

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The ***Word and Work***



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

November-December 2006

"Christians are being heavily persecuted in China even as the church is growing at a rate never before seen in history."

* * * *

Our Lord Jesus taught us how to respond to persecution. Maybe that's what His disciples are doing in China--and why the church is growing.

He Came and He'll Come!

He CAME

“Lord, I find the genealogy of my Savior strangely checkered with four remarkable changes in four generations.

Rehoboam begat Abia:

A bad father begat a bad son.

Abia begat Asa:

A bad father and a good son.

Asa begat Jehoshaphat:

A good father and a good son.

Jehoshaphat begat Joram:

A good father and a bad son.

“I see, Lord, from hence that my father’s piety [godliness] cannot be handed on: that is bad news for me. But I see also that actual impiety is not hereditary: that is good news for my son.

--Thomas Fuller, 1608-1661

He'll COME

“Guard your way of life. Never be caught unprepared. Be ready because you simply do not know the moment of the Lord’s return. Come together often, to strengthen each other spiritually, because all your past faithfulness will be no help at that moment, unless you have sustained your faith. For in those last days false prophets and deceivers will be everywhere, leading the flock away. Some sheep will turn into wolves and love will turn to hate, persecution and betrayal.

Continued on Back Cover

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THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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[EDITORIAL]

Hunker Down or Rise Up?

Dennis L. Allen

In this day it is easy for Christians to develop a siege mentality. We see the relentless drift of this present evil age, the increasing encroachment on the freedoms we have enjoyed, the outright persecution of Christians and feel that the situation is hopeless. We can't do much to counteract it, so the best thing to do is to hunker down in our little group, hold on to what we have, and wait for the rapture.

But is this the attitude our Lord has told us to take? The disciples were huddled behind closed doors after His crucifixion, but Jesus said to them, "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8.) That was His last word to them. The book of Acts is the wonderful account of the response that came forth when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

There is no virtue in putting on rose-colored glasses. We need to know our enemy and his devices, but we also need to remember that "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world," and He has promised to be with us even to the consummation of the age. Speaking of the end time God says to Daniel, "They that know their God shall be strong and do exploits." (Dan. 11:32.)

In this issue we want to concentrate our attention on the advances that the Gospel has made in the last century and even in the most recent years. Although there is much in the trends in affluent America and in the church to discourage us, we need to see the big picture and specifically the gains that the Gospel has made worldwide -- in Africa, China, South America, South Korea and many other countries. Praise God, Christ is building His church and "the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

In the triumph of the Gospel we see also another important truth. The greatest advances have come where persecution is the greatest. Our Master told us, "Unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." (Jn. 12:24.) The first missionaries to the Auca Indians met death, but now the same Aucas are bringing life to others around them. "Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother

against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.” (Luke 12:51-53.) “They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.” (Jn. 16:2.) We may think how can He ever build His church when the very nature of the message puts those who wholeheartedly receive it in such difficult and seemingly impossible situations? Yet God manifests His power by using such circumstances to build His church and transform lives.

May the Lord enlarge our vision, give us fresh courage, and cause us to heed anew Paul’s exhortation, “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” (1 Cor. 15:58.)

Watchman Nee and the House Church Movement in China

[See the note at the end.]

Watchman Nee was only one of many players in the drama of the struggle for the heart of the Chinese people, but he was one of the most interesting. His Little Flock movement was more influential in planting house churches throughout China than many realize.

From the time China was opened to western visitors in 1973 we have heard a growing stream of reports increasing in their excitement, about house churches there. At first, visitors claimed that, against all odds, the house church movement was still intact after 25 years of persecution. After several years estimates appeared claiming that there were 30 million authentic Christians meeting in house churches. Later estimates went higher to 50 million and beyond.

These reports are amazing because during the past 30 years [*actually since around 1950*] the Chinese church has lived under acute persecution, probably as harsh as that of any church in the world. Estimates of those killed go into the millions.

In addition, virtually the entire evangelical Chinese-Christian intelligentsia was destroyed or silenced. Therefore, by even the most conservative estimates, the Chinese church must be considered one of the most victorious in the world. During a thirty-five year period when the church *in the developed countries* has not experienced any significant growth at all, and in many places has decreased in size, the Chinese church has grown twenty-fold, and perhaps fifty-fold.

It seems today that most of the ferment of growth in China is occurring, not in government sanctioned "Three-Self Patriotic Movement" (TSPM) churches, but in less organized and illegal house churches.

Standing in the headwaters of much of this spiritual ferment is a shadowy figure to western eyes. He is an enigma, and a paradox, but unquestionably one of the great Christian workers of the century - Watchman Nee.

Biographical Background

Watchman Nee was born Ni 'Shu-tsu or Henry Ni in Swatow, November 4, 1903. He was later renamed Ni Ching-Fu, and finally, after his commitment to Christian work, Ni To-sheng -- that is, Watchman Ni.

Like so many well known servants of God, Watchman Nee had a family heritage of Christian Service. The first school in Foochow offering western-style education was opened in a suburb of the old city in 1853, and it was here that Watchman Nee's grandfather Nga U-cheng heard of Jesus Christ and was won to Him.

Conversion and Growth

Nee's conversion came at the age of 16 in 1919. His Mother, Huo-ping, had reaffirmed her commitment to the Lord at a series of evangelistic meetings led by Dora Yu, the female evangelist who had impressed Huo-ping during her college days. When Huo-ping went to Watchman and confessed to unjustly beating him, Watchman decided to attend the meetings as well, and was powerfully converted. He offered his entire life to God for His service that day, and never changed his mind thereafter.

During the early 1920's, Nee was involved in itinerant evangelistic preaching, based out of Foochow. He would usually go out with a small ministry team to preach in a village that had not previously heard the gospel. Kinnear says that Nee was usually successful in reaching good numbers of people on these trips.

Some trips were undertaken with his mother (who also preached), including trips outside of China, to Indonesia. Nee's method of church planting was to begin with a small group of people meeting in a house. Later, a building would be sought if the groups became large. From then on, they would hold both home meetings and meetings in the building. They would invariably train indigenous leadership for these groups.

Nee also received a bachelor's degree during this period from Trinity College in Foochow. During the later 1920's he lost at least two years of work because of his tuberculosis. It was during this period he married Chiang Pin-Hwai, a family friend who had graduated in literature from the famous Yin King University. Her knowledge of literature would assist Nee in his writing and translation work. He remained with her until he was imprisoned by the Communists.

During the 1930's Nee traveled widely in China focusing more on church planting than he had previously. The base for his operations moved to Shanghai in 1932. During this period he also made a trip to England, attending the Keswick convention, and eventually having a falling-out with his hosts, the Exclusive Brethren of the "London Group," because he refused to separate himself from other Christians.

Nee's Person

Nee quickly manifested the main personal and spiritual characteristics that would determine the tone of his ministry regardless of subsequent shifts in doctrinal emphasis. These characteristics can be summarized as follows.

Zealousness

Nee was unusually zealous from the first day of his Christian life until the last. His zeal was so intense that it might well have been considered fanaticism in our culture. On the positive side, his zeal no doubt was an important element in his ability to lead and persuade others. On the negative side, he tended to lack patience, driving himself to the point of physical collapse on several occasions.

Idealism

Nee was not only idealistic, he was hyper-idealistic. The word "compromise" was not in his vocabulary. Cliff points out that he bitterly denounced the western missionary churches because "...He found the Christians of the missionary churches half-hearted and compromising, and charged that the denominations were weighted down with what was to him man-made traditions regarding baptism, worship and ordination, teaching what was quite foreign to what he read in the New Testament. Nee considered the western form of church life (especially the existence of denominations) "an affront to God." He deplored the clergy/laity distinction that was so strong in western Christianity. While the responsibility of expanding the work of the church lay chiefly, if not solely on the shoulder of the pastor in the other denominational churches, Nee concentrated on training

all the believers to the work of God. Thus Nee manifested himself as a purist in terms of primitive biblical Christianity.

