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to condemn the world;
but that the world
through him
might be saved.*

John 3:17

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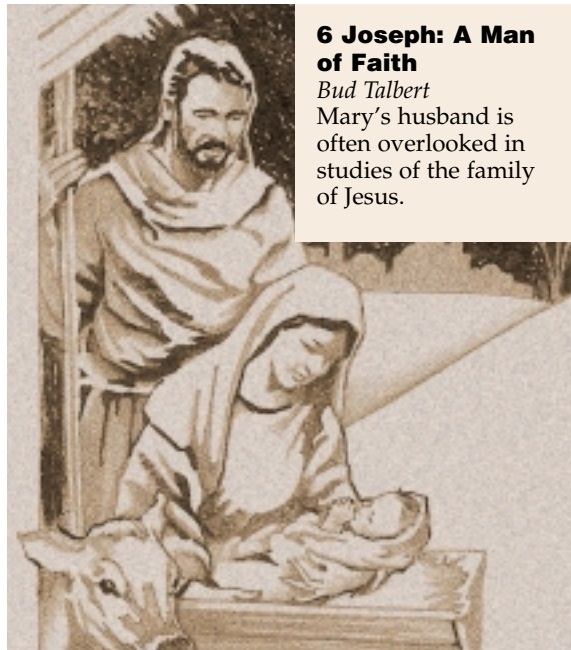
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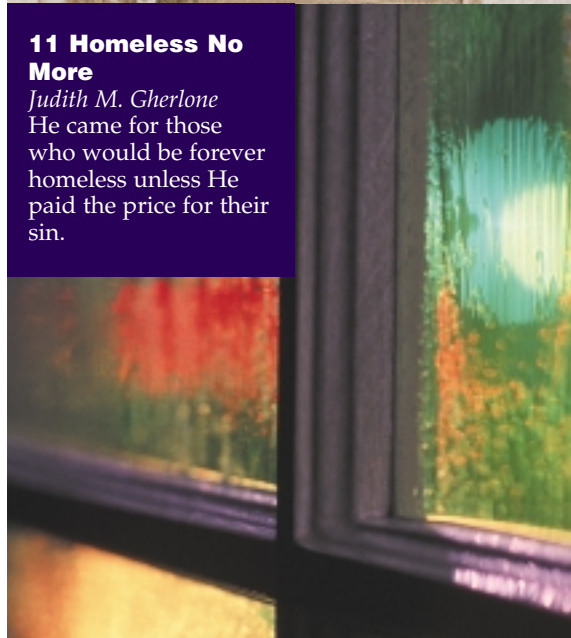
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Congratulations! Ten years of blessing to readers, and we do appreciate it. This doesn't "just happen" without labor pains which continue long after birth.

Frontline magazine stands out among Christian periodicals. . . . God bless you, Dr. Vaughn and staff, as you continue to print *Frontline* in your second decade.

*Pastor Howard M. Pyle
Ellenwood, GA*

I read with interest the article written by Pastor Jim Hollandsworth in *Frontline* ["A Checklist for Choosing a Good Local Church,"

May/June 2000]. . . . I think overall that he did a fine job of drawing attention to the important things that should be looked for in a Bible-preaching, Christ honoring church. However, I am concerned that Brother Hollandsworth remembered the preaching of the Second Coming of Christ to this earth after the Tribulation to establish His literal 1000-year reign to the exclusion of the great doctrine of the Rapture of the Church.

*Tod Brainard
Milton, FL*

Having recently purchased Fee and Stuart's book, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, I was happy to see Dr. Talbert's critique of their interpretation of 1 Thess. 5:22 and the principle of separation ["At a Glance," July/August 2000]. . . . We need good

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teaching on hermeneutics from a Fundamentalist position so that we really can read the Bible for all its worth. Thankfully, Dr. Talbert's articles have helped meet that need.

*Andy Efting
Suwanee, GA*

We have just read the July/August *Frontline* and are grateful that Dr. Cummins ["Bring . . . the Books"] chose to present one of the works of Sir Robert Anderson. His several books are impressive in handling Old Testament typology.

*Gordon & Beverly Barnes
New Lisbon, WI*

I am writing to cancel my subscription to *Frontline*. . . . Recently I have noticed a trend in *Frontline* that has caused me great concern. . . . I decided I would wait one more issue, and if one more article appeared along this line I would ask you to remove my name from your mailing list. The last issue [March/April 2000] I received concluded

with an article by D. A. Stertzbach entitled "Enough Is Enough." . . . Enough is enough. There comes a time when we all have to say, "I can go no farther in cooperation with error." For me, this is my time.

*Missionary Buddy Smith
AUSTRALIA*

I really appreciate your magazine and thoroughly enjoy reading it. However, I would like to take exception to the small article "Humans Not Linked to Neanderthals" in the Newsworthy section of the July/August edition. Although practically all readers of *Frontline* would agree that humans did not evolve from Neanderthals, what do we make of them if they are not fully human? . . . The conclusion that DNA evidence proves Neanderthal was not human is based on a flawed interpretation of the DNA evidence.

*Dave Greear
Huntington, WV*

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The Precious Blood of Christ—Part 2

The hymnwriter asked a pertinent question:

*Have you been to Jesus
for the cleansing power,
Are you washed in the
blood of the Lamb?*

That is the all-important question. What is your honest answer? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

It is my prayer that, if you are not saved, you will accept the payment for your sins—the shedding of the precious blood of the Lamb of God—and that you will be led into salvation and into assurance that you have been washed in that blood.

