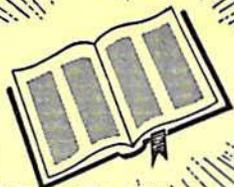
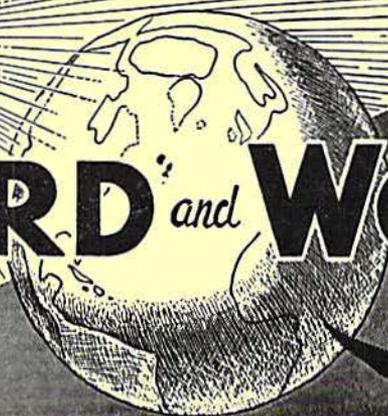


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GOOD BOOKS MAKE GOOD CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Here are some books we highly recommend you give to your Christian friends. Your preacher, elders, and Sunday School teachers would appreciate them—and learn a lot.

A NEW SPIRIT, by Carl Ketcherside; 41 pages, paperback, \$3.50

Excerpts from this stimulating author's writing over the years, compiled by Lloyd Boyll. The book explores 16 subjects such as interpretation, sectarianism, creeds, differences, Christians among the sects, conformity, brotherhood, etc.

DISCOVERING OUR ROOTS: THE ANCESTRY OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST, by Leonard Allen & Richard Hughes; 160 pages, paperback, \$12.25.

This fascinating book explores the origins of the Stone-Campbell movement. It asks, "Where did we come from? How did we get this way? Why do we read the Bible as we do? What has been the heart of our movement?" And it asks further, "What can we learn from those who have viewed restoration of N-T Christianity in ways quite different from our own?"

THE PILGRIM CHURCH, by E. H. Broadbent; paperback, \$7.95.

This church history book tells little of popes fighting emperors, or of institutionalized Christianity. But its 420 pages tell stirringly of "those groups of believers in every generation which have faithfully maintained the teaching given by the Apostles to the first Christians. Often separated from the ecclesiastical establishment, their story makes clear the distinction between institutional Christianity and the lively, irrepressible faith of believers who have attempted to follow only New Testament teachings." This book is a gold mine for the serious reader. It contains chapters about the Waldenses, Lollards, Hussites, the Reformation, the Anabaptists, Pietists, Christian Brethren (Darby, Mueller), Restoration Movement (Stone & the Campbells) and other leaders and movements.

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THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE:

Not STALE, but STIRRED

Alex V. Wilson

Another year draws toward its close. This combined issue for two months will be our last one for 1990. (A different, "special" issue will come out in January, Lord willing.)

We have sought to present a balanced diet for our readers, month by month. Our themes for three issues concentrated on the Bible: can we still really believe this book is the divinely-inspired, fully authoritative Word of God? If so, how can we grasp what it teaches and refute the many ideas and cults that contradict it? And how can we teach it in better, clearer, more forceful ways? (July, April, and March, respectively)

But the Bible is for living, not just knowing. Two months' themes dealt with holy character—how to be overcomers against evil and unbelief. In May we thought about ugly matters like pornography, pre-marital sex, abortion, AIDS, and child abuse. In February our theme was overcoming depression and despair. (That issue was probably the most valuable one for me personally. Which one helped you the most?)

Since the Christian is called to be a team player, not a Lone Ranger, building stronger congregations is a vital matter. So we focused on church leadership, primarily elders and deacons, in January. The August issue laid stress on church aims and purposes: to "Cultivate the Knowledge of God, Celebrate the Greatness of God, Communicate the Gospel of God, and Care for the People of God" (in other words, teaching, worship, evangelism, and fellowship/edification). The following month elaborated on the importance of fellowship and burden-bearing, especially by means of regular cell-group meetings.

And since half of our ancestors are women, and over half of our church members are female, in June we concentrated on the ladies among us. How essential they are! Another important ingredient for strong churches is loving unity and cooperation. But if we feel that unity demands conformity, we have misunderstood it. God's Word teaches that we can have both liberty of mind and conscience on the one hand, and cooperation on the other, as the October issue brought out.

This review of 1990's themes has been given for several reasons. First, just to refresh our memory about these urgent matters. Second, to serve as an informal "index," in case you wish to look up some theme but can't remember what month it was in. Third, to ask you to pray that God will guide us as we seek to minister to His people month by month through this magazine—choosing themes, selecting articles, and writing.

This issue's theme is "the greatest thing in the world"—God's unbelievable love and our response to Him. In the light of His inex-

pressible mercy, may our hearts not be *stale*, but *stirred*—to loving living and sacrificial service.

Two other articles this month continue the train of thought presented by Randall Terry's article in August ("The War has Begun") and A.W. Tozer's in October ("Crumbling World, Sure Foundation"). The world is passing through grim, chaotic times—morally, politically, economically, spiritually—and we need insight from God's Word and strength from His Spirit as we face these pressures. Read what Dave Reagan and John Stott have to say about this. Shalom, dear friends.

THEME:

INCREDIBLE LOVE

Two Sons, ONE Father

Elmer Prout

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fatted calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate." —Luke:15:22-24

It's still exciting, isn't it? We have heard the story of the return of the prodigal son hundreds of times. But its appeal does not fade—in fact, the impact grows with each hearing.

Our hearts are caught in the tensions of the story. The young man demanding his part of the inheritance. A wild goose ready to try his wings in a flight to his own 'far country.' The father torn between a desire to protect his son from his own folly and the necessary cutting of the ties of control. The risk of putting the inheritance into possibly impetuous hands. The agony of standing by the open door and watching the boy walk out and away. . . And, then, the waiting, the listening, the yearning eyes turned toward the distant horizon . . . But that and all that went between was washed clean in the joy of return and welcome. The father running, the son's hurried attempt at confession, the father's celebration command . . .

Yes!! It is exciting, exciting as only the story of redemption in terms of gospel welcome can be. We read, think, remember, and rush over to join the celebration. We understand that the gospel is a message of forgiveness and restoration for the wanderers! We do not hesitate, our arms and hearts are wide open to receive and encourage the wild goose who, fallen to earth and with wings drooping, has turned homeward. We want no question to remain—our church receives the prodigal as we have been received by the Christ!

Where is the Father?

As we congratulate ourselves on the size of our hearts and join in the celebration, we look for the Father—we want to be sure that He

notices that we are as forgiving as He . . . We look and look again—He is not in the room. Where could he possibly be? Didn't He himself call for the feast, take the first steps in the dance? What kind of Host is He not to be in the middle of the festivities?

We notice that the side door is ajar. Could He have gone outside? What possible reason would He have had? The older son? Well, yes, there is another boy but he's nothing more than a stiff, self-righteous toad . . . who cares about him? Let the celebration continue.

Who cares about the older son? In the answer to that question lies the breadth of the gospel. Who cares? *The Father cares.* The Father who ran to greet the prodigal now walks to plead with the stay-at-home. Two sons, *One Father* with a heart big enough and a love strong enough to want to bind both sons to himself and thus to one another.

The first part of the story describes the risk which the Father took when He put the inheritance into the hands of the younger son. The conclusion of the parable presents us with the risk which the Father took when He welcomed the prodigal back home. This is the risk of losing the older son. As we listen to the Father's pleading, we begin to see that if there was the far outer distance there is also the 'far inner distance.' *The Father yearns to cross both the inner and the outer.*

Where Are We?

We look at ourselves again. We find the excitement of taking part in the welcome of the wild goose appealing. "This is what the gospel is all about!" We make that declaration, nod our heads and think we have come all the way to the Father.

But at that very moment we feel a hand on our arm. We turn. There is the Father. "Come with me. I've another son who needs my welcome, too. Join me." "What! Receive that Toad! He's so stiff in his self-righteousness that he will ruin the whole celebration. He hardly knows how to smile, much less dance for joy . . ."

We make our retort. But as we look into the Father's eyes we realize that He has heard it all before—these excuses for our narrow hearts . . . Slowly the size of the gospel begins to dawn on our consciousness: two sons, *one Father* who will not rest until both of his boys are back together with him. Only one question remains: "Will we join the Father in his pleading as well as in his celebration?"

(For more than 30 years Elmer Prout and his wife, Geneva, have served churches in California and Japan. Elmer presently serves as minister to the North Stockton Church of Christ in Stockton, California. Reprinted from Integrity. You may be put on its mailing list by writing 2919 Lafayette Ave., Lansing, MI 48906. There is no subscription charge but they ask for a donation once yearly.)

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Would You Have Gone to the Party?

Michael L. Lewis

Early each May my youngest celebrates another birthdate. The single digit birthdays always provide great parties with dozens of

children, all about the same age, swarming the house like packs of frisky pups. Each party is another lifelong precious memory for a grateful dad. However, early each May, the birthday of my youngest also makes me think of another.

I first met her soon after she moved from many miles away to stay with some family members. In those early days it was only known that she had lived some tough times and travelled some hard roads in sowing her "wild oats." She had come to live with relatives who she hoped could help encourage her toward godliness. She told many she was determined to face the mistakes of the past and live a different life. Her honesty and courage were impressive . . . but the display of greater courage was still to come.

In a few months some of her past mistakes became more apparent. She was pregnant. But she was present for every church activity, and she attended Bible studies in community homes and on the nearby college campus. She was right in the middle of college student devotionals and weekend retreats; and she always had a warm smile and an interested disciple's heart.

A hundred times it happened: She would meet new people, and they would react with joy to meeting her and the coming of her baby. Invariably the conversation evolved to a statement like, "I suppose your husband is excited about the baby?"

Each time with a soft smile she would explain, "I am not married . . . I made several mistakes that I am trying to work through." Then she would be embarrassed for her questioner and try to comfort them. A hundred times . . . and I suppose many more I never saw . . . she faced the awkward moments with dignity and love. It was real courage.