Another aspect of the same purism was his refusal to become part of the popular nationalism that was dominating China at the time. During the war with Japan, Nee refused to pray that China or Japan would win. "It must be possible," he said in 1940, "for British and German, Chinese and Japanese Christians to kneel and pray together. In China, Christians and Missionaries have too much intimacy with the state.... We ask for neither a Chinese or Japanese victory, but for whatever is of advantage...to Thee..."

Studious

Nee is repeatedly characterized by those who knew him as a profound student of the Scriptures. He demonstrated knowledge of the Greek text in his writings, although it is not clear whether he was versed in Greek or depended on other authorities. Kinnear comments on Nee's preaching, that no one ever saw him use any notes, for he remembered and could reproduce anything he read. Noted Chinese evangelist John Sung said, "For exposition of the Scriptures, I am not equal to Watchman Nee." Therefore, like so many great figures in the history of the church, Nee had powerful intellectual gifts that were well developed, as well as a love of God's Word.

Many of the features of the 'post Denominational Church' in China Nee would warmly endorse. Denominational labels have gone, as he advocated for many years. Most of the pastors are self-supporting and the laity plays a prominent role in church life -- features with which he would be in full agreement. The Church has been freed from the encumbrances of maintaining large premises and of running institutional work.

It is obvious to this author that God was at work during the last years of freedom in China to establish an underground network of house churches that were ideally suited to survive and grow even in the appalling circumstances of the last 35 years. The groups have a distinct Chinese flavor in the doctrinal outlook and are entirely used to carrying on Christian witness on an underground basis.

Nee's Legacy

It is hard to tell how large the Little Flock movement was in China at the time of the [Maoist] revolution. One reason for this is the fact that Nee felt it was fleshly to consider numbers. Therefore there was no systematic effort made by Little Flock themselves to count their people. There was no formal membership in the group, since Nee believed membership in the body of Christ was determined

by God, and there was no good reason for the church to draw up a list.

According to Cliff, in 1949 the "Little Flock" (as the movement's congregations became called) had over 70,000 members in 500 assemblies. However, according to the Ecumenical Press Service the Little Flock had at this time 362 places of worship and 39,000 members in the one province of Chekiang [alone—not counting other provinces]. These figures were interpreted as indicating that members of the Little Flock made up 15-20 per cent of the whole Protestant church in China, and that they may have been the largest single denomination. In other words, this estimate would show anywhere from 150,000 to 300,000 members for the Little Flock. Cheung affirms there were "thousands" of assemblies by 1956, and that the Little Flock was the largest Christian group in China.

Nobody has even hazarded a guess as to how many of the millions of Christians meeting in house churches today may be the outgrowth of Little Flock groups. Two things are clear: There are many house churches that are directly derived from Little Flock churches, and there are many other groups that owe a substantial debt to Little Flock doctrine and practice for their survival.

When the organized churches were destroyed in the Cultural Revolution, traditional forms of Christianity were also done away with. The household churches have cast off the trappings of the West and have developed their own forms of ministry. The dynamics of house churches, therefore flow partly from their freedom from institutional and traditional bondage.

The story of God's witness in China is far from over. Indeed, there is no reason to think that China will not continue to be one of the true spiritual hot-spots in the world – due in part to the work done by one of God's agents, Watchman Nee.

[Dennis Allen found the above good article on the web. Neither its author or date of writing are told, so the time periods mentioned are uncertain. But since it mentions "the appalling circumstances of the last 35 years," and the Communists under Mao conquered mainland China in 1949, it may have been written around 1984.

Nee wrote many books. Two which you might find especially valuable are *The Normal Christian Life*, and *Sit, Walk, Stand*. The former is based on Romans, the latter on Ephesians. They are still in print; ask your Christian bookstore or use the web. A very few of his books need to be read with great discretion, it seems to me. We should always be like the Bereans in Acts 17:11. -avw]

China: The Church's Inspiring Growth In Unrelenting Suffering

The story of the Christian Church in China oppressed under Communism is inspiring. Its context is that Communist regimes such as China always regard Christianity as a threat to their very existence, because of their atheistic political ideology.

During the dark years of Mao's 'Great Leap Forward' (launched in 1958) and 'The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' (1966), multitudes of Christian leaders were killed and imprisoned for their faith, and many others spent years in hard labor camps. The Communists thought they were destroying the church, but it was really like they were stepping on the head of a dandelion.

The Church in China sprang quietly to life like a freshly sown field. Led primarily by elderly women who had escaped the Communist purges, small house churches sprouted all over the country. Their very existence was and still is illegal. Fifty years of oppression and persecution has seen this Church grow from around one million believers in 1949 to 70-80 million today. But we must never forget that along with this inspirational growth, the suffering of our Chinese Christian brethren is very real.

In China today, Christians may operate within the state religious system, but the conditions placed on these official Chinese Communist Party (CCP) sanctioned churches are intolerable to most evangelical Christians. To remain true to the gospel message and to evangelize, they function illegally outside the official church system.

These 'illegal' Christians are at great personal risk in China, where a citizen can be detained for two weeks without any charge being laid. Trials are often mere show, with no lawyers present to represent the accused. At the discretion of the police, a citizen may receive an administrative sentence (requiring no legal process) for up to three years in one of the enormous network of Soviet style labor camps.

The US State Department's *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom 2000* describes the Chinese Government's respect for religious liberty as having "deteriorated markedly." It notes that "government officials in some regions imposed tight regulations, closed houses of worship, and actively persecuted members of some unregistered religious groups. Members of such groups were subject to harassment, extortion, prolonged detention, physical abuse, and incarceration in prison or in 're-education through labor' camps. There were credible reports of religious detainees being beaten and tortured."

On 23 August [also in the year 2000?] 15 police raided a meeting of the Fangcheng Church in Henan Province, arresting 109 Christians. A week later, police violently raided an underground Catholic Church in Fujian Province, and of the 24 worshippers arrested, 22 are still detained, whereabouts unknown. Also in late August, four Christians arrested in Hua Du were immediately sentenced to 15 days in jail.

The church in Hua Du was broken up by authorities in May. Now these 600 believers meet in 40 smaller fellowships, where baptisms occur every week. The words of the Chinese officials in USA are indeed true that China is witnessing a 'golden age for religion'. However, that has nothing to do with freedom of religion, because there is none. Church growth is occurring amidst intense suffering.

PLEASE PRAY SPECIFICALLY FOR:

*The safety, health and strength of imprisoned Chinese Christians, separated from their loved ones and church families.

*Their emotional and spiritual strength, that they will be 'lights' in their prison or labor camp, and that their imprisonment will not be without blessing. "Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering." Hebrews 13:3.

*The encouragement, hope and strength of families of incarcerated Christians, and for support with food and income.

*Witness, even to the highest levels of the Chinese Communist Party, to bring about a change in the Chinese situation.

--John Mark Ministries

CHURCH PERSECUTION AND GROWTH IN CHINA

Christianity always seems to grow where its followers are persecuted and paradoxically seems to die away where its followers have the absolute freedom to worship. The United States seems to be one of the exceptions so far--despite all the freedoms and distractions that we have, there are many who practice authentic Christianity. We need to pray that this will last.

Newsweek had an interesting article last May about how *Christians are being heavily persecuted in China even as the church is growing at a rate never before seen in history.* Being a Christian in

China literally means risking one's life, so there are probably few who worship just to look good to their friends and neighbors.

Some estimate that there are 90 million Christians in China. Are there 90 million believers in the United States? Maybe, and maybe not. It's quite possible that China is the most heavily Christian country in the world in terms of sheer numbers of believers. Not only is the church thriving under persecution, but they are sending out missionaries to other countries. Here's what the *Newsweek* article has to say:

May 10 issue-- When they praise the Lord, they close the windows. In a packed classroom in China's Henan province, 35 young Christians stand behind their desks singing the Hallelujah prayer. These students have pledged the next three years of their lives to this illegal seminary, one of the many run across China by members of the Chinese Protestant underground. Tucked away in a two-story apartment donated by a fellow believer, these future preachers study, eat and sleep together, girls in one room, boys in another. If the students want to leave the school, they must do so one or two at a time, at night, so as not to make the neighbors suspicious. They often go weeks without venturing outdoors. After the last Hallelujah, they open the windows.