There are four great themes in connection with the blood of Christ that make this possible. The very foundation of the altar in Leviticus 4 was covered with the blood. The foundation of our approach to a Holy God, our forgiveness of sin, our worship, our communion with Him, is all based upon the shedding of that precious blood.

Notice the purity of the blood: the blood of Christ is incorruptible blood. There is a vast storehouse of revelation on the subject of the blood of Christ. First Peter 1:18, 19 expound this doctrine. But mark carefully what it says: “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.”

Note particularly that redemption was not accomplished by corruptible

things, but with the precious blood of Christ, plainly showing that the blood of Christ was *incorruptible*.

Notice corruption and sin. Corruption followed after sin entered into the world. “The day that thou eat-est thereof, thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). Sin led to death, and the mark of death is corruption. The Bible says in Romans 5:12, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

*The awful
moral conse-
quences of
spiritual cor-
ruption are
set forth in
the Bible*

Therefore all humanity has sinned in Adam and fallen with him, died in him, and become corrupt through and through. The first chapter of Romans gives a terrible description of the rotten stench and depravity of corruption: “When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things” (Rom. 1:21–23).

The awful moral consequences of spiritual corruption are set forth in the Bible as God gives a commentary on the natural depravity of the human heart. Read it for yourself and see how far hideous, wicked, perverted, depraved fallen man will go. The prophet

Isaiah has given a similar view of the state of the natural man: “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores [*putrifying* literally means a rotten, running, stench]: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment” (Isa. 1:5, 6).

This is God’s view. This is the way that God sees man. Man may dream up some flattering description of himself, but God’s description remains the same, and it is the true description of man’s condition as the consequence of the fall. It is not only generally true, it is individually true. That is, it is not only true of the race as a whole, but it is true of every individual member of the human race. Each of us is naturally corrupt. The poison of sin flows in the veins of every one of us, and the foul, corrupt nature of sin is passed on from father to son, generation to generation. This needs to be emphasized, especially in these days when proud men try to ignore or play down the awful but true Biblical doctrine of man’s total depravity. Unless and until there is a clear realization and God-wrought conviction of sin, there is no hope of entering into personal salvation.

The Lord Jesus said, “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matt. 9:13). Christ has no word of salvation to say to a man who does not see himself as a vile, guilty sinner. So the truth of man’s natural corruption and depravity must be seen first of all before salvation can be received.



DR. ROD BELL



Joseph: A

Joseph, descendant of Abraham and David, was “the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ” (Matt. 1:16). This is how the earthly father of our Lord is introduced in the New Testament. Notice how careful and specific the wording is? Jesus was indeed born “of Mary” but not by her betrothed Joseph. The Holy Spirit wants all His readers to know that Jesus was born of Mary when she was still a virgin, thus ensuring His freedom from original sin. From this very first reference, Joseph’s life history remains curiously obscured. Who was this man who figured in so largely in the events of our Lord’s incarnation, and yet of whom the Bible says so little?

Joseph was the son of one Jacob (Matt. 1:16),¹ a descendant of Israel’s King David (Luke 1:27; 2:4), from Nazareth in Galilee (Luke 1:26, 2:4). Joseph was likely apprenticed to his father in the carpentry trade throughout the young years of his life.

Nazareth was a small village perched hundreds of feet above the north edge of the Valley of Megiddo. In the first century it was eclipsed socially, economically, and politically by the nearby Roman town of Sepphoris. Humanly speaking, Nazareth was of little consequence when Joseph was growing up there.

Jacob and Joseph probably made yokes, ploughs, and a wide assortment of household furnishings for

local residents. Joseph would have lived a humble life. Even in later life, when Joseph and Mary made their offering in the temple in Jerusalem (Luke 2:24), presenting Jesus as their firstborn to the Lord, they offered the offering of the poor—a pair of turtledoves. He probably received a solid religious education in Judaism, since he is called “a just man” (Matt. 1:19). Joseph had a living faith in the God of his father Abraham, and he grew into a man of genuine moral and spiritual integrity.

Aside from this heritage, the first fact we are given about Joseph is that he was “espoused” to Mary (Matt. 1:18). This refers to the betrothal or engagement of the couple. However, it is not like western engagements. You will notice that Joseph is called Mary’s husband (Matt. 1:19) and even the angel refers to Mary as Joseph’s wife (Matt. 1:20) even though they were not living as man and wife yet (Matt. 1:18). The only way to break this kind of engagement was by divorce (Matt. 1:19). This is what the

and name her Son Jesus. Dutifully, Joseph did both. Did family and friends understand? Was there village gossip about their marriage? This time was, no doubt, a great trial to Joseph’s faith. But God had graciously given him an angel’s witness to strengthen him.

The couple had been together some months when word came that all were to return to their hereditary home for the Roman taxation. This was most inconvenient (not to mention expensive) for Joseph and especially for Mary. Travel was not easy, and this was a trip of several days. But there was an additional burden to this. They were traveling to be taxed, and a family of humble means was further burdened by Rome’s greed.