On the morning of my youngest son's birth, this young woman, who had already squeezed a lifetime of pain into her first twenty years, was in the next birthing room—no husband to hold her hand. Her child was born a few minutes after mine. My wife and she went home the same day; my wife with her new son and she alone. Oh, her baby was fine, but she had made the decision eight months before to give the baby up to a Christian adoption agency. Her pregnancy was the result of mistakes, but she refused to make another by intentionally aborting the life of the child. No matter how embarrassing, no matter how physically and mentally painful, she wanted to give the child life and a godly future with Christian parents.

The wages of sin are indeed death, but honest repentance can also be expensive. Part of the expense is the consequence of sin and part is the lack of compassion in people, even Christian people.

She could have slipped away on a weekend for an abortion and few would have known. If she had been a student at most Christian colleges, she would have been expelled for becoming pregnant. However, if she had terminated the pregnancy in secret and the school never learned the secret, she could have continued on to graduation. I watched many squirm and shake their heads as they watched her pregnancy progress. Some could only think of her sin. Why could they not also admire her repentance and godly desire to protect the life of that child? Many of us still have much to learn about forgiveness.

So, every May 6, I remember two birthdays . . . and thank God for them both.

Questions: What if the prodigal son had been a prodigal daughter and returned to her father pregnant? Do you think there would still have been a party? Would you have gone to the party? Will you go next time?

—Reprinted from *IMAGE* by permission

* * * * *

The Day I Was Arrested

Jack Exum

When I was a little boy 2 years of age, my mother died. When I was 4 years of age my father died. I was living here and there and was a sinner. I was to be 14 years of age the 10th of the coming March. It was Christmas week, and I was caught in Sin and put under arrest and dragged to court.

I did not cry. I had cried all the tears out of my head. I tried to look at the judge. I wished that I could faint. I was guilty. I did not have a friend. I was miserable and they packed the courthouse. They looked at me—then at the judge. Their faces said, "Judge, give him the full penalty of the law and save us all trouble later on." I felt as though the whole universe was down on me.

By and by a clerk stood up and said, "This court is open." The Judge said, "Has this boy anyone to represent him?" I did not know the meaning of this. I thought that fellow was the one who was going to take me out and hang me. They said, "No." I was hopeful. The Judge said to a lawyer, "I appoint you to take this boy's case." He walked through the crowd, pushed the policeman aside and took me into a room. I sank into a corner. I thought he was going to drag me to execution. But I saw tears under his eyelashes. He sat down and slipped his arm around me. It was the tenderest touch I ever felt and it drew me to him.

"My little friend, are you guilty?" he asked.

I could not have lied to him to save the world. He gave me a little squeeze. I said, "Yes, Sir, I am guilty of this and lots more they don't even know about." I was in for a clean breast. When I looked at him, I could not lie. I had found a friend. I feel his hand yet. Oh! It was such a wonderful touch to an orphan child.

He said, "Don't you think you had better confess guilty and throw you on the mercy of the court?"

I did not know what that meant, but I thought if he would throw me, it was best. I said, "Please, sir, throw me on the mercy of the court."

He put his hand on my head, and I put out my dirty claw-like fingers and grabbed his coat, and the feeling came to me, If I hang on to his coat, he will pull me through.

He came to the Judge and said, "If it please your honor, It has been my privilege to practice before this bar for many years. I have

noticed that when the ends of justice can be secured, and society can be protected, it is your Honor's custom to show mercy. I stand with this trembling orphan child, without father or mother, home or friend, to beg your honor's mercy. His heart is broken, he confesses with readiness his sin. He pleads for forgiveness."

I grabbed some more coat. I thought that was a great speech, yet it was just the introduction. He spoke until chills ran up and down my spine. He spoke until silence fell everywhere. The most beautiful language ever heard filled every corner of the courtroom. Old men wept and even my policeman was brushing tears from his cheeks. He spoke until he said, "If you will show compassion on this orphan child, I want to adopt him as my very own. I pledge your honor, to not only tend to his physical needs, but look after his education, and to eventually deliver to society a useful citizen." He spoke until my heart burst within me for love and admiration for my friend. If I could but put my ragged coat sleeves around his neck and kiss his cheek one time, they could take me out and hang me and I would have died happy.

Then the greatest shock of all came as a bolt out of the blue. He spoke again to the judge and said, "*My father.*" I couldn't believe it. The judge had appointed his own son to plead for me. Like as not he would have mercy.

"My father," he continued, "the intentness of my love for my little client comes out of the fact that he is my brother." I wasn't much on mathematics, but I could see at once that if the judge on the bench was the father of my attorney, and the attorney was my brother, then the judge was *my father too*. I gave a *shout*. I made a leap. Then the judge stood up and said, "Rejoice, for the lost is found, and the dead alive."

. . . .

I have never read anything, outside of the word of God, that so moved me as did this simple story. I was in the waiting room of Dr. Layman's office in Sherman, Texas, and having time to pass, reached for a few religious tracts on display. Tears fell from my eyes as the story unfolded, and a true and deeper meaning of Christ and His greatness, came into my heart. I asked myself certain questions. "Why don't you preach more of the grace of God?" "Why don't you make people feel His hand upon them, and His eyes brimming with tears when He looks upon their fallen state?" Sin leaves one an orphan, without a spiritual father. It separates us from God and sends us into a far country. It's the old, old story from "riches to rags" as Satan robs us of everything we hold dear, then sends us to the hog pen to feed his swine. Yet while in this unbearable bondage, we are brought by His grace to the court of His law. "By the law comes the knowledge of sin," and as we look deeply in the mirror of God's righteousness, we see our soul, ugly, defiled, sinful and unclean.

Then for the first time we can truly read and know the meaning of the simple words, "For by grace are ye saved." That we, worse than nothing, less than nothing, and good for nothing, without God and without hope in the world can plead no other words. The prob-

lem all along is that we have tried desperately to change our life, when Christ wants us to *exchange* the old man of sin for the new man of righteousness. It is for this humble, broken, contrite spirit that God appoints a mediator. He stands between, knowing the weakness of man, and the greatness of God. The paradox of Rom. 7:24, and Rom. 8:1 can now be clearly seen, and we, together with Paul can cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death . . . for there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus . . ."

We do not have an attendance problem in the churches of Christ; we have a humility problem. From the lack of Bible reading, spiritual praying, to the breakdown of the "all-mighty" budget, it basically stems from our failure to comprehend the meaning of six simple words: "For by grace are ye saved." Heartfirst—not headfirst.

—In *Firm Foundation*

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MEDITATIONS ON GOD'S INCREDIBLE LOVE

Do you know the story of Major John Foote? He was a chaplain with Canadian forces during the Second World War. On August 18, 1942, Major Foote went ashore with his troops in the great commando raid on Dieppe. The losses were staggering. Due to many causes, a large number of Canadians were unable to be evacuated from the town and had to be left behind. Foote had personally carried and pushed into boats thirty blinded or wounded Canadian soldiers. Finally the order was given to withdraw. He was safely on board a small boat which would have taken him to a larger craft and ultimately back to England. Suddenly it hit him that there were two thousand wounded Canadians still on the streets and docks of Dieppe. He knew they would be captured, perhaps tortured and shot, perhaps left in prison camps for what would be a long war. He knew that they would need all the encouragement and comfort to face the future that anyone could give—and that he was the only chaplain at Dieppe. Without hesitating, John Foote jumped over the side of his boat and waded ashore. He deliberately went back to be with men without hope, and spent three long, miserable years in Nazi prison camps.

We rightly applaud such exceptional courage and compassion. However, he was only following the greater example of his Savior. The Lord's love for His people was so great that He too waded ashore to share our deprivations, sufferings and misery—to provide us hope. What a Savior!

* * * * *

God the Sufferer

"One reason why we are not deeply impressed by the uniqueness of the Bible is that we have never fully comprehended how utterly revolutionary it is. It proclaims a message which is designed to produce total world *revolution—not by causing others to suffer, but by*

being willing to suffer. This, or course, is *the meaning of Calvary*, and we, if we are to be Christ's disciples, must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him—each one to a Calvary.”

—Eugene Nida

• • • • •

A Thought-provoking Definition of GRACE:

“Grace is God's love . . . *at work* . . . on behalf of the unlovely . . . *making them lovely.*”

—E. L. Jorgenson

A Testimony: “WOW!”

Letter to an editor: “For many years I tried to prove to God that I was worthy of His love by doing all the right things, and it left me empty and doubtful that I was really a Christian. Thank God, I at last got free of legalism and found my way to Christ. . . I've never been so *excited* about the Christian life. It's *wonderful* to be free in Christ!”

• • • • •

The Hardest Things to Believe

“It was R.H. Boll who first taught me that the Gospel means grace, and when it becomes law it is no longer Gospel, no matter how ‘conservative’ or ‘Biblical’ its dress. . . There is a temptation for all of us to deny, distort, misconstrue and misinterpret the eternal, fathomless, incomprehensible love of God. As Brother Boll used to say, ‘The hardest thing to believe about the Gospel is not the Virgin Birth, the resurrection or the miracles of Jesus, but the fact that it is simply *too good to be true.*’”

—J. Robert Ross

• • • • •

A Testimony: “EXHILARATION!”

From a private letter: “I wish there were some way to share with legalistic Christians the tremendous joy and lifted burden that comes when one truly *lays down his own work and accepts the gift of God.* It's just hard to believe the exhilaration and sense of self-worth that come when one can really understand that Christ loved me so much that He died to earn for me what I had no capacity to earn for myself. I know beyond doubt that I am saved—right now—as secure as can be; that is the peace that passes understanding.”