All across China, more and more people are turning to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The numbers have been growing for years, encouraged by the personal freedoms that have slowly accompanied the country's economic reforms. Protestantism--and especially evangelicalism--appeals to many Chinese in rural areas that have been left out of China's economic miracle. Now China has at least 45 million Christians, the majority of whom are Protestant, according to Chinese academics. Western observers say the numbers are much higher. Dennis Balcombe, a preacher from California who has made hundreds of mission trips to China since the late 1970s, and Western researchers put the number at closer to 90 million.

Meanwhile, under-ground churches are expanding with lightning speed. Some of these groups oppose all state controls. Others are willing to register, but the government won't accept them. Faced with the accelerating growth of so-called house churches, the government has cracked down hard--bulldozing many of them and increasing the number of arrests. In January the government arrested Xu Yongling, a top leader in the movement to evangelize abroad. Last June, a group of underground Christians in Guangxi province who had applied to register were summoned by the authorities to finish the final steps of the application process. They arrived with all their paperwork completed and notarized, only to be arrested on the spot and sentenced to re-education camps. The government eventually re-

leased them, but there are scores of examples of others who have been similarly duped and not as lucky.

The level of organization within China's Christian community is almost as great as its size. The underground movement is largely divided into five groups that began in Henan, Anhui and Zhejiang provinces and spread across the country, sometimes branching off in different directions or under different leaders. Each has its own head and council of nine elders, and members of the groups meet quarterly to discuss issues facing the church. In 1998, for example, they penned a letter to the country's top leaders, demanding recognition. They even regulate themselves: one member says the five bodies were instrumental in helping to curb the activities of Eastern Lightning, a Christian offshoot that the government had labeled a violent cult. "We worked really hard to get rid of this sect," says Liu Ling, an underground preacher who asked only the name on her fake travel documents be used. "I believe our efforts were more successful than the government's."

Liu was one of China's first missionaries to strike out across the country after the end of Mao's destructive Cultural Revolution. But compared with 20 years ago, the converts come much more easily than they once did. Last year she trained more than 200 students to be missionaries in hidden seminaries in southern China. Liu still takes special precautions to evade the authorities--every three days she changes her mobile-telephone number--but schools like hers are so successful, they now have to turn some applicants away. One school in Henan province weeds out less-promising candidates after a two-month trial period and sends them to an alternative program, where they work part time in a textile factory and study religion. The seminaries always hold Bible classes, but also often arm disciples with practical lessons in composition, computers and, in some cases, Arabic.

At a meeting in March, about 60 believers gathered in a southwestern Chinese city to discuss proselytizing. The believers were keen to penetrate China's 56 minority groups. Minorities like the Muslim Uighurs are often isolated from mainstream Chinese life and face discrimination in their work and education. Of course, this makes them natural targets for a message of redemption. But preaching to them is risky for the missionaries, who are mostly Han, China's ethnic majority. "Because we speak different languages... it is not easy for us to stay among them," says Paul, one of China's top underground Christian leaders, who is under close surveillance by authorities and asked that only his Christian name be used. "It's quite easy to detect us."

But this group of Christian faithful has higher ambitions than converting Chinese minorities. They're hoping for converts around the world. In fact, Paul is part of the first wave of Chinese missionaries to scout out opportunities for proselytizing in Muslim countries. Using a pseudonym, he recently traveled to Egypt and Jordan and says he was happy to discover many people of moderate Islamic beliefs. "So in those places, we will set up factories where Arabs can come and work," he says. The factories will make real products with profits going to support the preachers. Paul shrugs off the risk of angering Middle Eastern governments. "We are not going to go out in the street. We'll just meet people one on one, so even if they don't agree with us, there's no harm." He's only one disciple in the early stage of a massive crusade organized by Chinese Christian leaders worldwide. Dubbed the "Back to Jerusalem Movement," the initiative calls for Chinese Christians to spread the Gospel in every country, to every ethnic group between China and Jerusalem. The movement's Web site calls the crusade a cause Christians are "willing to die for." The idea has been percolating for decades, but Chinese Christians are only now preparing to launch it in earnest. They've held conferences in Milan and Paris, and they run six training and information distribution centers in the United States and Europe.

It's that kind of bravery that terrifies the Communist Party. It sees the Protestant and Catholic churches, in part, as responsible for the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. The party quickly crushes any movement that is a potential threat to its power, especially if it organizes people from different social or geographic backgrounds. Falun Gong leader Li Hongzhi did just that when he mobilized thousands of his followers to gather near Tiananmen Square in 1999. Beijing responded by violently cracking down. Now that the Falun Gong has been virtually wiped out on the mainland, Christians are one of the biggest threats in terms of sheer numbers and organization.

Theme #2 this month--

Turning the Other Cheek, and Returning Good for Evil

[Matt. 5:38-42]
A.V.W.

"I believe in an eye for an eye," writes Donald Trump. "A couple of people who betrayed me need my help now, and I am screwing them against the wall!" Contrast his words with these of Jesus in Matthew 5:38-42.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' 39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic [shirt], let him have your cloak [coat] as well. 41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."

Once more our Lord makes it crystal clear that His followers should be different from other people. As Jesus' disciples we often should *act* differently from others. Other times our actions will be the same, but our *motives*—our reasons, attitudes, and manner of doing what we do--will be different. Or should be.

In these verses and the following ones too, Jesus asks us, "What are you doing more than other people? If you are friendly only to your friends, *how are you different* from anyone else?"

From verse 21 onward, Jesus has been applying God's Law to our lives, correcting false *interpretations* and wrong *applications* of God's O.C. Commands to Israel—re: murder (and the hate which causes it), adultery (and the lust which leads to it), divorce and marital unfaithfulness (which Jesus deals with more completely in Matt. 19), and oath-breaking (which springs from deceitfulness).

Now, in this text, He deals with our reaction to those who **oppose** us, who **impose** on us, or who **wrong** us—as seen in the expressions, "...an evil person...if someone strikes you...or sues you...or forces you..." etc. He is teaching us how to react when treated unlovingly, unfairly, even unjustly--when we are tempted to seek revenge on those who mistreat us.

Once again He shows us 1) what God's Law actually said, and also 2) how the scribes or religion scholars misinterpreted the command, and then 3) His correct interpretation.

What God's Old Covenant Said

In Ex. 21:22-25, we read, "If men . . . are fighting . . . [and] there is serious injury, you are to *take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.*"

This was a good rule, if its purpose was rightly understood. It was a *guideline for Israel's judges in court-cases involving injuries*. It was a principle to control and restrain the injured person's desire for revenge. It lay down the principle, "Let the punishment fit the

crime.” It set limits to legal penalties, lest they become excessive. For instance, it forbade an arm-for-a-tooth.

If a life was taken, the guilty person’s life could be required, depending on circumstances, but the punishment could not be “the killer must die *and also his family must become slaves of the victim’s family.*” If a man caused another to lose his eye, then he could be forced to pay his victim an amount regarded as the equivalent for losing sight in one eye – but not, for example, be imprisoned for life.

So this law was good: It upheld justice, and worked to prevent revenge. It also restrained violent vendettas or gang wars, and family feuds. (Remember the Hatfields vs. the McCoys?) In such cases if one member is wounded the group must avenge their honor by killing one or even several of the other family or gang.

Mark Twain wrote of a conversation where Huck Finn asked his buddy to explain the meaning of a feud. Huck’s friend replied, “Well, a feud is this way: A man has a quarrel with another man, and kills him; then that other man’s brother kills *him*; then the other brother, on both sides, goes for one another; then the *cousins* chip in—and by and by everybody’s killed off, and there ain’t no more feud. But it’s kind of slow, and takes a long time.” When will folks ever learn?