When they arrived, Bethlehem was gorged with people. Joseph and Mary came too late with too little to secure a room at the inn, and so they set up house in a nearby stable and settled into a routine as best they could. While they were there, Mary came to full term. “And she

Man of Faith

Bud Talbert

term “put away” signifies. This espousal was a serious premarital attachment, viewed as the precursor to the consummated married state. Such betrothals usually lasted at least a year.²

Then Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant before their marriage. He assumed Mary has been unfaithful to him, but he was nevertheless “not willing to make her a public example” by divorce (Matt. 1:19). That is, he did not wish to shame her at all. Matthew 1:19 tells us that what motivated Joseph’s decisions was not his emotion or his embarrassment, but his regard for God’s Word. He was concerned to obey, as best he knew, the revelation of God’s will in the Scriptures. He had made up his mind to divorce her quietly and privately, so as few as possible would have to know. He wanted to make Mary’s transition into motherhood as easy as possible under such circumstances.

We should not miss the angel’s words in Matthew 1:20: “But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.” Why might Joseph have been afraid? If his decision to divorce Mary were motivated by his righteous regard for God’s law, then we can be certain that his fear here was a fear of God, and not of man. No, he had no fear for the shame that would be associated with taking to wife a pregnant woman. Joseph was afraid of doing wrong.

The angel told Joseph to do two things: marry Mary

brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7).

Why should we suppose they made room for themselves in a stable, since it is not explicitly mentioned here? Because this was the normal location of feeding troughs (i.e., “mangers”), into which the humble family laid their Child. Justin Martyr (about A.D. 150) states that the stable was in a nearby cave. Modern representations portray a quaint wooden barn. Whatever the exact picture, we can be sure that their situation was difficult.

And yet God was gracious to give to both Joseph and Mary confirmations of His presence and blessing. The very night Jesus was born, shepherds arrived telling of an amazing angelic announcement, causing all who hear to wonder at the Child (Luke 2:8–20). Eight days later when they traveled to Jerusalem to dedicate their Son according to the Law, Simeon and Anna both confirmed that their Child was the long-expected fulfillment of the Word of God (Luke 2:21–38). After both of these incidents, Joseph marveled at God’s work (Luke 2:18, 19, 33). As if this were not encouragement and confirmation enough, wise men later traveled to the village of Bethlehem “from the East” in order to worship Jesus. Each of these events confirmed the truth that this Child Jesus was indeed Israel’s Messiah. Joseph knew God was in control.

After the wise men departed, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream for the second time, warning him to take the family and flee from Herod into Egypt (Matt. 2:13–15). How did Joseph respond? Once again he

obeyed, even departing from Bethlehem in the middle of the night (v. 14). They came to Egypt, in those days the home of many Jews, and there they stayed until Herod was dead. Before long, an angel of the Lord again appeared to Joseph in a dream, commanding him to return to Israel (Matt. 2:19, 20). Matthew 2:21 tells us, "And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel." Directed by God again in a dream, Joseph took his family north to Nazareth (Matt. 2:22, 23).

Settling in familiar country, Joseph and Mary had children of their own. Jesus was by this time about two or three years old. And so ordinary family life was experienced by the world's most extraordinary family. In fact, it was a commonness so conspicuous that Jesus' future uniqueness would cause great resentment (Luke 4:22, 23; Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:2, 3; John 6:42). To support his family, Joseph established himself in his father's old business of carpentry, and even apprenticed Jesus (Mark 6:3).

Joseph continued to be "a just man," raising all his family in the Lord's nurture and admonition. They would have been regular at synagogue, in Torah classes, and in family worship. The worship of God according to Moses was a vital part of Joseph's family (Luke 2:41).

During these years Joseph was commonly regarded as Jesus' father (John 1:45), and Jesus was commonly regarded as one of his children (Matt. 15:55, 56). Indeed, even within the family circle there was no unusual qualification of Jesus. Joseph regarded Him with the same genuine concern and affection a good father would regard any of his children (Luke 2:48). However, as Jesus grew into manhood, even from the age of 12, there was a sense of detachment from the family, and especially from Joseph, that distinguished Him (Luke 2:49, 50). Jesus continued to be subject to both His parents, as every good son should be, but the difference had been detected, declared, and was increasingly demonstrated.

Sometime between the age of 12 and 30, Jesus lost His legal father. From the beginning of Jesus' ministry there is a conspicuous absence of references to Joseph when other family members are mentioned in the Gospel records. And at the crucifixion, Jesus entrusts the care of His mother to the apostle John (John 19:27), presumably because Joseph was no longer there to provide such care.

There are, I think, two lessons to be learned from the life of this godly man. First, we can learn from Joseph's humility. In the grand design of God, Joseph served a vital function of which the Scripture says very little. And he seemed perfectly content to occupy that humble position with a godly attitude. It is God's will, not our own, which ought to be supreme in our lives, even when our own ambitions of Christian service are wholly noble. Second, Joseph was a faithful man, dedicated to obeying the God of his fathers at all personal costs. His own desires and emotions were subservient to God's will. To him was committed earth's grandest Treasure, and he faithfully kept that trust. His greatest legacy is that he did as the Lord commanded Him.

Bud Talbert is pastor of Foundation Baptist Church in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

¹ One of the difficulties with the Matthew and Luke genealogies is that Luke 3:23 seems to name Heli as Joseph's father, whereas Matthew 1:16 makes Joseph's father Jacob. There are three possible solutions to this apparent discrepancy. (1) Jacob and Heli were brothers. When Heli died, Jacob—the younger—married Heli's widow according to the Levirate law. Jacob is Joseph's physical father and Heli is his legal father. (2) Luke 3:23 means that Joseph became the "heir" of Heli by his marriage to Mary (J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, pp. 203–4). (3) The parenthesis in Luke 3:23 should include the entire phrase "(as was supposed the son of Joseph)" and leaving Jesus to be "of Heli" by real descent on the maternal side (Robert G. Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth: Doctrine of Deity*, pp. 152–55).