• • • • •

God's Grace, Not Our Goodness: PREACH IT!

Personal experience of a preacher: Rubel Shelly's dad had always enjoyed robust health, till suddenly cancer was found. They just sewed him back up, unable to do anything. He lived only three and a half weeks more. Brother Shelly tells what happened:

One afternoon he said, “Rubel, I can feel I'm getting weaker every day and I know it's not going to be long now. I just hope that when I stand before the Lord I've done enough that He will be able to say, ‘Well done.’”

It was just like somebody hit me in the back with a poker. I shot straight up off my cot and said, “Daddy, though you are the best man I've ever known or ever will know, I'm sure, you *haven't* done enough.

But you are saved *anyway*, by the grace of God."

For the first time in my presence during those weeks, Daddy cried. He lay there, tears starting down both temples, and he said, "Son, I don't know why I said that. I know I'm not going to be saved because I've done enough. I know that my salvation is a free gift to me through Jesus Christ. I don't know why I said that."

Now I'm crying. I said, "Daddy, I'm not mad at you. I'm mad at me and preachers like me who somehow have messed up the preaching of the Gospel so that we've left people like you—believers, who have given their lives to the Lord—we've left them on their death beds to doubt and fear rather than to rejoice."

I don't want anyone else who has been redeemed by the death of Jesus Christ to get to where my Daddy was on his death bed in his mid-70's, wondering whether he'd done enough. NO, he DIDN'T do enough, because Jesus Christ had done it all and had given it to him as a free gift. We must preach it properly, Biblically, powerfully, so that people understand it, so that in their moments of crisis instead of doubting they will be able to live with joyous certainty—born of faith in Christ, not in our good works.

—From a sermon preached at Gallatin, Tenn.

More Blessed to GIVE than to RECEIVE

by Kenneth R. Gipson, via Gallatin Lamplighter

A friend of mine named Paul received a new automobile from his brother as a Christmas present. On Christmas Eve, when Paul came out of his office, a street urchin was walking around the shiny new car admiring it.

"Is this your car, mister?" he asked.

Paul nodded. "My brother gave it to me for Christmas."

The boy was astounded. "You mean your brother gave it to you and it didn't cost you nothing? Boy I wish . . ."

He hesitated, and Paul knew what he was going to wish. He was going to wish he had a brother like that. But what the lad said jarred Paul all the way down to his heels.

"I wish," the boy went on, "that I could be a brother like that."

Paul looked at the boy in astonishment, and on a whim said: "Would you like to go for a ride?"

"Oh yes, I'd love it," the boy said.

As they were riding the boy asked, "Would you mind driving in front of my house?"

Thinking the boy wanted to show his friends that he could ride in a new automobile, Paul agreed.

"Will you stop by those steps?" The boy jumped out crying, "I'll be right back," and ran up the steps. Upon his return he was leading his young crippled brother.

"There it is, Buddy, just like I told you upstairs. His brother gave it to him for Christmas, and it didn't cost him a cent. Someday I'm gonna give you one just like it."

That Christmas Eve Paul learned what Jesus meant when he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Hosea, The Heart and Holiness of God:

"Israel Becomes Canaan"

Ernest E. Lyon

Hosea 12:2 - 13:1; read this passage first

In this passage please note that Hosea speaks twice (2-6; 12-1) and God speaks in between (7-11).

Hosea's speech starts with a truth that we should generalize for ourselves. While speaking of punishing Judah and Jacob he says it will be "according to his ways" and "according to his deeds." Many Christians feel that this does not apply to us, because, they say, we are under grace, not under Law. That is a true statement, but the grace of God does not free one from being under His government. "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap" is a perfectly correct statement for today and that is reiterated by Paul in Galatians 6:7. To be sure, God does not decide our final destiny by what we do but by what we believe, what we trust in. But our faith will change our behavior and He is still the holy God who hates sin and knows it will harm us; so "He chastises every son whom he receives." That statement from Proverbs 3:12 is repeated in Hebrews 12:6. Let us not forget that the Holy Spirit guided Amos to write, "You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins." That was written to the northern 10 tribes of Israel in the day of Jeroboam II.

Now look at the rest of verse three and its application in 4-5. "As a man he struggled with God." You know the occasion—on Jacob's return to Canaan from Paddan Aram he met an angel of God (actually the Son) and wrestled with him all night. The angel finally showed him how easily he could have been overcome, but Jacob still would not let go. And how did he win? He won by surrendering to God, not by strength but by weakness. That is a profound lesson for us—we can never get the victory in the Lord until we surrender to God. Verse six very well ends this passage—"But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always."

The very first verse of God's speaking (v. 7) is the key verse for the whole passage, but, unfortunately, it is badly translated by most versions. In the Hebrew it starts with just one word, "Canaan!" Thus God accuses Israel of falling far short of His plan. He had sent them into Canaan to make the land Israel, the prince of God. Instead Ephraim had let the people of the land change them, so that they became "Canaan." The best translation that I have seen is in the New King James. It reads, "A cunning Canaanite!" All the versions are making their interpretation of the word Canaan into the text instead of letting God speak for Himself.

Have you noticed that the word Canaan always has the idea of depravity, pollution in the Bible? Literally, I understand, the word means "subjugated, humiliated" but it came to have that meaning of depravity or pollution attached to it. It is not difficult to see why this

is. Look, for example, at Leviticus 18:24-28 for God's feeling about Canaan. After warning against a number of very bad sexual sins, the Lord said through Moses, "Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things, for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you."

In the light of such statements, I find it hard to understand why some of our hymn writers considered Canaan a symbol of heaven. It would be a peculiar heaven, wouldn't it—with enemies that had to be overcome in battle. But those hymns are being sung even today.

You see, Israel was sent into the land to wipe out the terrible moral infection and to be clean themselves. They were "to cleanse a plague spot, which was blasting the whole world by its influence" (G. Campbell Morgan). God is love and He prefers that men turn to Him because of His love, but when they won't, He must use the surgeon's knife and eliminate the infection that endangers the world.

Canaan (Palestine today, or Israel) is in the most strategic position on the globe, connecting three great continents. But in Moses' day had become a corrupting influence. God sent Israel into the land to make Canaan "Israel" (prince of God), but the time had arrived when God looked at Israel and said, "Canaan!" They had forgotten that God had chosen them not to exclude others but to win others. Instead they were becoming the lost like the others. God's choices, God's election are always that others may be included; those selected are not to the exclusion of others and only for the benefit of the few but also for the benefit of others in need. Since Israel had not followed that path, God had Hosea speak of Jacob's desire to be first from the beginning, then of when Jacob became Israel through surrendering to God. God then interrupts Hosea's speech as Hosea spoke of what Israel must do. He did it with one word, "Canaan." That is the most severe indictment He could bring.

We need, then, to remind ourselves that when we become God's elect, we must be true to the purpose for which He called us and we must be true to the standards of God. Let us remind ourselves that John 3:16 indicates God's great purpose—to save those out of the world who would believe on His Son. And let us devote ourselves with greater fervor to that end in the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is, of course, always a conflict between God's chosen ones and the world. And the people of God will change the world for the better or the world will change the church to be like them. I am very much afraid that today, as it was in Hosea's day with Israel, the Church has been many times more infected by the world than they have brought the world toward God. I know we are not given the burden of converting the world, but we are given the work of evangelizing the world, taking to them the great gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To do that we must not take the ways of the world, not to love those ways and adopt them. That happened in Israel and that has happened too many times in the Church. How about your congregation? or how about you and me? Are we so much like the world that others can not tell us apart? Are we at conflict with the world or at peace?

We need, probably, to re-read 2 Corinthians 5:16-20, where Paul tells us that God has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that of telling that God "was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ." And also to read 6:14-18 in the same book, showing again that there can be no peace with the world and its ways but that we are to be separate from that. In reading that passage notice the five times Paul asks a question beginning with "what." Why didn't he answer his own questions?—because they answer themselves. There can be none of these things. If they occur, then Israel has become Canaan, or to use Paul's idea here, the Church has become the world. But we should work for the reverse of that. Let us see that we become the salt and the light of the world as the Lord has made us; let us not be made the opposite and our light put out. Let us remember why we are where we are. And let us be sure that God will never have to look at us and say, "The world!"

VOICES from the FIELDS

Karen Ashley

Honiara, Solomon Islands

October 1990

The translation work has been going pretty well. David has finished the first draft of Matthew, and James has been working on checking it with him. They have been able to make good progress, and have checked the first 21 chapters. Timo is likewise finished with the first draft of Mark, and it has been 3/4 checked as well. James hopes to finish checking both Matthew and Mark soon after we return to the village. After that, the next step is to give it to a team of reviewers—pastors and priests—for their comments, corrections, and remarks about dialectical variation. We have not yet selected and trained these reviewers, so please pray that God would send us people who will give good, insightful criticism (or praise) and who have the time and level of commitment to help us.

This issue is especially troubling to us when we consider the attendance at our last Sa'a translation committee meeting. Only 3 out of 12 members showed up. That was despite the fact that we had scheduled the meeting well in advance, announcements had been made over the national radio station to remind the members, and canoes were sent out to look them up and transport them to Sa'a. All those who didn't attend had some excuse, but we wonder if there isn't a basic problem of lack of interest. Translation takes a long time; we've been here four years and haven't gotten anything into print yet. It takes a real hunger for God's Word to sustain interest for such a long term project, and people are just too busy with their own lives. The committee approach is supposed to give the local people a voice in the

running of the project and get them involved as supporters, reviewers, and users of the translation. For some reason this doesn't seem to be working in our situation. At this point we don't know whether to keep working with the present committee setup or to modify it in some way so that we will involve the wider Sa'a community. Please pray with us about this.