Interpretations – Wrong and Right

How did the “religion scholars” mis-interpret this command? They wrongly applied it to personal relations, and used it to justify retaliation. “He wronged me, so I have a perfect right to get revenge—to strike back up to the amount of harm he caused me. I must not do more harm to him than he did to me, but it’s perfectly alright to get even.”

How then did our Lord correct their mistake? He gave a *general principle, illustrated by four examples.* His general principle is in verse 39: “Do not resist an evil person.” (NIV & New Living Translation.) That is, “Do not take revenge on someone who does you wrong” (Good News Bible). Or, “Do not try to get even with the evil person” (F. D. Bruner). But the King James Version puts it, “Resist not evil” and the Living Bible says, “Don’t resist violence.” Those translations have caused weird misunderstandings.

Some of them have been way-out absurd: Luther mentioned a crazy man some folks considered to be a saint. “He let the lice nibble at him and refused to kill any of them because of this saying of Jesus, maintaining he had to suffer and could not resist evil.”

And a century ago the Russian novelist and social reformer Leo Tolstoy, who claimed to be a Christian, taught that it is impossible to believe in Jesus as Son of God and at the same time favor the establishment of law courts, police departments, military forces and government at all – because they resist evil and even return evil for evil! But Tolstoy was obviously wrong. For Paul appealed to Caesar – i.e., Rome's supreme court. And neither John the Baptizer nor Jesus nor His apostles told converted soldiers they must leave military service. (Luke 3:14; 7:2-10; Acts 10.)

In our times some people have taught that Jesus' words forbid governments to use force of any kind. Some radicals in the 1960s and '70s had the slogan, "Better Red than Dead." Don't oppose Russia with its nuclear weapons because warfare would eliminate us all. Instead, we should be willing to surrender to Russia in order to save mankind. (Then Pres. Reagan came along and challenged: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall"—and soon the Soviet empire fell apart.)

To claim that Jesus' statement "Resist not evil" proves He was against all government, all force and all war is contradicted throughout the Bible, including the NT: Jesus said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's" -- i.e., pay taxes. Paul wrote that government is established by God for the purposes of punishing wrong-doers and rewarding those who do good. (Rom. 13:1ff). Etc.

There have been other mis-applications too: Never execute any lawbreakers, no matter what their crimes. Never spank children. But Jesus is not referring to international relations, nor treatment of criminals, nor discipline of kids.

He is referring to *His disciples' conduct as individuals*. He is talking about personal reactions by Christians to personal mistreatment, as His examples make clear. He says, in summary, "*My disciples should base their personal relations on love, not mere justice*. Be loving and forgiving, and willing not to demand your rights always. Be willing to suffer evil rather than repay evil.

The world's common attitude is, "I'll get even with him if it's the last thing I do. I'll never forget what he did to me!" No, says Jesus. And after stating His general principle, He gives four illustrations of it, showing how we as individuals might apply the principle.

1) If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

That raises lots of questions, doesn't it? #1: Should we do this literally? Think and pray about it for yourself. My personal answer

is: Maybe, but not necessarily. That is, if someone literally slaps you, perhaps you should take it and face him down, asking why he did it, or of what use is such violence. But under some circumstances, it may be better to run away or to fight back-- to protect others, for instance.

Question #2: Should we turn the other cheek *always*? Study it for yourself. My answer is: No, for Jesus and later Paul were both unjustly slapped at their public trials, but neither one turned the other cheek! (John 18:22f; Acts 23:3.) On that occasion Jesus challenged the smiter: "If I've spoken wrongly, why do you strike me?" He did not answer force with force, blow with blow, but He exposed and rebuked the wrong. Also Paul twice used his rights as a Roman citizen to defend himself from being abused: in Acts 16:35-39, when he'd been jailed; and in Acts 22:25-29, when he was about to be flogged.

Samuel Chadwick said: "Proverbs such as 'resist not evil' state a *general principle but not a universal principle.*" In other words, there are exceptions. "The difficulty with a literal interpretation is its inconsistency with Christ's own example. He resisted evil and opposed wrong-doers [as we just mentioned but even more when He cleansed the temple--avw]. No doubt the literal interpretation is the easiest. Face-slappings, robbery and compulsion are not too common in a free country. Most adults go through life without ever being required to turn the other cheek."

Actually it may be that the slap Jesus mentions was intended more as an insult than an injury. The backhand slap of the right cheek was often used in that mocking way. In that case, we may be "slapped" on many occasions: On the job you are insulted as politically incorrect, and the views you hold are twisted beyond recognition—maybe behind your back or even to your face. Or on the expressway you are driving at the speed limit and in the right lane and some speeder dangerously cuts you off and gives you the finger, for slowing him down.

We are not to seek revenge, but there may be times when it is right to stand up for law and order and defend ourselves--or especially others. After all, Jesus didn't say, "If anyone slaps your neighbor, do nothing about that." Instead, do or say what you can to protect that neighbor.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote: "The Christian is not to be concerned about personal insults. But when it is a matter of righteousness and truth, he *must* be concerned and thus he makes his protest." And Matthew Henry explained, It is the Christian's duty "to forgive an injury done to himself, and no further insist upon the punishment

of it than is *necessary for the good of the public,*" *the community's safety.*

At Central Bible Institute in Manila, one time two drunks broke the big glass front door of the building. They had no money, and we decided *not* to press charges—which would have put them in jail one or two days. But another time, when a man pulled a knife on one of our students right outside the dorm, we decided not to turn the other cheek. We *did* press charges as a warning to him and his friends in the community. (Though I believe the police never arrested him.)

So When and How Do We Obey This Teaching?

Here are four more examples of turning the cheek, that may throw some light on those questions. **Alvin Dark** was manager of the New York Giants—obviously decades ago, before they moved west. One day he removed a popular pitcher from the game. As Dark arrived back at the dugout a fan threw a cup of beer in his face. The manager could have had the fan ejected by the police, or could have jumped up into the stands to hit him. But he just wiped it off and went into the dugout. He was a Christian, and had read in Scripture *that very morning* how Jesus' captors had spit on Him!

Hudson Taylor, a missionary in China, needed to cross a lake. He signaled to the pilot of a small boat, who came to pick him up. But just then a rich Chinaman arrived. Not used to waiting, he pushed Taylor aside so hard that he fell into some mud. The rich man began to get on, but the boatman said "No, the foreigner called me first." Taylor got on, but then invited his assailant to come too! The man was astonished at the gracious invitation, and Taylor talked to him about Christ as they went.

Billy Bray, a tough boxer in England, later worked as a coal-miner. He became converted to Jesus. There was a man who'd been very afraid of him before, but probably thought he was a wimp now. With all his might he struck Billy Bray without cause, wanting to fight him. But the new convert simply told him, "May God forgive you, as I forgive you." The attacker was dumbfounded, and soon became a Christian himself.

And last year we remembered how in 1956 **five missionary men** landed in a dense jungle of Ecuador seeking to make peaceful contact with the violent "Auca" Indians. Each man took a pistol, but only as protection from wild animals. On the third day a band of warriors charged them, brandishing their spears. The missionaries pulled out their pistols and shot—up in the air, to scare them off. Soon the warriors returned and this time killed the five men. The latter still had bullets in their guns, but they refused to kill their assailants. After

all, the Christians were ready to die, but their attackers were not. Years later most of those warriors were converted—through the teaching of the wife of one missionary and the sister of another one. (See Nov./Dec. '05 W&W for several articles related to this.)

Here is how someone summed up this teaching about turning the other cheek: "It is better to *suffer* wrong twice than to *do* wrong once."

Teaching *Children* about "Turning the Other Cheek"

Dr. James Dobson

In his excellent booklet, *Dr. Dobson talks about ANGER*, the author is asked, "My five-year-old daughter has a rather passive personality, and she is constantly being hit, kicked and pinched by other children What do you suggest?"