² Fred Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*, p. 129.

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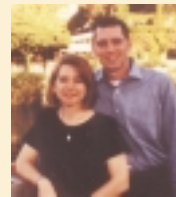


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Each Thanksgiving I remember the day I began my search for Arne. It was a snowy, bone-chilling morning in Flint, Michigan, when I said goodbye to my family and hopped on a plane bound for Minneapolis. I was on my way to a computer convention and had decided to look for Arne afterwards.

After my plane lifted off from Bishop Airport, I mentally hit the rewind button on 28 years and paused at age seven. I was sitting on the worn, green carpet of our living room, glued to a game of Pac Man on our Atari set, when a stranger knocked at the door. The man had the biggest nose I had ever seen, and it glowed red from the cold.

"Hi, I'm Arne." The man's voice reminded me of Mister Rogers. "I'm from First Baptist Church across town. Would you like a ride to church?"

I ran to get my mom. "Sorry, sir, but we don't go to church," my mom explained. She was always polite to strangers. But she wasn't as amiable a few weeks later when the man returned, seemingly unmoved by her rejection.

"Sir, I told you last time that we don't go to church."

Arne lowered his voice and thought I couldn't hear. "You don't want your son to grow up without knowing about God and the Bible, do you? It's a very important part of his education, don't you think?"

I think my mother's mind was on the free babysitting service when she made me turn off the Pac Man for a talk. "I want you to go to church, Lee," she said. "Knowing about God is a good thing. I think it would be good for you to hear about Moses in the bulrushes and David and Goliath."

I screwed up my face. "Who's Goliath?"

"See what I mean? I knew all about those people when I was your age. If that man comes back, you're going to church with him, understand?"

The stewardess offered me a drink. After accepting a Sprite, I returned my gaze out the window and wondered what Arne would be like after all these years. Would he still have that big, red nose and the wispy gray hair?

My first morning at church with Arne had been a disaster. During craft time, the teacher, a pretty lady with pink lipstick, instructed all the children to take off their socks and shoes and trace their feet on colored construction paper. But I didn't want to take off my socks and shoes; I just wanted to be left alone. One of the other kids called me names, and I started crying and asking for my

mother.

"That's okay," the teacher said. "You don't have to take your socks and shoes off." She patted my leg, as if making light of the situation, but she saw me wince. "What's the matter, Lee?"

"I sprained my ankle," I lied.

She took me to a quiet corner and insisted that I show her. I hated for her to see the bruises because I knew she would just start asking lots of questions. When Arne came to take me home, she pulled him aside and spoke with him in quiet, concerned tones.

In the car, Arne looked at me and said, "Does your mother beat you, Lee?"

At first, I said that I had fallen down on the playground at school. But when he wouldn't stop pressing me, I finally told him everything—about my mother's drunken fits, about her screaming and kicking. At home, he told me to stay in the car while he spoke with my mother. Later, after Arne had left, my mother smothered me with hugs.

"I'm so sorry, Lee," she cried, her tears wetting my face. "I'll never hit you again. I promise."

A few days later, a strange lady—a social worker, I realize now—came by the house and asked me lots of questions. "Mom just gets mad sometimes," I said. "I think it's because my dad ran off when I was a baby. Sometimes she drinks and forgets what she's doing."

Arne had disturbed our lives forever, and things were never the same after that. Mother began attending classes to help her stop drinking. Arne kept picking me up for church—that is, when I let him. On some mornings, I just lay in bed with the pillow over my head and listened to his banging on the door. He was the most stubborn man I had ever met. Usually I gave in just so he wouldn't dent the door.

My plane landed in Minneapolis without event. After the computer convention, I checked into my hotel room, rented a car, and explored the neighborhood where I had grown up. Finally, I parked in front of a green-shuttered ranch, my palms turning sweaty as I slammed the car door shut, and paused to take in the house. So little had changed. The trees, of course, were taller, but the house seemed timeless somehow. I felt surprised when a woman I had never met greeted me at the door.

"Arne sold the house to me," she explained, "after his wife died."

"Clara is dead?" I felt crushed. Why hadn't anyone told me?



Fiction by Adam Blumer

The woman nodded. "Cancer. Real sudden about a year ago. I'm afraid it hit Arne pretty hard."

"Where is he now?"

The woman shrugged. "I think he moved into an apartment, but I don't know where it is. You could always call information."

After using her phone, I hunted for the address, my eyes watering when I remembered Clara's clear blue eyes, her lopsided grin, the scent of gardenia lingering on the sweaters she wore. Then I remembered the aroma of the chili she always made in a big pot on Saturday nights. Every kid in the neighborhood knew about her famous chili; that was her way of drawing the kids into the house where Arne was always ready with a Bible story.

I pounded on the apartment door hard, the way Arne used to. Finally, a disgruntled neighbor swung her door open and glared at me. "If you don't stop pounding on that door, I'm going to call the cops."

I blushed. "Sorry, I didn't mean to disturb you. Could you tell me where Arne is?"

The woman nodded wearily. "In the hospital. Drug overdose."

I stared at her. Surely she had the wrong man. I described Arne in detail. "Biggest red nose you've ever seen."

"Yep, that's Arne." She nodded. "Tried to save my soul at least a dozen times." She scribbled down directions to the hospital.

I found Arne lying with his face to the wall, his eyes wet with tears. He had cried himself to sleep. I sat down beside his bed and gently touched his arm, but he didn't stir. I shook his shoulder. "No more shots!" he cried in a harsh, bitter voice that sounded so unlike him. "Just leave me alone."