We think that perhaps some public relations work will improve the situation, so starting in late November we'll take a couple of weeks to go from village to village all around the island. Each evening we'll hold a meeting to explain how we work, what we hope to accomplish, and how they can be involved. We'll give examples of good and bad ways to translate, perhaps do some skits, and try to answer their questions. We anticipate that this will be a very stressful time for the family—sleeping in a different place every night, canoe trips every day, eating only local foods, no bathrooms, etc. It's necessary, but I am *not* looking forward to it, so please put yourself in my place and pray accordingly.

Joy Garrett

Ruwa, Zimbabwe

November 1, 1990

How good it was to have Granny Garrett, Dr. Jim, daughter JoAnn, and grandson Jordan Broaddus to visit us. They were not only a blessing to us, but also to our churches.

The congregations decided to all meet together at Arcadia the weekend they were here. Jim spoke to the regular monthly combined Saturday afternoon Bible Study. We had our auditorium full of adults and a big group of children outside learning from Bro. James Mushonga.

The next day we had our "big" Sunday. Bob had installed the Rockwood Park loudspeaker system for those outside the auditorium. Jim taught on Galatians. Roughly 400 partook of the Lord's Supper. Also many children were listening to Jim's sermon just outside the side door. Here in Zimbabwe there are usually more children than adults.

After lunch Jim spoke on Depression. There was much appreciation for that lesson. Several special singing groups added to our meetings.

After a visit to Victoria Falls and Hwange Game Park, we went down to Venda in South Africa where several brethren from Arcada in Zimbabwe have established a church. They have applied to the government for a site, but at present meet in a Christian School classroom. Jim again gave his lesson on Depression. Folks again expressed gratitude for the lesson. Jim was able to counsel several people while he was here.

Some of the Harare women came to Rockwood Park on 3 Thursday afternoons to hear Granny Garrett and JoAnn speak. There were usually 58 women present. How good to go on a holiday and be used of the Lord to bless others.

Gwern church foundation has been completed. We are waiting for the contractors to erect the steel framework and the roof.

A recommendation to sell a church site to Kuwadzana congregation has gone to the city council. Kuwadzana is a new high density suburb just outside the city of Harare.

Zengeza church goes every week to inquire about a church site in this area south of Harare, but nothing has come from its efforts yet. It is very difficult to meet in a small private home. Pray about these difficulties.

Rockwood Park's multi-purpose building walls are above the doors. The concrete ceiling for the cold room and pantry are finished. At the same time we are constructing benches. Our last "big" Sunday showed how much we need an auditorium that will seat everybody.

Motoyuki Nomura

Japan

October 24, 1990

I go to Tokyo on Thursdays and Fridays to teach at the American Christian College, a small school a vocational missionary and myself started last year with one student. This year we have 15 students. I teach Old Testament and New Testament surveys, church history, Restoration Movement history, and comparative religions.

This is not a seminary but exists to give young people here knowledge of basic English so they can go to Milligan College. (We approached 3 Christian colleges about starting this as an extension school for them in Japan; Milligan is the one responding.) We give the students plenty of Bible related subjects, as if we were operating a Bible college or a seminary. If we had 20 or more students it would pay us, but so far we are in the red. I enjoy this chance to teach young people the Word of God. Most of them are not Christians. A couple of them are getting very interested in the Bible now.

I wonder if any readers of *Word and Work* can send me up to 30 copies of used hymnals for this school.

I get up at 5:30 a.m., take the 7:20 express train to Tokyo, teach and then take a 6:30 p.m. train back to our home in the mountains. Next day, Friday, the same schedule. This makes me physically tired. But I thank God for this rare opportunity in Christian service. I have to do a lot of research and preparation to teach these classes, of course. It has been a rich experience, though it keeps me exceedingly busy daily.

I am also working on translating Dr. Leonard Allen's book, *Discovering Our Roots*, into Japanese.

The Gulf crisis and U.S. budget problems brought devaluation of the dollar, and big hikes on gasoline, kerosene and other oil related products in Japan. We expect a big hike in electricity bills soon, too. A gallon of gasoline here now costs us about \$4.20, but major oil suppliers have just said the price will increase soon. Everything is so crazy now, though God holds our tomorrow.

I am not sure if Abilene Christian University Lectureship Committee is really serious in inviting me to their conference next February. They said they would give me \$250 for the trip! If I go, I wish to spend a couple of days in Kentucky or any other area where I am invited, either before or after the lectureship.

IS IT TOO LATE FOR AMERICA?

David R. Reagan

In a sermon delivered at Times Square Church in New York City, Pastor Dave Wilkerson electrified his audience with the proclamation that America has passed the point of no return in its rebellion against God and has thus been destined by God for final judgment. He began the sermon with the following words:

America is dying! The country's wound is incurable. It is now in the final throes of a terminal disease. The great empire is crumbling!

The Message Summarized

The crucial points made by Wilkerson in this historic prophetic declaration were as follows:

- 1) America is a sinful nation that is currently experiencing the judgment of God.
- 2) God has raised up many prophetic voices to call America to repentance and to warn that continuing rebellion will lead to doom.
- 3) America has refused to listen to these prophets. Instead, the nation has stiffened in its rebellion against God.
- 4) The result is that America has passed the point of no return, the point of "dread release," when God delivers a nation to destruction.
- 5) And thus, the wrath of God is about to fall on this nation, most likely in the form of an economic collapse from which there will be no recovery.

A Mocking Nation

It is an ominous message of truth that Americans, even Christians, will rebel against. The Christian community will reject it because it has compromised its values with the world, it has wrapped itself in the flag of patriotism, and it has deceived itself with its pollyanna gospel of health, wealth and prosperity.

When God sent prophets to Israel and Judah, calling them to repentance, the people mocked the prophets. "We are God's Chosen People," they reminded the prophets. "God will never allow our nation to be destroyed." (See Jer. 5:12-13 and Micah 3:11.)

For the past thirty years God has been raising up prophetic voices in America—voices like Dave Wilkerson—calling this country to repentance. We have reacted in the same manner as the ancient Israelites. We have mocked the prophets by arrogantly reminding them that we are a "Christian nation."

A Nation Under Judgment

But the truth is that we are anything but a Christian nation. Our behavior as a nation makes a mockery of Christianity. We lead the world in every abomination known to man—abortion, alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, divorce, child abuse, violent crime, pornography, and yes, even child pornography. Worse yet, we export our violence and immorality to other countries through our sleazy movies and

television programs. We have become the moral polluter of planet earth.

And we are reaping what we have sown. The judgment of God is upon this nation. Read Deut. 28:15-48. The curses of a nation under judgment are listed there. The passage reads like a detailed description of American society—cities in chaos, youth in bondage, government in confusion, a foreign policy in retreat, rampant disease, epidemic divorce, agricultural calamity, and increasing foreign domination.

A Nation in Rebellion

Yet, despite these judgments, we have refused to repent. In fact, we have stiffened in our rebellion against God. In our schools we have abolished prayer, removed the ten commandments, and banned the distribution of Bibles. We have terrorized our teachers into believing they will lose their jobs if they mention God to their students. We have even mandated the teaching of atheistic evolution and have prohibited the truth of creationism.

We are in the process of legalizing and even encouraging sodomy. We are handing out condoms and needles to our youth. We are going out of our way to protect every expression of profanity and obscenity. Our state governments are encouraging immorality by promoting gambling in every conceivable form. And our artists are wallowing in blasphemy, using every form of artistic expression to mock and ridicule God.

America is thumbing its nose at God. The Supreme Court is in rebellion against God. Our Congress is hardened against God. Our Bureaucracy could care less about God. Our educational system has banned God.

A Nation Facing Wrath

The chilling thing about our behavior as a nation is that the Bible teaches that when a nation under judgment refuses to repent, it will ultimately reach a point where God will deliver it from judgment to wrath—from discipline to doom. The Bible further teaches that when this terrible point of dread release is reached, the nation cannot be saved even by the prayers of the Righteous! Read Ezekiel 14:12-20.

I call this the "Nahum Principle" because it is so clearly taught in the prophetic message that God gave Nahum to deliver to Ninevah, the capital of the Assyrian empire. Nahum pronounced that the nation's wounds had become "incurable" (Nahum 3:19). Jeremiah was to use this same terminology when he later pronounced God's doom upon Judah (Jer. 10:19 & 30:12).

Nahum identifies the point of no return in chapter one, verse 11. He says it occurs when a nation's apathy toward God or rebellion against God is transformed into war with God. In other words, it is one thing for a nation to ignore God and another for it to rebel against God. These actions will provoke the judgment of God. But when a nation goes to war with God that nation beckons the wrath of God and thus seals its doom.

Has America reached that point? Dave Wilkerson, God's Jeremiah for our time, says we have. I think Wilkerson is right on target.

How will God's wrath be manifested toward us? Initially, it is most likely to come in the form of an economic collapse from which there will be no hope of recovery. Ultimately, it is likely to be consummated in our destruction by nuclear weapons.

As we face the consequences of our war against God, let those of us who are Christians do so with hope in our hearts, remembering the words of Nahum 1:7—

The Lord is good. He is a stronghold in the day of trouble. And He knows those who take refuge in Him.

NO CAUSE FOR ALARM

John R. W. Stott

(Summary of a sermon preached by John Stott some years ago—but newly relevant in recent months)

You will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom . . . All this is but the beginning of the sufferings . . . And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come. Matthew 24:6-8, 14 RSV

The command of Jesus not to be alarmed must seem to many a quite extraordinary requirement. Here is the world, confronted by intractable problems. New problems are continually being added. All the time we live under the shadow of an ominous mushroom cloud. Peace and security, justice and freedom seem unattainable. Men's hearts are failing them for fear.