He replies, "It is unrealistic to expect a young child to exhibit all of the characteristics of a mature Christian—turning the other cheek and walking the second mile. To require complete passivity from him is to strip his defenses in a world of fists and teeth and thrown fire trucks.

"The relevant scriptural principles should be taught in the pre-school years . . . [by teaching] our children not to hit and hurt others, and to be Christlike in their love. The second part of that formula (returning good for evil) requires greater maturity and a few more years. Generally speaking, a parent should emphasize the stupidity of fighting. But to force a child to stand passively while being clobbered is to leave him at the mercy of his cold-blooded peers."

Dr. Dobson also tells of Joan, a little neighborhood bully "who would crack three-year-old Ann in the face at the slightest provocation. Ann had been taught not to fight. I recommended that Ann's mother tell her to hit Joan back, but only if she was hit first. Several days later Ann walked casually into the house and explained, 'Joan socked me so I had to help her remember not to hit me again.' She and Joan have played together much more peacefully since that time."

Jesus' 2nd illustration--

2) If Someone Sues You for Your Shirt, Let Him Have Your Coat Too

If Christ's first illustration was about being insulted and perhaps violently mistreated, His second is about abuse of our property and possessions. He says that if you are swindled, don't let bitterness toward your swindler, or toward God, overwhelm you. Heb. 10:34 echoes this principle, commending believers who were being persecuted because "you joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property since you knew you had a better and eternal possession."

Don't always insist on your legal rights, even if you sometimes suffer injustice. In dismay Paul wrote the Corinthians, "Christian brother goes to law against brother and even before unbelievers. To have lawsuits at all with [other disciples] is defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?" (1 Cor. 6:6f.)

Here are 2 examples. The first is told by Watchman Nee, an outstanding church leader in China during the mid-1900s. The second occurred at Portland Avenue Church in Louisville.

1. A new Christian in pre-Communist China faced a crisis. He was a farmer, whose strip of rice-field lay next to an irrigation stream on the terraced hillside. But several times he'd been defrauded of his laboriously pumped water by a neighbor beneath him on the slope who at night pierced through his retaining wall and drained the water to his own fields below.

In desperation the Christian asked fellow-Christians, "What shall I do? It's not right!" They prayed, then suggested he go the 2nd mile. "If we do only the right thing, it's not enough. We should go beyond what is merely right." The next day he carried his treadmill waterpump there and in the morning pumped water for his neighbor's two strips of land below him, then in the afternoon pumped enough for his own field. The neighbor was stunned, and soon became a convert. (*Against the Tide*, biography of Watchman Nee.)

2. Here at Portland, over a year ago three neighborhood boys about 10 years old began attending my wife's Sunday School class. They also came to Wed. night Bible Club a few times. A few weeks later a Portland Christian School teacher's wallet disappeared during a school program one night, and several days later Ruth's wallet was nowhere to be found after church. Sure enough, under intense questioning one of the boys finally admitted "they" took them both. The teacher's wallet was found, minus the money; but Ruth's had been

dropped down the sewer. In case you haven't had the experience, it's a humongous bother to get new keys made, cancel your credit cards, replace your driver's license, etc. etc.

Yet despite their mistreatment of her, and the trouble caused and time wasted, Ruth wanted to tell those boys more about Jesus, forgiveness, repentance and new birth. Sister Lois Campbell agreed for her and them to meet at her house, and one of the boys came. Of course Ruth stressed how bad their conduct had been, but she also told him she was willing to forgive them and Christ was eager to save them.

The other two boys had moved away, to "somewhere near 15th and Jefferson Streets" -- where there are many tenements. After searching, Ruth found their apartment there -- a miracle in itself. She picked them up for Bible Club several times, till finally they moved far away. By the grace and persistence of God, we hope to see those boys in the Glory someday.

It is hard to return good for evil. But it is the way of Jesus the Christ. And it is His path to growth now and glory later!

LOVE BELIEVES and HOPES

1 Cor. 13 says Love "always trusts and always hopes." That does not mean it is gullible, naïve, easily fooled, unrealistic. It does mean it is "*always ready to trust, to hope*" (Jerusalem Bible) -- "*it is always eager to believe the best, always hopeful*" (Moffat translation).

In other words, the loving Christian will give other people the benefit of the doubt. He'll put the best possible interpretation on their actions and words, especially the words reported by someone else. She will avoid jumping to damaging conclusions. He will keep giving other folks more chances unless that is not at all feasible. She will communicate with disgruntled critics and try to clear up the differences between them and her. He will listen to both sides in a controversy. They try to be "always eager to believe the best, always hopeful."

When I was in college, John R. Rice was a veteran evangelist and outspoken editor of *The Sword of the Lord* and of *John R. Rice*. He loved and stood up for Christ and the Bible. But also he often wrote articles highly critical of Wheaton. He opposed and denounced it as too liberal and compromising. (The college's backing of Billy Graham was one reason.)

So I was surprised and impressed when in class one day, a professor made these comments: "Be slow to condemn John R. Rice. If you could *hear* him say in person what he *writes* on paper, you would have a very different opinion of the sort of man he is.

"Actually, he's a loving, kind, concerned man motivated by the fear of God. But most of his graciousness doesn't come through in his articles. See and hear him – his facial expressions, tone of voice, his yearning for the lost and concern for God's glory, the catch in his throat and tears in his eyes as he preaches. Then you'll know what John R. Rice is really like, and you'll *respect* him *even if you don't agree with him.*"

I learned a valuable lesson that day. And I was glad when the college later had Brother Rice speak in chapel at least twice while I was there. And at least one of his daughters enrolled in Wheaton.

WHAT WOULD WE HAVE DONE?

Wayne Newland, Falmouth, Maine

It's a tendency of human nature to look back on history and think that we would have done the right thing. *If I were Peter, I would never have denied Jesus! I would have properly understood the Bible even without the help of great men and women teachers of the past! I would never have supported slavery!*

We know our nation's history -- how the country existed for nearly a hundred years before the war to end slavery. There were sincere people on both sides of the issue. Churches used the Scriptures to argue for as well as against it. Who among us now wouldn't say that slavery was wrong?

Recently I read the following story of some heroic believers, and found it moving and humbling. If we had lived 250 years ago, how would our faith have led us? -- W. Newland

The 1758, the Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends took place in Philadelphia. The slavery issue was a major agenda item. A great deal was at stake and the issue was hotly debated. John Woolman, with head bowed and tears in his eyes, sat through the various sessions in complete silence. Finally, after hours of agonizing prayer he rose and spoke. "My mind is led to consider the purity of the Divine Being, and the justice of His judgment, and herein my soul is covered with awfulness...Many slaves on this continent are oppressed...It is not a time for delay." Firmly and tenderly Wool-

man dealt with the problems. With prophetic boldness he warned the Meeting that if it failed to do its "duty in firmness and constancy" then "God may by terrible things in righteousness answer us in this matter."

The entire Yearly Meeting melted into a spirit of unity as a result of this compassionate witness. They responded as one voice to remove slavery from their midst. John Greenleaf Whittier states that those sessions "must ever be regarded as one of the most important religious convocations in the history of the Christian Church."

That united decision is particularly impressive when we realize that the Society of Friends was the only body that asked slaveholding members to reimburse their slaves for their time in bondage. (There are no accurate figures on the amount that was paid though it was common to pay the yearly wage at that time. It is said that it had cost North Carolina Friends fifty thousand pounds to release their slaves.)

So influential was the united decision of the 1758 Yearly Meeting that by the time the Declaration of Independence was signed less than two decades later, Quakers had completely freed themselves from the institution of slavery.

Source: Celebration of Discipline – the Path to Spiritual Growth by Richard J. Foster (p. 183)

* * * *

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said: "One of the most tragic things about us is that **our lives are so much governed by other people** and by what they do to us and think about us Your love must become such that you will no longer be governed and controlled by what other people say or do to you – but by God's love in your heart.