"Arne." I gripped his cold, limp hand. "Arne, it's Lee. Don't you remember me?"

Arne started as if a bolt of lightning had struck the bed. His red eyes snapped to my face, recognizing, and a tear dripped down his mottled nose. "You shouldn't see me like this," he whispered.

"Well, I have," I said, sitting down, "and I'm not going to leave until you're better."

"You mean, you came all the way to Minneapolis just to see me?"

I explained about the computer convention. "I had to find you, Arne. I had to thank you for leading me to Jesus."

"I miss Clara so much." His eyes averted mine. "The doctor put me on antidepressants. I guess I forgot how many I had taken and took too many."

"It doesn't matter what happened. I've found you now, and I'm going to love you whether you want me to or not."

When Arne started to weep, I

draped my arm across his trembling shoulders. "You said those words to me once. Do you remember?"

"When they took you away from your mother and put you in that foster home."

"I became so angry, but you never gave up on me, Arne. You came every Sunday to take me to church. Sometimes I yelled terrible things at you. Once, I even kicked you in the shin. Do you remember?"

"Black and blue for weeks." Arne actually smiled, but I could tell the smile muscles had fallen into disuse.

"You never gave up on me," I repeated. "It was your stubbornness that brought me to Jesus, and it's the stubbornness God gave me that brought me here to find you. I'm not leaving you, Arne. And when you're better, you're going to come live with me and my family. I won't take no for an answer."

Arne lived in my home for two years, but God had prepared a better place. On the day of his homegoing, I was raking the backyard and frowning at the oak tree where several leaves still clung tenaciously to spindly branches. They had hung on all winter despite the worst ice storm the Midwest had seen in 20 years.

Now that's Arne, I thought. Cold weather, sickness, and financial woes had never gotten him down. He just kept serving Jesus through the years without complaint. But even leaves know when it's time to let go. As I watched, one leaf suddenly broke free and, as if realizing it had fulfilled its role in God's grand design, floated tremulously to the ground.

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Homeless No More

Judith M. Gherlone

Spring had arrived. Tree buds were bursting, flowers painted the landscape with their splendid colors, and storm windows were raised while screens were lowered. It was a Saturday morning and time to get on with the flurry of chores and activities that usually fill the first day of the weekend. The ride to market was delightful as I heard the birds singing and saw folks tending their lawns, riding bikes, or just strolling hand-in-hand. And children—they seemed to be everywhere and running about as only children can. Yes, spring had arrived.

As I pulled into the market's parking lot, there he was. *Oh, yes, I thought, I remember seeing him before in exactly this place*, but I couldn't recall just when. Perhaps I had even seen him many times before. But there he was again, with his back towards me, holding a large cardboard sign while facing the people who were exiting the shopping center. His hair was shoulder length, and his tattered jacket was far too heavy for the weather that was quickly warming. As I continued on past him I glanced in my rearview mirror, and although the writing was reversed, it was easy to read the top line of large, crude, uneven blending of upper and lowercased letters. The word

"homeless" seemed to have been written by a child's hand.

Even the marketplace was more lively than usual. Easter themes decorated the florist shop, bins overflowed with abundant fresh produce, and perhaps it was only my imagination, but folks seemed more considerate as they patiently waited to pass each other rather than playing crash carts. I actually enjoyed food shopping that day!

With shopping done, I retrieved my "to-do" list while pulling into the farthest right of the two exit lanes, and as I approached a red light, there he was again in the not-so-far distance to my left. I had forgotten about him during the past two hours, but now he stood facing me, and I must admit feeling relieved when the cars to my left prevented me from getting a full view or seeing him up close. Ample space, however, allowed me to glimpse at some of the finer print on his sign, and I recall seeing "will work for food, war vet and unemployed," among other terms no longer legible because rain had dissolved the words. From a distance, I think I looked into his eyes then quickly lowered mine to the ground, only to see pieces of his life scattered about his feet. There were a few books, some donated groceries, an extra pair of shoes, a lawn chair

and, yes, the rusty shopping cart with its plastic garbage bags organized, I'm sure, according to his needs as a street traveler. I was grateful when the light turned green—at that time of year when green was the color of the season.

Springtime passed quickly and, as the warm seasons tend to do, summer also came and went too fast. During those months I would occasionally notice the man with his sign, though most likely he was there each time I shopped and hurried about while keeping pace with the busyness of life.

October and November brought their own favorite and seasonal things. The beautiful foliage as leaves prepared to return to earth, the raising of screens and lowering of storm windows, the first-time fireplace gatherings, hayrides and, of course, the time called Thanksgiving. And I don't know whether it was because of the gray, barren days or the more reflective moments of the season, but I seemed to be more aware of the homeless man with his sign. *Surely, I thought, at this time of year, lots of folks will open their car windows and fill his cart. Surely, someone will invite him over for Thanksgiving dinner. Surely, someone will part with a long, warm overcoat to replace the jacket that was too warm for spring but too thin for the coming winter.* I also pictured him taking refuge in the many soup kitchens that would welcome him at this time of the year. And I took comfort in those thoughts as I drove away on a day that was especially frigid.

Before long, the trees and snowmen and lights and glitter and songs of the joyous Christmas season arrived and—winter, when the days are shorter and the nights are darker and so much colder. There were many more visits to the shopping center. But why was I surprised one day to still see him there, and why did I feel irritated while waiting for the red light that seemed to take forever to turn green? And when it did, I couldn't drive away fast enough. As I did, Scripture verses came to mind—Matthew 25:40, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me"—and John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." That's when I remembered the years when I too was homeless.