How then can Jesus Christ say to us, "See that you are not alarmed"? Are we to close our eyes to reality and retreat into a fool's paradise? Is the Christian religion indifferent to the sufferings of the world? Does the Church consist of a bunch of escapists? It is important to note on what grounds the command of Jesus is based.

BECAUSE WARS ARE CERTAIN TO CONTINUE

"You will hear the noise of battle near at hand, and the news of battles far away" (verse 6, NEB). Possibly the allusion of Christ was to clashes between the Roman Empire and Jewry, which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. But verse 7 has a more general and distant reference: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." These are simple statements of fact, each being expressed by a verb in the future tense. Further, at the end of verse 6, Jesus said that "all these things *must* come to pass." That is, wars not only will happen, but are inevitable.

The explanation is not far to seek. The inevitability of war is due to the nature of man. The ultimate origin of every war is man's selfishness and greed. "What causes wars and fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members?" James 4:1.

Those who believe that a golden age or Utopia is going to evolve on earth base their confidence on a naively optimistic view of man, his fundamental goodness and perfectibility.

But Biblical Christians, who get their opinions from Christ and His apostles, not their own fancies, do not believe that man is evolving morally. And if man is not evolving, Utopia will not evolve. Jesus

clearly predicted the continuance of war. He seems to have seen the period between the Ascension and the End as a time of political and natural disturbances. He has been proved right.

This does not mean that we may sit back and twiddle our thumbs in irresponsible inactivity. On the contrary, Christians are to be "the salt of the earth," exercising a restraining influence in society. We are to do our utmost to be peacemakers, and to pray for peace. Nevertheless, we have our Lord's own authority for believing that the world will never be wholly rid of war.

BECAUSE WARS ARE UNDER THE SOVEREIGN CONTROL OF GOD

This does not mean that God is responsible for them, but that He turn all things (including the wrath of man and the wars of nations) to the fulfilment of His own will.

"The end is not yet," verse 6. So there is going to be an end! Moreover, the end is predetermined by God. To say that history is not evolving towards Utopia is not to say that it is out of control. Nor is it ultimately controlled either by man's wickedness and folly, or by the blind interaction of economic forces, as the Marxists believe. No. God is in control. He has His program, and both the time and manner of the consummation are determined by Him.

Christians urgently need to recover this Biblical outlook. Too many of us are fatalists. As we learn the current news from newspapers, radio or television, we sigh and shrug our shoulders as if everything were hopeless. But God is still on the throne! We need to read the Old Testament, in which Israel and Judah were tiny buffer states between the mighty empires of Egypt and Mesopotamia. As the tide of history ebbed and flowed between these empires, Israel and Judah were like little boats bobbing up and down on the swell. They were successively invaded, put to tribute, depopulated and governed by Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Yet throughout the corridors of Old Testament Scripture the triumphant shout of faith resounds, "the LORD reigns." The same truth is plain in the New Testament. The empires of the world and their rulers are under the control of Almighty God. He raises up one and puts down another, as He works out His own purposes of salvation and judgment. "The Most High God rules in the kingdoms of men."

There is a second indication here of God's sovereign control. It is not only that the end is determined, but that present sufferings are in some sense a means to it. When Jesus said "These are the beginning of sorrows" (verse 8), the Greek word for "sorrows" or "sufferings" is that commonly used for the pains of childbirth. The NEB renders the phrase "with all these things the birthpangs of the new age begin." The Christian is not filled with pessimism. He knows that the sufferings of the world are not only the death throes of the old order but the birthpangs of the new. This truth is repeatedly emphasized in Scripture, that the way to life is death, the path to glory is suffering, and the prelude to birth is pain. Since Jesus referred to the new heavens and the new earth as "the regeneration" of the universe (Matthew 19:28), He seems to have thought of the political, social and natural disturbances of our day as the prolonged labor-pains which will ultimately lead to a new birth.

BECAUSE WARS ADD LUSTER TO THE GOSPEL

It is significant that Christ goes on to speak of the Church's evangelistic task. Before the end comes, the gospel of the kingdom must be preached throughout the world (verse 14). The point is not just that international unrest must not hinder or distract the church from evangelization, but that the gospel gains meaning and force from the disturbances of the day.

This becomes clearer when we see that the gospel is "the gospel of the kingdom." It is good news that God through Christ has established His kingdom on earth. It is not a political kingdom with territorial frontiers; it is the reign of God in the hearts of men. Now we are called to publish the good news of this kingdom just at a time when "kingdom rises against kingdom" on earth. The kingdoms of men have always been sullied by injustice; God's kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness. The kingdoms of men are wrecked by "wars and rumors of wars;" God's kingdom is a kingdom of peace. The kingdoms of men are marred by the passions of a narrow nationalism and radicalism; God's kingdom draws its citizens from every race and nation under heaven. The kingdoms of men rise and flourish and fall and pass away; God's kingdom will stand and grow for ever. It is against the somber background of imperfect human kingdoms that the kingdoms of God shines forth.

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"See to it that you are not alarmed," Jesus said. He implied that it would be natural to be alarmed, to share the alarm of an unbelieving world. But Christian people are to take steps to avoid thinking and behaving like unbelievers, and to conquer the alarm to which they are naturally prone. How? By reflecting on the truths of the Christian revelation which we have been considering, especially the doctrines of man and of God.

Because of our doctrine of man (that he is fallen, sinful and selfish), we know that wars must continue. So there is no excuse for surprise and therefore for alarm.

Because of our doctrine of God (that He is the sovereign ruler of all things), we have even less cause for alarm. We know that God has not abdicated His throne. He controls history, however chaotic it may seem. He has determined the end, and present sufferings are the birthpangs of the new age. Moreover, His kingdom, *one day to be consummated*, has *already been inaugurated*; it is a kingdom of righteousness and peace, stable and universal.

Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

Do not some sciences, e.g., geology, require a much older earth than the Bible allows? Does not oil exploration work require the Christian to accept the idea of an old earth?

While the Bible does not give us specific figures to allow establishing an exact age for the earth, it very strongly suggests that man's

presence on the earth is a much shorter period than that adopted by evolutionists. Ussher's chronology, adopted as a part of the authorized version of the Bible, is a human addition and is not necessarily correct. We might allow a few thousand years more back to creation than he does without destroying the integrity of the Bible. Even so, the Bible does not seem to allow us to talk in terms of hundreds of thousands or millions of years for man's existence.

The so-called "gap theory" is presented by Scofield (Scofield Reference Bible; see notes on Gen. 1) and others. It declares that the creation of Gen. 1:1 took place in the dateless past, and God brought judgment on earlier beings, possibly the angels, and that this resulted in the earth being "without form and void." Then in Gen. 1:3, there is a new beginning. Hence, there is an indefinite period which gives scope for all the geologic ages. Without necessarily giving approval of the estimates or dating methods of the evolutionists, this view would find no problem with long ages for the earth itself.

A second possibility is that God created age in the earth at creation, including the existence of fossils, oil, etc. He did create Adam a grown man, therefore without necessity of certain years for growing up. He had the appearance of a full grown man apparently when he was but one day old. God is able to have created age in the earth. We have no specific evidence for saying that He did this; it is only a possibility.

A growing number of scientists believe that much of what is attributed to great age was produced in the earth by the flood of Noah's day. This would have caused great upheavals of rock layers, great cataclysmic changes in the earth. This could have distorted the measurements which are based on conditions as they now exist. To a great extent the long ages are merely guesses which have been made so as to allow for the evolutionary process. The methods for dating are based on the assumption that decay rates, for example, have always been the same, and these do not allow for the effects of cataclysmic changes.

Recently a prestigious magazine was caught in an error by a reader, who wrote the editor. The editor's reply was: "Like others before us, we repeated an old error." In various guesses of age, there has been a repeating of a lot of old errors. Picking up the estimates of one who wears the title of scientist and passing them on may be very common, but it is not really scholarship.

I suppose most modern training in geology has pretty well sold out to the evolutionary concept, and many of the terms, explanations, etc., tend to perpetuate those concepts. The Christian needs to be careful that in adapting to the language of this study he does not surrender his faith in God and in the Bible. The evolutionary theory is still a theory, and it is one full of holes.

We need to be careful that we do not impose some interpretation on the Bible that it does not require and that proves to be an embarrassment, but we do not ever need to fear taking a stand upon the proper interpretation of it. The various sciences have had to change a lot of concepts that were at one time considered true, while the old Book still stands.

Soviet Leader Credits God for Harvest!

"Now that God has provided us with a good harvest, we cannot cope with the work." —USSR Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov, August 2, 1990.

Ryzhkov's words jump right off the newspaper. His crediting God for the largest Soviet harvest on record underscores the ideological shifts surging through that country today.

Our Christian ship Logos II has enjoyed great freedom in proclaiming the gospel in the USSR. Officials permitted 290,000 Gospel booklets, stamped with local church addresses, to be given freely to Leningrad citizens. Hundreds more received Bibles and New Testaments as they boarded the ship. Their probing questions show the spiritual hunger sweeping this nation.

We praise God for what He is doing in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But like the Soviet government after the bumper crop "... we can't cope with the work." All over the world we see a ripe harvest, but shortages of workers and funds threaten to leave spiritual fruit perishing in the fields.

Workers for strategic ministries, both here and abroad, are still in short supply. We face critical staff shortages for *existing* work, let alone for new opportunities like the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

—Operation Mobilization

Try Being a Simeonite

Compiled, Paraphrased and Annotated by Alex V. Wilson

Don't be an Arminian, who argues that it is possible for a really saved, regenerate person to lose his salvation. And don't be a Calvinist, who insists that a saved person can never possibly lose his salvation. Instead, be a Simeonite! A Simeonite?? What is that?