Christ's challenge is searching: "What are you doing more than others?"

Lessons from the Farm (6)

Bob Yarbrough

I live on a farm. The country reveals all kinds of critters and varmints, some of which seem to serve no useful purpose. Sometimes I have wondered why Noah ever brought certain animals aboard the ark. I have never seen any value in a skunk. They are cute in animated cartoons, but that's about all. Skunks are the number one road-kill animal seen and smelled on the highways and farm roads of America. The question, *Why did the chicken cross the road?* does have a simple answer. It was *to prove to skunks and opossums that it could be done.*

Another varmint that seems useless is the armadillo; however I have noticed some rather exotic purses and boots made from their hides. Armadillos are devastating to a front or back yard. They dig for grub worms and they will literally destroy a yard in a few nights (they are nocturnal creatures). I will shoot them on sight whenever I see one since I know first hand what they will do to a yard.

One evening about dusk I was treating four of my grandkids to a four-wheeler ride around the place when Joseph, age four, spotted what he thought was a rabbit. Upon closer inspection, we discovered it was an armadillo rooting around in our young pecan grove. I drove back to the house and got my trusty 410 shotgun. I asked our son, Mark, if he wanted his kids to witness the execution of the "destroyer."

Of course, the kids begged and pleaded to go, and Mark thought it okay as well; so off we went, back to the place where we spotted the armadillo - all of us on the four-wheeler. The animal had moved around a bit, but I still had a clear shot. We all got very still, and then, BOOM! I got him with my first shot. What I did not expect was what happened after the gunshot. A tremendous cheer rang out. All four grandkids let loose with a victory shout that could be heard in the next county. Later, Mark told me he heard the shouts at the house, quite a distance away. As we rode back to the house, all the kids were shouting, raising their arms high in the air with the victory cheer. My wife Janet (Mamma Jan to our grandchildren) and son were standing on the porch witnessing this rousing celebration. All I could do was laugh and enjoy the moment. An enemy of the premises had been destroyed - there was "joy in the camp."

In thinking about this event later, I saw some parallels to the Christian walk from at least two points of view. First, the enemy of our soul, the destroyer, is ever lurking around seeking to do as much harm as he can (1 Pet. 5:8). He can ruin a life and make a be-

liever's testimony totally ineffective for the Lord. It can be done so quickly when we are not on guard against him. We are engaged in Spiritual warfare, but according to Ephesians 6:11-17 we are well equipped to combat the enemy. Believers are told to resist the devil and he will flee from us (Jas. 4:7). That power to be victorious lies within the believer in the person of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19), and He is more powerful than the evil one (1 Jn. 4:4).

There is a sense of joy and celebration when we have met the enemy through some trial or difficulty, and then won the victory defeating him through the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It makes one want to shout praises to the Lord when the victory has been won. Also, it helps when there are other believers who can shout praises with you in your victory. My grandkids were certainly giving me the victory high-fives when I bagged that menacing varmint. The Bible teaches us to rejoice with those who rejoice (Rom. 12:15). When Jesus told the parables of the lost sheep, coin, and son, an important ingredient in the story was the invitation to rejoice with the finder (Luke 15). We all need the encouragement that can come from other believers as we take our stand in the faith. Let's celebrate with each other's victory.

A second point struck me as I thought about this event. It was a thrilling moment when we all came back victorious from our "armadillo expedition." What joy! What exuberance! What sense of accomplishment! We met the enemy and he was ours! And, there were those we loved waiting for us on the porch when we got home. I think of the Apostle Paul, knowing his end was near, declaring, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Tim 4:7-8). He was approaching home in victory. In concluding his remarks on the resurrection, Paul said, "But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57). He also says, "Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ" (2 Cor. 2:14). We were a one-vehicle procession that afternoon. Children were shouting to their parents and grandparents as they were coming home. It must be something like that when a child of God goes home to be with the Lord after a victorious and abundant life on earth. The Father brings them safely home only to be met with those family members who have gone on before - waiting and watching for their arrival. Oh, what reunion! And it's all because of Jesus. So, let's rejoice with each other's victories and look forward to spreading the news as we're homeward bound. And I certainly want all of those in my family, those whom I love so dearly, safely and securely on the four-wheeler when I arrive home. Our circle will not be broken if I can help it!

God's Purposes, Anxiety, and the Heart of Joseph

Nick Boone

The book of Genesis is not a simple narrative. It is a layered text in which a number of separate stories are brought together under one heading. Many times, we divide up and study separately the stories in Genesis, for the purposes of more coherent Bible lessons. However, as Walter Brueggemann's interesting commentary on Genesis* reveals, the first book of the Bible does contain at least one single dramatic thread that ties the entire book together. He states that the dramatic tension of the book of Genesis revolves around "the faithful, anguished, respectful purpose of the Creator, and creation's mixed response of obedience and recalcitrance" (Genesis 13). Throughout the entire book we are presented with instances of God's most precious creation, humanity, stubbornly refusing His will for themselves and for creation as a whole. The relationship between Creator and created becomes somewhat distanced and rife with anguish and anxiety. However, the book ends quite beautifully as one creature, Joseph, is finally able to resolve these issues of anguish and anxiety by faithfully following God's will, even when there seems to be no good earthly reason to do so.

God's creation is good, but it is not long before the serpent interjects anxiety into the relationship between God and his creatures. God has placed a limit on what humanity can do. This is perfectly normal and rational. Each one of us understands that life is complex and dangerous, and that without drawing proper boundaries on behavior, terrible things can result. Parents, especially, understand this as they raise children. Everyone needs boundaries. They make life safer and more secure. But the serpent blinds Adam and Eve to the truth of the goodness of God's law and convinces them that God's boundaries are infringements on their individual freedom.

As Brueggemann says, "The rhetoric of fidelity [which God has established between himself and humanity] has given way to analysis and calculation. The givenness of God's rule is no longer the boundary of a safe place. God is now a barrier to be circumvented" (48). The commentator also makes an interesting note in saying that the serpent is the first theologian to appear in the Bible. He pretends critical knowledge of God, but he places that knowledge ahead of obedience.

When we leave God's providence behind, when we decide that his will for our lives is inconsequential or is simply an infringement

on our freedom that we can bypass, we create for ourselves a major source of anxiety. And we create, for God, anguish. We see the anguish of God all over the flood narrative in Genesis chapter six: "The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth and his heart was filled with pain" (Gen. 6:6).** God, throughout the entire Bible, Old Testament and New, continually displays his grief at the stubborn heart of a recalcitrant human will. On humanity's side, though, is anxiety. By looking at the will of God for our lives as a barrier to be circumvented rather than a safe boundary or a source of goodness and truth to be cherished and obeyed, we bring numerous burdens on ourselves. Adam and Eve first witnessed this tragedy. But throughout Genesis the same predicament recurs again and again.

Take Cain, for instance. God counsels him, in a very fatherly, gentle way, by warning him that he must master sin, or he will not escape its grasp (Gen. 4:7). When Cain resists God's counsel and murders his brother, we immediately see Cain's anxiety. He doesn't know what to do with himself. Ironically, he asks God to protect him, a murderer, from being murdered himself (Gen. 4:14). Such is the twisted result of a will reluctant to heed God's warnings.

Abraham is a noted man of faith, but even he created much anguish and anxiety when he decided to take matters into his own hands and have a son through Sarah's handmaiden, Hagar. Where there was once no enmity or division in Abraham's family, it now exists in abundance. Abraham's sons also fail to perfectly follow God's will, and they pay for this mistake with loads of anxiety. Example after example of Abraham's seed failing to follow the will of God could be cited, but the end result stays the same. Though God's people continually fail to perfectly obey him, God's will gets fulfilled. Humanity cannot stand in the way of what God wants, ultimately, though they can make a lot of grief for themselves, and God, in the process of disobeying him.

