water) was frowned upon in ancient times, certainly the drinking of today's distilled spirits in which the alcoholic content is frequently 3-10 times greater would be frowned upon a great deal more."

(Quoted from *Christianity Today* —Date now unknown)

NEWS AND NOTES

"They rehearsed all that God had done with them . . ."

Westside Church of Christ, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.:

We have had six baptisms in the last two and a half weeks. One was an American who worked four years in Greece (two and a half of them in Thessalonika) and several more years in Italy, Turkey, Russia, Thailand, and others. Two brothers, a sister, and a cousin, all from Jamaica working in Ft. Lauderdale, show that a sudden, new, but real hunger for God's word is contagious. It is inspiring to see the Holy Spirit work, transcending culture, different lifestyles and deep-seated behavior patterns.

The last man to be baptized is a bank teller.

We have also had a sister transfer from Phoenix, Arizona and a family from New Orleans in the last three weeks.

—Billy Ray Lewter

Louisville, Kentucky:

The Kentucky Association of Christian Schools vs. Kentucky State Board of Education was held in Frankfort, Kentucky the week of June 11. It is now concluded until August 16, when the final arguments will be made, followed in a couple of weeks by the decision. Continue to pray for the Lord's blessing on the outcome.

Jesus! Engrave It On My Heart

Jesus! engrave it on my heart
That Thou the One thing needful art:
I could from all things parted be,
But never, never, Lord, from Thee!

Needful is Thy most precious blood,
To reconcile my soul to God;
Needful is Thy indulgent care;
Needful Thy all-prevailing prayer.

Needful Thy presence, dearest Lord!
True peace and comfort to afford;
Needful Thy promise, to impart
Fresh life and vigor to my heart.

Needful art Thou, my Guide! my Stay!
Thro' all life's dark and weary way;
Nor less in death Thou'lt needful be,
To bring my spirit home to Thee.

Then needful still my God! my King!
Thy Name eternally I'll sing:
Glory and praise be ever His,
The One Thing needful, Jesus is!

Samuel Medley 1738-1799