Well, really I mean, "Be a Bible-Christian, not a system-Christian." That was the view of Charles Simeon, an Evangelical leader in England during the latter 1700's and early 1800's. The following quotations from his writings further explain what he meant, and also provide wise and balanced advice for all of us who want to follow Jesus Christ and His Word. (I have taken the liberty of paraphrasing the quotations in some places, to modernize and simplify them.)

My aim is to bring out of Scripture what is there, and not to thrust in what I think might be there.

I am no friend to systematizers in theology. I have endeavored to derive from the Scriptures alone my views, and to them it is my wish to adhere with complete faithfulness, never wrestling any portion of the Word of God to favor a particular opinion, but giving to every part of it that meaning which I believe the great Author desired to convey.

I am aware that for this reason I may be considered as sometimes inconsistent by the zealous advocates of human systems. But if I shall be no more inconsistent than the Scriptures themselves, I shall be satisfied. No doubt there is a system in the Holy Scriptures

(for truth cannot be inconsistent with itself); but I am persuaded that neither Calvinists nor Arminians *alone* possess it.

The truth is not in the middle, and not in one extreme, but in both extremes. Sometimes I am a high Calvinist, at other times a low Arminian, so that if extremes will please you, I am your man. Only remember, it is not *one* extreme that we are to go to, but *both* extremes.

It is supposed by many that the doctrines of God's sovereign grace are contradictory to the doctrine of man's free-will, and that therefore the one or the other must be false. But why? Can any man doubt for one moment whether he be a free agent or not? He may as well doubt his own existence! On the other hand, will any man who has the smallest spark of humility claim that he possesses any spiritual blessing which he has not received as a gift from above? Will anyone refuse to say with the apostle Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am"?

Men differ not only about the beginning of faith in our hearts—what is God's part, and what is man's—but also about the continuation of the Christian life. Some affirm that God will without any doubt carry on and complete the work in our hearts, while others affirm that even Saint Paul had reason to fear lest he himself should become a cast-away. But why should these things be considered contradictory? Does not every man feel within himself a liableness—yea, an inclination—to fall? Does not every man feel that there is enough corruption within him to drive him to commit the greatest sins, and eternally to destroy his soul? Whoever denies this must have very little knowledge of his own heart. On the other hand, does not every one who is following the paths of righteousness daily give credit for his steadfastness to the influence of God's grace, and look daily to God for more grace in order that he may be "kept by His power through faith unto salvation"? No man in any way resembles the Christians of the Bible unless he have this disposition. Why, then, must these attitudes and beliefs be put in opposition to each other, so that every one of these points must necessarily contradict and explode the other?

I think that the Scripture system is broader and more comprehensive than some very dogmatic theologians allow. As wheels in a clock or other complicated machine may move in opposite directions and yet fulfill one common purpose, so may truths that seem contradictory be perfectly reconcilable with each other and equally fulfill the purposes of God in accomplishing man's salvation. It is my invariable rule to *try to give to every part of the Word of God its full and proper force, without considering what school of interpretation it favors, or whose system it is likely to advance*. I am very sure of this, that *there is not a strong Calvinist or Arminian in the world who equally approves of all Scripture, and who, if he had been with Paul or John while they were writing it, would not have recommended them to change one or more of their statements*.

[In other words, the Arminian would have said, "Wait, John! Don't include those words of Christ. 'My sheep hear my voice . . . and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of

my hand.'” Or again, “Now Paul, don't say that nothing whatever 'in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God.'” (John 10:28; Rom. 8:38, 39) And the Calvinist would have said, “Paul, how can you possibly say, ‘Note . . . God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off’? Also, Paul, I wish you would alter your statement that Christ has now reconciled us ‘in order to present you holy and blameless . . . before him, provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel.’” (Rom. 11:22; 1 Cor. 15:1, 2; Col. 1:21-23) Now back to Simeon's words:]

But I would not wish one statement of the apostles to be altered. I find as much satisfaction in the one type of passage as in the other, and I use the one as freely as the other. Where the inspired writers speak in unqualified terms, I feel free to do the same, judging that they needed no instruction from me how to spread the truth. I am content to sit as a learner at the feet of the holy apostles, and I have no ambition to teach them how they ought to have spoken.

Some read to prove a pre-adopted creed,
Thus understanding little what they read,
And every passage in the Book they bend
To make it suit that all-important end.
Some people read, as I have often thought,
To teach the Book instead of being taught.
—Author unknown

Reprint:

The Question of Eternal Security

R. H. Boll

FALLING FROM GRACE

There are passages in the word of God, which taken by themselves, make the impression that the Christian's keeping and destiny is wholly in God's hands, and that He who is faithful will see us surely and safely through. There are passages on the other hand, which, taken unrelated, teach that the matter is wholly in our hands, and that our ultimate salvation is correspondingly problematical. It is the sectarian way to take one or the other wing of doctrine and hold it up as the Bible-truth, while ignoring, or “explaining away” the seemingly contradictory passages. It is the Christian's way (or should be) to take both sides in relation to each other, and to give to each its due weight of meaning, and to seek for the common basis of harmony which belongs to both. All opposite errors (as one hath said) are bolted together and revolve around a common center. And the apparently contradictory teachings of the Bible on whether a Christian can or cannot “fall from grace” are but the two sides of the same truth. All that God has said is true. Nothing of it is to be nullified, or so offset by something God has said elsewhere as to wipe out the meaning. If anywhere God says that He keeps us, *it is so*. If in any place He says we must keep ourselves, *it is so*. If I can

discover the hidden harmony between the statements—good. If not, I shall continue to say to the faint of heart, "Fear not, God will see you through"; and to the careless and self-confident, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." For "I believe God that it shall be even so as it hath been spoken."

GOD KEEPS HIS OWN

Let us get this fact, first and firmly: *God keeps His people*. If it were not so I could have no courage to induce anyone to start out in the Christian life. Looking back over the years I am dimly aware of the unnumbered snares and pitfalls along the way, and how I have escaped many of them almost miraculously. A thousand dangers lurk on the road. It is easy—ah, so easy, to slip away. The chances are infinite. The difficulties are insurmountable. What with the cunning craftiness of Satan, the temptations of the flesh, the wiles of error, the deceit of unrighteousness, the trials, and drawbacks, and stumbling-blocks that await—the enterprise of the Christian life is superhuman. Yet men of the weakest types have fought that good fight and finished their course triumphantly. When I see a ship skillfully and safely threading its way through a dangerous channel, where a little swerving to the one side or the other means disaster, I know that a pilot is at the helm who knows his business. When I see in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation humble men and women, walking in truth and love, I know that a Power beyond their own is holding their hands and keeping their feet. It may not be noticeable to us in any one day or hour—but when we look back over the path of years, however we ourselves may have watched or worked, we become aware that it is because of Jehovah's lovingkindness that we have survived. And it gives us peace to fall back upon His grace and set up our Edenezer and trust the same faithful hand to see us through. For He only is able to guard us from stumbling and to set us without blemish before the presence of His glory in exceeding joy.

"Through many trials, toils and snares

I have already come

'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far

And grace will bring me home."

THE EVER-PRESENT PROVISIO

Yet here is always something understood. If a doctor undertakes to cure my malady it goes without saying that he expects me to submit to his care, follow his directions, take his remedies. If a teacher engages to take me through a course of instruction, so as to fit me for some public examination, it is superfluous to stipulate that I am to apply myself to my subjects. This is a matter of course; for there is no other way to learn anything. If a railroad company enters into contract with me, as certified by the ticket, to carry me through to some distant point—I do not expect them to put me on the train, nor to hold me on till I get to my destination. I can refuse to get on, or I may get off at any way-station along the line, if I choose. That is my lookout. So God does not force men's wills. It is by their own will and willingness He engages to see them through,

not against their choice. His keeping of us is not mechanical—not by outward force, but by inward constraint and motive. We are kept by the power of God *through faith* (1 Pet. 1:15). True His loving care watches even over that: He works in us both *to will* and *to work*; and in time of danger He makes intercession "*that thy faith fail not*" (Phil. 2:13, 13; Luke 22:32). But none of these things in violation of our own right of choice. The question, "Will ye also go away?" is ever to us. Like Abraham and his pilgrim sons—if we are mindful of that country from which we went out—opportunity is ours to return (Heb. 11:15). There are no bridges burned behind us. Our allegiance to the Lord Jesus must ever be one of free and loving choice on our part.

MAKING US TO FEAR AND TREMBLE

The secret of the matter—not the whole secret, but the practical end of it—is this, that God keeps us by making us careful, by making us watchful. All through the New Testament we find the most solemn warning to Christians to watch and pray, to flee from evil, to abhor it, to keep ourselves pure, unspotted from the world, to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. God keeps us by keeping us *afraid*. If you refuse to be made afraid you cannot be kept. When you see a professed Christian careless and indifferent, be sure he is not being kept. The keeping power of God is manifest in the man who dreads sin and danger, who trembles at God's warning, who watches and prays and stays close beside his Savior. And the people who try to destroy the significance of such passages as Heb. 2:1-4; 8:4-8; or 10:28-31 in order to assure believers of their "eternal security in Christ," are really undermining the very means by which God keeps His own, and are apt to lull them into a false security which may easily end in disaster. We must take God's warnings, not as so many bugaboos, but seriously. And as we believe them and on the other hand the promises of His faithful keeping, we are driven further from sin and closer to Him. We can even "trust Him to keep us trusting"—for to such faith nothing is denied. And we will not fail on our side, if such is our faith. But after we have done all we shall see that it was only because of His keeping that we got through and that to *Him* is due all the praise.