Finally, though, Joseph enters the story. He, although the youngest of Jacob's eleven sons at that time, is the chosen son. Jacob seems to recognize this fact of God's preference for his youngest, but his other sons, for a variety of reasons, fail to see what God saw in Joseph. Some make a point of saying that Jacob created strife between Joseph and the brothers by favoring Joseph overmuch. This is almost certainly true to an extent. It is also somewhat true to say that Joseph, by recounting his dream of superiority to his brothers, brought about his own mistreatment.

But while those two points have some validity, it is most important, in the context of the entire book of Genesis, to see that the

brothers are culpable, not only of committing an atrocious act that borders on fratricide (the intent to murder a brother), but also of not properly hearing, or heeding, the will of God. God has chosen Joseph to be superior, but they feel they have much to lose if the tradition of primogeniture (the eldest son's getting the most inheritance) isn't followed. They get rid of Joseph for their own selfish interests. They are committed to keeping the status quo instead of being open to the dream, as Joseph was. Unlike Joseph, they were not open to listening to what God has planned for their lives, and the life of their family as a whole. No wonder God chose Joseph instead of Reuben, or any of the other brothers. As I Samuel 16:7 reminds us, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Of course, the brothers' failure to heed the will of God creates much anxiety in the family. And this anxiety follows the brothers through the story even to the last chapter of the book. And it is in this final chapter that we witness the final resolution of the theme of "disobedience creates anxiety" in the book of Genesis. Joseph, and his godly heart, his willingness to follow God completely, even when there seems no benefit in doing so, resolves this theme.

For daring to talk of God's will, Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. For staying committed to God's will, Joseph was thrown into prison by Potiphar and his wife. For carrying out God's compassion on the cupbearer, Joseph was forgotten. But throughout the narrative, Joseph never wavers in his obedience and his willingness to follow God's call. This fact is demonstrated nicely in chapter 48, when Jacob blesses Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob gives the best blessing to Ephraim even though Manasseh is the eldest. Though Joseph is at first confused by this, he easily comes to accept this order as God's will for his family. Unlike other father/son/brother/inheritance relationships in Genesis, this situation is happily resolved largely because Joseph is so quick to accept the idea that God has willed Ephraim to be the chosen son. Other fathers (like Abraham and Isaac) were more anxious about how God was carrying out the family plans, and tried to do His job, resulting in much heartache. But Joseph, as always, accepts God's will.

The climax of the triumph of the heart of Joseph is witnessed in chapter fifty. Even after being reunited with Joseph for years, and after seeing his character, the brothers are still haunted by their evil deed of selling Joseph into bondage. After Jacob dies, they are frightened that Joseph will seek revenge, so they lie to him, saying that it was Jacob's wish that Joseph continue to treat his brothers well even after he is gone. The anxiety the brothers brought upon themselves by disobeying God has never been resolved. In fear they bow down to Joseph proclaiming, "We are your slaves" (Gen.

50:18). Joseph's response reveals much about the heart of one who has devoted his life to seeking God's will. He responds to his brothers by saying, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Gen. 50:19-20).

Notice not only the reflection of God's forgiving heart in Joseph's response, but also his humility in saying "Am I in the place of God?" To his brothers, he is in the place of God, since his political position gives him power over their lives. "Surely," the brothers think to themselves, "if we were in his position, the position of God, we would seek revenge." The brothers' problem is that they fail to understand who God is and their proper relation to his will. Joseph bends in obedience to God's will because he stands in humility before God's holiness. He therefore also shows a heart of forgiveness, for it is easier to forgive with a humble view of oneself in light of God's perfect holiness. But the brothers seem to continually assert their own wills in the place of what God wants. They cannot understand Joseph's heart, why he would forgive them, because they have not spent their lives in pursuit of God's will.

Thus, the great book of Genesis ends on a hopeful note. The problem of anxiety and anguish, caused by humanity's disregard of God's will, meets its perfect resolution in the heart of Joseph. He steadfastly and humbly seeks God's purpose throughout his life, and thus brings harmony back to Abraham's strife-riven family.

**Genesis*, by Walter Brueggemann (John Knox, 1982).

**Interestingly, Brueggemann mentions that the word for "grieve" in Genesis 6:6 is the same word used for "pain" in Genesis 3:16, where God describes the pain women will have to bear in childbirth. Obviously, God is exceedingly grieved by the sin of humanity in chapter 6.

Why Muslims Hate the West

Edward Fudge, GracEmail, Oct. 16, 2006

It is astounding to realize that millions of Middle-Eastern Muslims hate the West (and the USA in particular). I am not talking about the terrorists -- barbarian savages who launch suicidal attacks on innocent men, women and children. I am speaking of day laborers and artisans, mothers and school-children, regular people sometimes referred to as "the Arab street." Political correctness says they hate us because they disagree with our democracy, our capitalism, our cherished freedoms -- often summed up as our "way of life."

That is a comfortable answer, to be sure, but it is also wrong. In fact, widespread Muslim animosity toward us is grounded in Islamic religious conviction.

By saying this, I am not suggesting that Islamic convictions are correct. Aside from rejection of polytheism and a call to obey God, Islam offers little in common with Christian faith. It speaks of one God but denies his incarnation in Jesus Christ. It honors Jesus as a prophet of God who was virgin-born and ascended to heaven but denies that he was God's Son, that he died on the cross or was raised from the dead. It teaches that Jesus will come again but says that he will convert the world to Islam when he does. Its scenario of last things includes a form of heaven and hell but bases both destinies wholly on human merit rather than on God's undeserved grace manifested in Jesus' atonement and appropriated by faith. Islam provides for polygamy, denigrates women and inflicts cruel and inhumane punishment on those who trespass against its harsh morality. But what is there about Muslim teaching that fans hatred among its adherents?

In the first place, Muslims see non-Muslims as infidels (unbelievers) and regard the military presence of "infidels" in Muslim countries as gross sacrilege. This applies especially to Saudi Arabia, home to Islam's holiest sites. Secondly, Muslims abhor the lewd and decadent lifestyle regularly displayed in popular Western television programs, movies, music and fashions -- all of which they see invading their own countries despite their best efforts to keep these out. Finally, Muslims consider any land ever inhabited by Muslims to rightfully belong to Muslims forever, regardless of passing years or changing circumstances. This includes the present land of Israel, which Muslims occupied off and on from the eighth century after Christ until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1947.

Because the U.S. steadfastly supports Israel's existence (which I believe it should) and usually its policies involving Palestinian neighbors (which I believe sometimes require a more discerning eye), Muslims not only generally regard the Israelis as unlawful occupiers but the U.S. as equally guilty co-conspirators. I totally, absolutely and unequivocally reject Muslim logic in this regard, but no good is served by pretending that this is not the way most Muslims view the world and our place in it.

"So what if Muslims hate my country?" I ask myself. Should we do anything differently for that reason? As one Christian citizen of the U.S., desiring to think with "the mind of Christ" but not presumptuous enough to suppose that I always do, I raise some questions for further thought. For example, do we too easily go along with the immorality that characterizes contemporary American cul-

ture? Must Muslims be the voice of conscience for our country? I certainly do not want the Muslim (or non-Muslim) world to associate the media-promoted life of sex, drugs and booze -- or even of materialism, self-centeredness and entertainment -- with "Christianity."

I am not a politician but I cannot help wondering: must we maintain military forces in Saudi Arabia, supporting an autocratic ruling family that denies religious freedom to Americans as well as to its own citizens, even while sponsoring Wahabism -- a radical form of Islam that produces terrorists by the score? Does our dependence on Middle Eastern oil as our major energy source forever align us with a totalitarian regime that despises our faith and values? Must geopolitical calculations concerning global balances of power outweigh all other considerations? Has the urgent warning by U.S. founding father George Washington to avoid foreign entanglements become meaningless in the 21st century? Finally, does our unwavering commitment to Israel's security not permit and oblige us to criticize its leaders when they sometimes make wrong choices (as both Jewish and Christian Scriptures say all humans regularly do)?