They were more years than I care to remember. But I never carried a sign. After all, what was I supposed to do—grab a bite for breakfast, put on a well-coordinated outfit before leaving home, drive to my favorite shopping center, and park far from where I would stand before removing my sign from the trunk of my car? No, I never carried a sign that others could see, but I did carry one that only God could see. I carried it in my heart, and its title, "Eternally Homeless," was as big and fragile-looking as the words on the dilapidated cardboard sign of the man I now could no longer forget. The fine print on my sign, however, was much clearer. Rain or snow had not smeared them. Creases and finger-dented worn edges had not deviated or abruptly ended their meanings. And only God knew the words descriptive of my homelessness—"stranded, deserted, desperate, desolate, abandoned, alone, lonely, hopeless, purposeless, angry, bitter, lost sinner." But could God understand homelessness?

As I continued to drive home on that cold day before

Christmas, I realized that God, more than anyone, can indeed, understand homelessness. After all, isn't that what Christmas was all about—is all about? For long ago, in the cold of winter when flowers sleep, a Rose bloomed.

Lo, how a rose e're blooming from tender
stem hath sprung!

Of Jesse's lineage coming as men of old have sung.

It came, a flower bright, amid the cold of winter

When half-gone was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the rose I have in mind;

With Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.

To show God's love aright she bore to men a Savior,

When half-gone was the night.

This flower, whose fragrance tender with
sweetness fills the air,

Dispels with glorious splendor the
darkness everywhere.

True man, yet very God, from sin
and death He saves us

And lightens every load.*

God left His home in glory, came to earth, and during his years of homelessness experienced abandonment, hunger, despair, agony, desertion, disappointment, and so much more. But instead of asking others to help Him, He helped them. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, befriended the outcasts and the rejected, supped with sinners, and comforted the brokenhearted. He who was homeless came for those who would be forever homeless unless He paid the ultimate price of identifying with them—so much so, that He who was without sin became sin, and His homeless sign became the cross.

I was turning into my driveway when it occurred to me that I had driven many miles without realizing it. I no longer felt irritated at the thought of the homeless man and his sign. Instead, I felt immense gratitude as I realized how much my sign had changed and why. Its title now, bold and clear, reads "Homeward Bound," and its finer words, with the exception of one and three new ones, have faded; for lest I forget Gethsemane or lest I forget Calvary, the remaining words on my sign read, "sinner, saved by grace."

I shall prepare a package for that homeless man with his sign. There will, of course, be the usual things he wants—food, clothing, a small sum of money. The package will also include what he needs—the Word of God and His plan of salvation. And inside the pocket of a flannel shirt I shall include this story written because of a man with a sign that doesn't have to read "homeless" forever.

*16th-century German carol; translated by Theodore Baker and Harriet Krauth Spaeth

Judith M. Gherlone is a freelance writer living in South Windsor, Connecticut.

A Jewish Lawyer Meets the Messiah

Craig Hartman

I was born in Manhattan and spent my childhood growing up in the Bronx and Queens. As I grew older I became more and more antagonistic toward religion because of the blatant hypocrisy I saw in religious people. This hypocrisy was not limited to the rabbis, but was prevalent among “Christians” as well. I had no desire to follow these people and therefore wholeheartedly accepted the evolutionary worldview as I set my sights on building a career in law. For the sake of tradition, however, I did make bar mitzvah when I was 13, and I observed some of the Jewish holidays.

During college, I enrolled in a number of courses in American and English literature and was intrigued by the number of references to Bible characters and concepts. As a result I purposed in my heart to read the Bible someday to better understand those references. I shared these thoughts with my girlfriend, Lauri, who agreed that the idea was sensible—especially since discussions about marriage had begun and, as a result, religion was becoming an important issue in our lives. Lauri was reared in a Roman Catholic home, and we knew that tensions would eventually arise because of our different backgrounds. Consequently, we thought we should be better equipped to deal with them. We reasoned that studying the Bible and our respective faiths more carefully would enable us to be more knowledgeable about religious matters. We further concluded that this analysis would also make us better parents because we could be an information source for our children someday.

In time, we did marry, and after completing law school I began my career with a large firm in New York. Things changed shortly thereafter when I met a man named Mark. He was also an attorney and had recently joined the firm. Mark worked on another floor, so I didn’t have much contact with him, but I made sure to avoid him completely because he was one of those “Jesus people.” Although my family was not Orthodox, we were taught that Jesus was for the Gentiles and that we should avoid Him completely since He and His followers were against the Jews.

A few months later the offices were restructured, and I inherited a new officemate—Mark. I was upset at the time and even went to the personnel department to have it changed, but I was unsuccessful. There I was, trapped with a Jesus nut! Since I had no choice, I tried to make the best of it by being pleasant toward him. In time we became friendly, and as I got to know him I was impressed by the lack of hypocrisy in his life. He was different.

I soon found out that Mark had been a Roman Catholic, so I was able to learn a great deal about Romanism from him. He also knew the Tanach (Old Testament) quite well. Consequently, the things of God dominated our discussions, and I began bringing home all of the information that I was learning. By this time Lauri and I were expecting our first son, so we were especially focused on the “being good parents so let’s study the Bible” idea. After Grant was born we began attending a Bible study at Mark’s home, and Lauri and I started an intense independent study that lasted approximately a year and a half.