JOSHUA'S FAITH

In Joshua we have a great picture of the faith by which we are kept and win the victory. God promised him flatly an unqualified victory. "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life... I will not fail thee nor forsake thee." And Joshua believed God. Now his faith manifested itself not in ease and security but in the greatest earnestness and effort and watchfulness. Had he presumed upon the promise so as to relax his care, he would have failed despite the promise, because of *unbelief*.

But he fought with extreme vigor—marching all the night to obtain an advantage over the foe, and doing all to *lay hold* on the promised victory. That is the right faith. Because we know that God can and will keep and deliver us, we press on with fierce assurance to trample the lion and adder under foot, and meet every evil

in the strength of God, and inspired by this hope we strike with greater determination and bring our bodies into subjection that we be not castaways.

HOW TO STAY IN

There is naught indeed that can separate us from the love of God—and yet, solemnly, the Lord bids us, “*Keep yourselves in the love of God.*” In the same breath He tells us how: “*Building up yourselves in the love of God*” (Jude 20, 21). Now the former of these two items can be accomplished in only one way: “Now I commend you to God,” said the apostle in his farewell to the brethren of Ephesus, “and to the word of his grace which is *able to build you up* and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). That which produces faith in the first place (Rom. 10:17) alone can maintain it, and amid the adverse influences of the world *builds us up in faith*. And by faith we are kept by the power of God (1 Pet. 1:15). Do not then leave your Bible; do not cease to pray deeply and earnestly, and so will you keep yourself in the love of God. And *look to Jesus*. Jesus alone saves. In Him—His power, His love, His intercession—lies ever and always all our hope of being saved to the uttermost.

TEACH THE BIBLE BETTER:

My Favorite Age Level

God seems to have given many teachers a special age level, one to which they relate more easily than any other. They love their children and thrive on communicating Christ’s message in ways their age level will understand.

First and second grade teacher Marie Dahlquist, Kingsburg, California, chooses elementary as her favorite level. “Natasha’s parents didn’t attend church, but they sent their little girl. As a first grader she wouldn’t talk, much less pray aloud. Now she not only participates in class, but has learned to pray in a beautiful way. What a joy to see children develop from being nonreaders to readers of God’s Word, from knowing little or nothing about prayer to being able to pray with simple trust.”

Marlene Tate, Hendersonville, Tennessee, loves the second grade. “They listen so well and get involved in what they’re doing. I send students lots of mail every week. They get excited about it. This is one way I show their parents how much I care about their children.”

Louise Droney, Seneca, Pennsylvania, chooses the third grade as her favorite. “Being a child isn’t easy,” she says. “One child asked when I suggested that children draw their families, ‘Which family do you want me to draw?’ Another child prayed aloud, ‘I’m thankful that my daddy can get out of prison for a couple of weeks so he can come and see me.’ Each and every Sunday is a new story. Yet, through it all, the children see the rainbow. They make my week.”

Tom Gramza, Fresno, California, has chosen young teens as his favorite group to teach. Some people think this is the most difficult

of all age levels, but Tom disagrees, "Find out what matters to them, and they will respond. Steve came a few times, and I was sure he hated me. He never said a word. Then I made an effort to see him outside class and found out he was a Los Angeles Lakers' fan. So I engineered an object lesson the next Sunday that had to do with the Lakers. I called on him to comment. I got into his world, and in time, he became the strongest Christian in the class."

"I wish I had had a teacher like me when I was growing up," says LaVerne Alexander, Louisville, Kentucky. She loves high school kids. "I want to talk with them—not just at them. They're old enough to get involved with real issues. One Sunday we talked about race, how I had felt having to sit in the back of the bus and being bused out of the county to go to school. After class different ones came up and hugged me. They said, 'I'm glad you're here, and thank you.' I'll make a contribution to their lives."

—David C. Cook Publishing Co.

Happy Christmas Hangover

LeRoy Dugan

[Originally written after Christmas, it's better to read this article beforehand. Prevention is better than cure.]

Hangovers are not caused by drinking. They are caused by drinking too much of the wrong things. The keys to understanding the common hangover are in the words "too much" and "wrong things." You could imbibe tap water from now till the Mississippi flows west and never develop a hangover. Furthermore, you could drink twice the prescribed four glasses a day and never suffer any staggering aftereffects. It takes *too much* of the *wrong thing* to produce a bona fide hangover.

Not very profound, you say?

Agreed.

But please bear with me. I want to talk to you about a brand of hangover that has no connection whatever with the yuletide spirits generally responsible for all bloodshot eyes so recently opened across our holiday-conscious nation.

I want to discuss the "Christian hangover" that gripped millions of us teetotallers in the wake of the festivities just past. The post-holiday "blahs" that left so many of us wondering what we have wondered for years: "Was it really worth it?"

Please understand. I am not a Christmas hater. I feel no kinship with the crepchangers who insist that Christmas is essentially pagan in origin and such symbols as the Christmas tree are forbidden by Scripture. On the contrary, *I like Christmas*. It conjures sweet memories in my mind. It sends pleasant feelings coursing through me. Best of all, I am convinced that it gives Jesus Christ more free publicity than He gets at any other time of year.

No, Christian hangovers do not come from Christmas. They come from our misuse of Christmas. They come from *too much* of the *wrong things*.

So we experience a multi-dimensional aftermath.

The Financial Hangover

First of all, we spent *too much*. A friend told me shortly before Christmas, "It took us several months to get out of the debt we got ourselves into last Christmas." A very common comment. A very common condition. A terrible malady—"depletus walletus."

Next, we spent too much on the *wrong things*. The Bible makes it plain that Christians are to give to the poor and needy. We are to buy bread for the hungry, not trinkets for the fat and full. Gifts are a splendid symbol of love. They are a vivid reminder (or could be) of the greatest gift. But they are wrong if they blind us to the needs of people who cannot keep warm on Christmas night and hunger while we feast. "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food . . . notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" James really says it all, doesn't he?

The Friendship Hangover

Just the other day I had the very gratifying experience of getting reacquainted with a friend of my high school days. We once played on the same football team. My hair is thin on top, and his is now white, but that did nothing to spoil the memories we shared. I hope that ours will be a continuing friendship, and that God will give us renewed opportunities to share Christ. But there is a vast difference between friendship for friendship's sake, and friendship for Jesus' sake. Christmas can be a time of being railroaded by our culture into incessant visiting of people who really do not need us around. Or it can be a choice occasion for giving ourselves to people at a season when they are perhaps more receptive to Christian love than at any other time. This is friendship for *Jesus' sake*. But, we protest, there are so many people, and we have relatively little time to visit them. This means that we must do some *selective socializing*—going to those whom we can help the most.

For instance, we have a friend who had just suffered the agonies of a divorce. It was to be his first Christmas without his wife and we wept inside for him. It did not take us long to conclude that we must modify some of our usual Christmas Day schedule. Others could certainly do without our presence. This man needed some friends on Christmas Day. We spent some of it with him.

The Fun Hangover

One of the simple lessons Christians must learn is that we do not hit the fun target when we aim directly at it. It is a lesson easily forgotten at Christmas. We can make elaborate plans for skiing, skating, games and football watching—jamming our days with a full agenda of things calculated to give us pleasure. Perhaps that is exactly what you did. And you discovered it wasn't nearly as hilarious as you had anticipated. In fact, it left you emotionally famished and spiritually depressed. You had a hangover when it was through. Why? Because fun, for a Christian, comes as a by-product of higher things. When we *aim* to please God we often glean enjoyment as an extra blessing. We have found in our family that the most delightful times have often

come when we are gathered together for Bible reading and prayer. Frequently a wave of amusement will sweep over us at the moment we kneel to pray. The very act of worship draws us together, prayer is postponed while we enjoy laughter and warm conversation. We consider God to be part of the circle and are convinced that He is laughing and chatting along with us. The wonderful thing about an occurrence of this kind is that it is not ever necessary to "shift gears" when we begin to pray. The prayer is simply a continuation of the fellowship we have been enjoying together.

The Food Hangover

"*Too much of the wrong things.*" Here is the rule again. Everything is to be received with gratitude and eaten with pleasure. To eat in any other way would be a violation of Scripture. And three cheers for ingenious women who embellish their tables with special delicacies! But must their culinary craftsmanship be spoiled because of our gluttony? Certainly not!

I have a witty brother who often says facetiously to his wife at the conclusion of a fine meal, "There you did it again. You overfed me."

The problem was not overfeeding, but overeating. And we know it. We ingested such a fantastic assortment of contradictory sweets and sour, and in such quantities, that our unconditioned stomachs could scarcely cope with the bombardment. We closed our day with Alka-Seltzer rather than thanksgiving. We had made "food-a-holics" of ourselves. The calorie binge ended; we had hangovers!

The Frustration Hangover

Too much traveling. Too much money gone. Too many late nights. Too many people around. Too much mess afterwards. Too many gifts to exchange. Too many pounds put on. Too much sadness when the kids had to go back to college. Too much. Too much of almost everything!

Result: an emotional hangover. And a bundle of new frustrations (or reruns of old ones).

"We wanted to really make Christmas a Christian event, and somehow we missed it again this year. We wanted to be sure to pray with the kids when they were home for the holidays, but we never seemed to get around to it. We wanted time for quiet talks with unconverted relatives, but it was impossible to get alone with any of them..."

Frustration!

The week before Christmas a co-worker asked me, "Are you ready for Christmas?" Well, I'd seen too many people jumping about like a grasshopper with a hotfoot to want to "get ready" in the sense the term is usually used. If getting ready meant preparing for another holiday hangover, I wanted no part of it.

So I answered, "I refuse to get ready for Christmas. I rebel against the American Christmas!"

I would like to join the revolution against the misuse of one of the greatest things which has ever been permitted in American society—the celebration of the birthday of God Incarnate.