We live in a troublesome world of only precarious stability. At the very least, we ought to think clearly and know what we are doing. Better information equips us to make better decisions. Misapprehensions and incorrect assumptions set us up for easy manipulation by advocates with axes to grind and by politicians of any party. Some "solutions" to global turmoil are easily recognized as extremes -- "appease" and "annihilate" are opposite examples that quickly come to mind. My concern is not only with our answers; it bothers me that I hear so few questions.

Is there hope for peaceful coexistence, if not for reconciliation? Given the radical dissimilarities between the Islamic world view and our own, the fundamental, irreconcilable and conflicting truth claims held by both camps, and the constant provocation of the Muslim masses by strident jihadist extremists, such a prospect seems humanly impossible. But humans will not have the final word and we need not finally to despair. Instead, as Christians, we can cling to those certainties that transcend politics both national and global. God -- and only God -- is totally trustworthy. His kingdom -- and only his -- will last forever. Whatever happens in the meantime, whether we thrive or suffer, whether we live or die, we are safe in his hands.

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Can You PROVE It?

Joyce Broyles

After four decades of teaching, I gave up my grade book. Three generations of students came through my classrooms and libraries. Though I will not miss the daily routines, reports, and responsibilities, there is one mission that I will miss. Defending my beliefs and my behavior gave me opportunities to share the Good News with many, even in a public school setting.

One surprising attitude of some students that really troubles me is the irreverent feeling toward God. Some profess to be unbelievers, yet continue to use His name when they swear. Many students say they believe in God, but they do not bother worshiping Him in any way, and they do not really believe that He knows them or cares about their daily lives. They say His job is just to run the universe.

Because I believe in God, and I believe that Jesus Christ is His only begotten Son, resurrected from the grave, and I believe that He is coming back to get us to be with Him forever, I try to behave in a way that verifies that belief. I sponsored Bible Clubs, extracurricular groups that met during the lunch hour to hear Bible stories and make application of the lessons to their daily lives. Insisting that no profanity be used in my classroom, I tried to maintain a friendly atmosphere and welcomed any who needed a confidante. Trying to be compassionate and empathetic, I offered a safe haven to those who were misfits.

Sometimes a student or another educator asked if I could prove to them that Jesus really exists. The first time, I was so shocked that I could not think of a good answer. Mortified, I read, studied, asked questions, and heard sermons that gave the groundwork for the proofs I needed. These ideas are not original but are an accumulation of those studies. Now I can answer without stuttering.

This is the answer that I give and I hope that it will satisfy any who need proof that Jesus really is Who He says He is.

1. Consider the empty tomb. Of all the religions on earth, Christianity is the only one whose Savior is alive. No one has produced the body of Jesus.

2. Consider where the Gospel was first preached. In Jerusalem. Where did the crucifixion take place? Jerusalem. Where was Jesus buried? Jerusalem. Where was Jesus resurrected? Jerusalem. Where did He appear after the resurrection? Jerusalem. Would anyone want

to teach a fact in a place where there were eyewitnesses if the fact were not true?

3. Consider the consistent eyewitness testimony. More than 500 witnessed the post-resurrection Jesus. Every one of them said the same thing about Him.

4. Consider the changed lives of the apostles. They had followed Jesus, but they were scared at the crucifixion and scattered. He appeared to them after the resurrection and they then became so bold that in spite of threats, they declared "We cannot stop. . . ."

5. Consider the deaths of the apostles. Every one of them, except John, was killed because of what he preached. Would anyone give his life for something he did not truly believe in? They knew the rest of the story. They were champions of The Faith, and they knew where they were going, even after death.

What a passion those Bible heroes had after seeing Jesus! When we look at them, we cannot but be passionate ourselves, and take a stand against any who would try to put doubt in our hearts. When doubts arise, consider these proofs. We must never give up our faith in Christ.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill, BHill40482@aol.com

Love Packages Will Take Your Old Curriculum

Have you got stacks of old curriculum, magazines or Bibles sitting around your church or office? *Love Packages*, based in Butler, Illinois, collects leftover, unused Christian material and ships it to English-speaking mission fields around the globe. Last year 800 tons of Christian literature was sent to thirty countries. Founded in 1975 by Steve Schmidt, *Love Packages* can be contacted to make a donation of materials by calling 217-532-6701 or by writing to 220 Union Street,

Butler, IL 62015. Their website is www.lovepackages.org --

Brother Nomura's Korean Slum Ministry Featured The *Christ Weekly* is Japan's largest Christian weekly paper. Its issue of Oct. 14, '06, reports a part of the story of Moto Nomura's outreach to poor slum-dwellers back in 1968 to the mid-70s. May the Lord challenge and encourage His people in Japan through that account. If you missed the story in our May issue this year, check it out.

Robert & Joy Garrett Furlough Planned They hope to arrive next

May for about 11 months' home leave. Of course they hope to visit as many churches as possible. Anyone wishing to contact them directly may reach them now at rockwood@mweb.co.zw till the beginning of May. He is willing to hold gospel meetings or teaching meetings during that time, though of course they'll be visiting their widespread family as well. More information later.

LOUISIANA Christian Fellowship Report: (Bennie Hill) The red carpet was once again rolled out at Glenmora Louisiana and supporting churches. Southern hospitality is always at its best among God's people! Many provide overnight housing for speakers and those just visiting. Area churches provide through their ladies' groups daily lunch and some an evening meal to avoid having to travel home and then back.

Every speaker did an excellent job with each one doing a Bible exposition on their given topic. Recordings of each message can be obtained by contacting Donald Stump at 1720 Plum Creek Rd., Taylorsville, KY 40071. A highlight of the meeting was having Bro. Valdetero in attendance on the opening night. His presence and prayer were truly an inspiration to everyone.

Bro. Sonny Childs was kept busy each night with a large number of young people in the Activity Building. Bro. Robin Gough, who

assisted Sonny, also directed for the first time the adult chorus to kick off the meeting on Monday night. On behalf of many of us who do take advantage of this wonderful week of fellowship - we say "thank-you for the many acts of kindness. We look forward, as the Lord tarries His coming, to join again next year!"

KY-IND Christian Fellowship has been scheduled for July 30-August 2, this year. That's a week earlier than usual! This change was made due to many school systems that are beginning their school year earlier every year. We hope this earlier date will encourage more to attend our fellowship.

Buechel Church of Christ announces a "Teacher's Workshop" on Dec. 1-2, 2006. Friday night registration begins at 6:45 p.m. and the first session will end about 9:00 p.m. Saturday workshop will begin at 8:45 a.m. Everyone is welcome to attend.

MISSIONS Around The World Prayer/Praise Booklets have been distributed in the Louisville & Louisiana areas. Our goal has been to get several copies to churches and ministers. Leaders have been asked to pick up several copies for their respective churches. If your church has been missed and would like copies, please contact us at Church of Christ Worldwide, P.O. Box 54842, Lexington, KY 40555. (859) 269-1312.

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Frank and Connie Preston
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He'll COME

Continued from Inside Front Cover

"At that point the great Deceiver will appear, pretending to be a son of God and performing miracles and wonders. The whole world will fall into his hands, and evil will dominate as it has never done before. All the human race will be put on trial, as it were--a trial by fire. Many will fail the test and perish. But those who hold fast to the faith will be saved by the One who bore the curse of sin for us. And then the signs of truth will appear--the opening skies, the trumpet's blast, the resurrection of the dead. The Lord will come, and all his holy ones with him--and every eye shall see him riding on the clouds of heaven."

--From *The Didache* (or "Teaching"), an early Christian document dating back to around 100 A.D. The author is unknown. Notice the strong emphasis on imminence: he says we should watch and "be ready because you simply do not know the moment of the Lord's return." But also note that this very early Christian writer (like articles in the Oct. W&W) looked for the resurrection of the dead and the Lord's coming to occur *after* the appearance of "the great Deceiver" into whose hands the whole world will fall when "evil will dominate as it has never done before" (which must be the "great tribulation"). That provides us with food for thought, and readiness. -avw