The reality of God became clear through the study of fulfilled prophecy, and I was amazed by the proofs for the scientific impossibility of evolution. After carefully considering the life and conversion of Paul, I then turned my attention to the claim that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. I subjected the claims of Christ and the resurrection accounts to evidentiary standards and was left with no conclusion but that Jesus truly is the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world. In the privacy of my own living room on an October day in 1989, I confessed my sin before Him and became a child of the King, recognizing that my only claim to heaven was by His shed blood for my sins. Lauri was saved three months later, and we were baptized together.

As I continued to grow in my knowledge of the Scriptures I became increasingly burdened to reach the Jewish people with the gospel. In addition, I soon came to the unfortunate realization that the lost sheep of the house of Israel were often overlooked by Gentile believers in their evangelistic outreach. This is not to say that I found an intentional or inappropriate motive, but there was certainly much more that the church could do. I found that some people felt intimidated by the prospect of speaking with Jews about the Bible; in other cases there was simply a lack of understanding regarding the Biblical mandate to reach these special people.

This weighed heavily on my heart as I began to offer assistance to churches in our area to help them better understand the Jewishness of the Bible and to be better equipped to witness to the Jewish people. I didn’t realize it at the time, but through all of this God was beginning to redirect my life. After some time, some pastors I knew began to suggest that God might be pleased to see a Jewish work established in New York City and that it could very well be His will that I lead it. After much prayer and seeking input from many wise counselors, we all became convinced that the suggestion was correct and Shalom Ministries

was born.

One of the clear burdens that we have is to excite believers regarding reaching out to the Jewish people. One way we seek to do this is by encouraging people to consider the important place that the Jewish people hold in God's heart and plan. In Jeremiah 31 we read about the prophecy of the coming New Covenant that God would make with the Jewish people. It was this very covenant that Jesus confirmed at the Last Supper and which Gentile believers partake of spiritually through their grafting in (Rom. 11:17-24). In this context, God makes His permanent love and commitment very clear. In the beginning of the chapter He says that He loves Israel with an everlasting love (v. 3), and He indicates that Israel will be a special people before Him continually (vv. 35-37).

This concept of God's permanent love for the Jewish people can be seen in many places in the Bible. Another wonderful example can be found in Isaiah 49. Here, God, through the prophet, encourages the people in exile by telling them that God has not forgotten or forsaken them. This is particularly interesting since the fact that they were in captivity was, itself, a fulfillment of prophecy. God had warned the Jewish people of this fate if they were not faithful, and He kept His promise. In verses 14 through 16 God tells them that a nursing mother is more likely to forsake her helpless infant than He is to forsake them for all of their misdeeds. He even emphasizes the point by saying that He has "graven them upon the palms of His hands." Here the word for "graven" is a word that means "to cut into." God is saying, as it were, that the Jewish people are etched permanently into His hands.

Jesus Himself expressed amazing love and devotion toward the Jewish people. Again, the Bible has many examples, but one is particularly moving to me. In Luke 19:41 we are told that Jesus, nearing the end of His earthly ministry, beheld the city of Jerusalem and wept. Here, the Holy Spirit led Luke to use a particular word that does not mean simply to shed a tear, but rather to weep with loud emotion and lamentation. Our Lord, knowing all that would soon take place in Jerusalem at the hand of the Jewish people, was so moved with compassion that his body shook with emotion. This highlights the tragedy of the nation's rejection, but also underscores the depth of His love for them.

Turning to a mere human we need look no further than the great rabbi of Tarsus to see the results of a deep concern for the Jewish people. In Romans 10:1, Paul states that his heart's desire and prayer to God is that Israel be saved. This is particularly noteworthy since Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles.

As compelling as that may be, however, in the mind of this writer few portions of Scripture have the power of Paul's words in the first three verses of Romans 9. Paul begins the chapter by confirming to the recipients of the epistle that what he is about to say is true, as Christ and the Holy Spirit can attest. He then goes on to say that he has a continual grief and sorrow in his heart. One might say that he is constantly feeling the spiritual and emotional equivalent of a heart attack. Why does Paul feel this way? The answer is given in verse 3. The reason is that he

is concerned for the salvation of the Jews. He is so concerned for their salvation that he says that, if it were possible, he would give up heaven if that would mean the salvation of Israel in return. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, who had been repeatedly beaten and nearly killed by the Jewish people, was willing to go to hell for them if that would result in their salvation. The only explanation for this is that Paul had a supernatural understanding of the depth of God's love for this people and their intense need of salvation.

What should this mean to us as today? My sincere prayer is that fundamental believers throughout the world will stop and consider the Jew. In Romans 11:11 we are told that salvation has come to the Gentile as a result of the "stumbling" of the Jew. The verse then goes on to describe the responsibility that the Gentile has to provoke the Jew to jealousy for that salvation. God promises blessing on those that are a blessing to the Jews (Gen. 12:3) and spiritual prosperity for those who pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps. 122:6), yet these people often remain overlooked.

My consuming desire is to motivate my Gentile brethren to take God at His Word and be a blessing to the Jewish people, thereby honoring the Biblical mandate to bring the gospel to them. Remember, a Gentile led me to the Lord, and He just might use you to bring another lost Jewish soul to a saving knowledge of Himself.

Craig Hartman is the founder and Director of Shalom Ministries, Inc., a Brooklyn-based ministry reaching out to the Jewish people through local fundamental churches.