It is a revolution against the nerve-racking, energy-sapping,

Christ-neglecting extravaganza that has been passing itself off as a holy commemoration of a holy event. I want to take up arms against the yuletide banditry that wears out the saints and makes paupers of God's people. I want to stand against the commercially-produced fantasies which have no relation to heavenly realities. I want to resist the euphoria which makes sinners feel temporarily pious while still terribly proud.

I don't like being *used* by manipulators. I resent the marketing industry which plays upon our nebulous religious emotions for the express purpose of making another buck. I object to the networks trotting out their most renowned Hollywood mate-swappers before the cameras and calling their efforts "Christmas Specials."

Now the grim tragedy of all this is not hard to perceive. We have been so used by the secularists that we had little time to be used by the Savior.

If we have holiday hangover, it means we have let ourselves be victimized one more time—commerce, custom, conditioning conspired to do it to us again.

Think of how different it *might* have been: rich fellowship with God's people. Seasons of delightful worship. (Christmas is a great time to learn more about worshipping God. It is tailor-made for it.) Edifying conversations with children gathered in from far points for the holidays. Loving, intimate talks with relatives and neighbors who need Jesus and are willing to listen as never before. Rejuvenating recreation and long, restful sleep, buoying us up for the return to daily duty. All this, and no bad aftereffects. No regrets. No hangovers.

Would you join me in making a binding resolution not to do *too much* of the *wrong things* next time around?

—From *Message of the Cross*

NEWS AND NOTES

LILLY DALE WORKSHOP: This helpful annual event will be held Feb. 22-23 (Fri. nite - Sat. afternoon) at the Lilly Dale Church of Christ several miles outside of Tell City, IN. 1991's theme: Living for Jesus, with topics about commitment: to Christ, the Word of God, the family, the church, and service.

Manila, Philippines:

Central Bible Institute enrolled 124 students for 1st semester '90-91. Men made up 70% of the enrollees, which is unusual. Many who study at CBI are at the same time university students, professionals, educators, or church workers such as SS teachers, home Bible study leaders, youth leaders or even pastor-teachers. Two CBI grads have served as overseers mission-

aries, one in Cyprus and one in England. A number of others serve as missionaries to tribes-people in the Philippines.

More Missionaries from the "Two-thirds" World:

One of the most significant trends in world mission during the last 20 years has been the rise of mission agencies and missionaries in the non-Western world.

As reported by Larry D. Pate in his book "From Every People," in 1988 there were 36,000 non-Western missionaries targeting at least 2,425 people groups in at least 118 countries of the world.

These missionaries from the "two-thirds" world (so-called because their countries make up two-thirds of the

world's population and land mass) are making tremendous inroads for the gospel, often in areas inaccessible to North Americans.

In India alone, Pate's research revealed that there were 8,905 people ministering the gospel cross-culturally in 1988, more than twice as many as in 1980.

SFEKING O-L-D Issues: The editor never saw any issues of W & W from the 1908-15 era till a few days ago when a few were lent to him. If anyone has some of these ancient magazines and is willing to part with them, AVW promises to give them a pleasant, secure home!

Bulletin of Highland Church, Louisville:

Alex Wilson's article in the Sept. issue of "Word and Work" has done our brotherhood a great service. The Portland Congregation ought to be commended for the value it has placed on fellowship. It is not easy to change and attempt something new, especially if that change involves a Sunday night meeting which has been a regular part of the church's life for decades. We join them in praising the Lord for the success of small groups within their fellowship. This idea has been considered at Highland for our Sunday evenings in the past but the timing for its implementation was not right. I encourage you to read the article and consider the advantages that such a change might bring to our own family on alternate Sunday evenings.

In the past, one of our main concerns has been visitors on Sunday evening who would be deprived of an opportunity to be won to Christ. With current plans to mass evangelize our community and city on a weekly basis, this may not be the issue it once was. Getting to know one another better is essential for healthy, meaningful relationships. You may have a better idea on how we might accomplish this worthy goal. Let us know. Our goal is simply the strengthening of the body of believers, here, and the furtherance of the Lord's Kingdom.

—Dwight Thomas

Indianapolis, Indiana:

Please send 2 copies of the book, *A New Spirit*. This month's magazine is superb. I'm so glad to read more about Bro. Larimore.

I attended the "Praise Gathering

for Believers" put on by Bill & Gloria Gaither. Chuck Colson spoke... His favorite quote from Francis of Assisi was "Preach all the time; use words if necessary."

Thanks for this excellent magazine that is so different from what I hear—that the "Church of Christ" is the only one right! —Mrs. J. R. Fisher

Interesting Article:

The short quotation from Bob Ross in this issue is an excerpt from an interesting 12-page article he wrote. It is entitled "I know Lots of Christians and Not All in the Same Place." The subtitle is, "A Comparison of the 3 Wings of the Restoration Movement," and tells of various experiences he has had. If interested, write Bob for a copy: 603 Scenic Hills, Harrodsburg, KY 40330. Don't make him pay the postage, though!

Shawnee Church of Christ, Louisville:

Larry Miles has returned to Louisville and now preaches for the Shawnee Church.

Henryville, Ind. Church Bulletin

The annual Area Church of Christ joint Thanksgiving Service was Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 22, 1990, 10:00-11:00 a.m., at the Atherton High School Auditorium, in Louisville. Bro. Orell Overman was the speaker and the Chorus from Portland Christian High School sang. It was a very enjoyable time of worship, praise and Thanksgiving!

"SHAME on 'US,' U.S.!"

The United States has the most permissive abortion laws in the world. In the 15 years since the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion-on-demand throughout all nine months of pregnancy, more than 21 million preborn children have been killed before birth. At the present time: 1.5 million abortions are performed every year; 125,000 every month; nearly 30,000 each week; more than 4,000 every day; 171 every hour; three every minute; one every 20 seconds. Abortion kills the equivalent of the population of the city of Houston or the state of Nebraska every year.

BIBLES FOR RUSSIA

The Junior Sunday School Class is sponsoring this project through the end of November. To date, \$159.50 has been given to this. Don't forget to help with this needy and very worthy project.

Borden, Ind. Church Bulletin

Babies Abound! It is exciting to have so many newborns among us. In fact our congregation has enjoyed six local births in the last years—all boys. (Of those that have roots here, but live afar that had babies, add three more—all girls.) All of this has gotten me seriously thinking about young people at our church and in our community. As a congregation, are we giving enough attention to our young people? I have to answer, "No." Consider some of the points of a recent article I read in the *Christian Chronicle*. It stressed the importance of youth ministry in a church. In fact, it said youth ministry was vital to church growth. It surveyed a number of growing churches (10% or more per year) that listed the following reasons why youth ministry was important to their growth. (1) Youth is one way of attracting adults, especially parents. (2) Youth have a way of putting life back into a stale environment. (3) Reaching the young means making an impact on tomorrow's leaders. (4) Two thirds of all Christians make a commitment to Christ before they turn 18. Vital reasons for vital growth, don't you think?

I would like to meet with parents or anyone else interested about youth and discuss what else can be done for our youth for our Lord. It is time to get aggressive about our young people.

—Mike Abbott

Buechel Church of Christ, Louisville

We will have a prayer meeting at Jesse and Gertrude Woods' home on Friday Evening November 9th beginning at 7:30 p.m. This time of prayer will be to pray for revival at Buechel, our families, those in need, and other matters that may come up.

All great moves of God in history can be traced back to local prayer groups!

There are 3 basic components of man: body, soul and spirit. There are times when our body is ministered to: when we eat, take a bath, go to the doctor, etc. There are times when our soul (Mind, will, emotions) is ministered to: we hear a needed sermon, we read our Bible, etc. Then there are times when our spirit is ministered to. For me that was Sunday night, sitting around the campfire, singing praises to our glorious Lord! I was glad I was a part of the family of God, that great big world-wide family of all who have trusted Jesus Christ as

their personal Savior and Lord. What a privileged it is to be bought and paid for with Jesus' blood.

I believe we miss a lot when we are tied to the building. I am very glad we could do this on a Sunday night. Our children and grandchildren need to see that the worship of God goes beyond our comfortable pews. We are to be God's people wherever we go.

—Duane Smith

Locust Street Church of Christ

Johnson City, Tennessee

Homecoming day brought about three dozen visitors on Sunday morning, and some others were with us during the evening services of the meeting. We also enjoyed the fellowship with the Mt. View brethren on Sunday night and Wednesday night. The attendance at most of the services was encouraging, and Bro. Doug Broyles brought excellent messages during the series.

Gallatin Tenn. Church of Christ

We do praise the Lord for a super Homecoming Sunday!! It started with the Bible study hour where attendance was about 100 above average. Afterward, the visiting quartet blessed us with a message in song. We had 303 for worship and a fine message from Dennis Kaufman. A great lunch followed. At 5:15 the quartet sang for 30 minutes and was followed by a well-attended evening meeting.

If you are experiencing some of the roller-coaster emotions that are involved with the loss of a loved one, you are invited to join a support group led by trained bereavement counselors. There are daytime as well as evening meetings, some for a five-week period and also those who meet monthly. A new group will begin October 16. The grief process of adjustment can go on for years with many difficulties in adjustment.

Portland Church, Louisville:

Some of our men have enjoyed mailing New Testaments to other lands as part of the ministry of Bibles for the World, Box 805, Wheaton, IL 60189. They provide NTs in the language of the country, + addresses gleaned from telephone directories there. We wrap the NTs for mailing, stick on the address tabs provided, pray for the addressees and pay for the postage (about \$1.30 each). We have sent 12 NTs each to Venezuela, So. Africa, & the USSR, & 48 to Romania. We recommend this ministry.

Give 11 Christmas Gifts for only \$6⁰⁰!

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