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Adventists at 33,000 Feet

Doug Kutilek

Next to me on a Delta flight from Budapest to Frankfurt were two men wearing suits, the older perhaps 45 and the younger somewhere in his late 20s or early 30s.

They were looking at what were obviously religious booklets, and the older had a Bible and seemed to be instructing the younger. I suspected that they were cultists, so I kept my eyes and ears open.

Breakfast was served—fruit, juice, yogurt, ham and cheese, plus the usual offers of coffee, tea, soft drinks, and the rest. I sneaked a peek now and then to see what the two men did and did not eat. No coffee or tea; only water. The fruit was eaten, but the animal products—yogurt, cheese, and ham—were untouched. Vegetarians—that likely meant Seventh Day Adventists.

After breakfast had ended and the trays were taken away, I spoke to the older man in German; he answered in English. (My German often draws that response!) I asked about what he was and the purpose of his visit to Budapest. I learned that he was an important person in the Seventh Day Adventists' proselytizing outreach in Eastern Europe. A native of Brazil, he was in Hungary helping propagate the doctrines of Adventism.

I remarked, "I've heard many things about Adventist teaching but have never met one so well-informed as yourself on the subject. If I could, I would like to ask some questions about Adventist beliefs to see if I have been correctly informed." He agreed to address my questions, and so for 45 minutes I asked and he answered.

Adventism and Diet

I first inquired about Adventist dietary asceticism. "I noticed that you didn't eat the cheese or ham served with breakfast. Is that a matter of personal preference, or is that because rejection of these things is required, a command?"

"It is a command," he immediately answered.

Adventism teaches that abstaining from certain kinds of food, especially meat and other animal products, is essential to salvation. Vegetarianism is the order of the day (though not all Adventists are strict adherents). Mr. Kellogg of Battle Creek, Michigan, an Adventist, started his cereal company to provide an alternative to the customary bacon-and-eggs breakfast of most 19th-century Americans. Adventists adopted their dietary rules not as a result of careful study of Scripture, but from a directive allegedly given to Adventist prophetess Ellen G. White during one of her thousands of "visions."

The Bible, far from requiring vegetarianism, grants to us freedom in the matter. Though God originally created

mankind and all the animals vegetarian (Gen. 1:29, 30), after the Flood God granted to Noah and his descendants permission to eat the flesh of animals, excluding only the blood (Gen. 9:3, 4). It is true that the Mosaic Law contains strict dietary laws (see Lev. 11 and Deut. 14), but these laws were given only to the nation of Israel. In the New Testament, Jesus said all foods were clean (Mark 7:18, 19),* as did Paul (Rom. 14:14). When the apostolic council in Acts 15 gave recommendations for conduct to the Gentile believers, no dietary restrictions were imposed on them except the prohibition given to Noah to abstain from eating blood (v. 29; the matter of meat offered to idols was a question of worship, not diet). Paul expressly says that no one has the right to judge a believer in the matter of the food he eats (Col. 2:16), and adds that those who prohibit certain kinds of food are teaching demon-inspired doctrines (1 Tim. 4:3).

It is true that there are certain advantages to a reduced-meat diet, and that vegetarianism seems to lower the risk of heart trouble, certain cancers, and other medical problems. The Bible has no rebuke for anyone who chooses vegetarianism voluntarily; we have that freedom in Christ. But when someone promotes vegetarianism as an essential part of salvation, he has fallen into a demonic error of salvation by works and has placed himself under the unbearable yoke of the Law, which could not save the Jews and will not save the Gentiles (Acts 15:10, 11).

Adventism and the Saturday Sabbath

I next turned to the question of Saturday Sabbath-keeping. "Do Adventists really believe that worshipping on Sunday is the Mark of the Beast?"

He replied, "If a person has heard the truth of Sabbath-keeping and continues to worship on Sunday, yes, he has accepted the Mark of the Beast."

This is another doctrine allegedly revealed to Ellen G. White in a vision. She claimed she was carried into heaven and saw the tablets of the Law with the Ten Commandments in the heavenly sanctuary, and that the fourth command had a special glow about it. This was God's way of informing her that she must restore the long-neglected Sabbath command.

I turned to Colossians 2:16 and quoted Paul's words, then added, "Paul says here that you have no right to pass judgment on anyone regarding his day of worship."

He had no answer to that. There is no answer. Never in Scripture are Gentiles commanded to keep Saturday as a day of worship. The apostolic council of Acts 15 could and would have made such a command if it were essential, but they were perfectly silent on the matter. In truth, Jesus

Himself (not the popes, as Ellen White in ignorance of history affirmed) began Sunday worship by meeting two Sundays in a row with the assembled disciples after the Resurrection (John 20:19, 26; that is, Sunday by the Roman/Gentile reckoning, since the evening had already come, which by Jewish calculation would actually be Monday; yet Scripture calls it "the first day of the week"). Furthermore, the great day of Pentecost in Acts 2 fell on a Sunday. Paul specifically chose Sunday as the day to meet with the assembled believers at Troas (Acts 20:7), and the Corinthian church also customarily met that day (1 Cor. 16:2). John was given the Revelation of Jesus Christ on the first day of the week, seeing Christ in the midst of the churches (Rev. 1:10, 13; 2:1), strongly implying that that was the day the churches assembled. (See also Matt. 18:20.)

In truth, neither Saturday nor Sunday worship is a command, the New Testament granting perfect liberty in the matter, though we customarily assemble on Sunday in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ and following the example of Christ and the apostles. By its *demand* of Saturday worship, however, Adventism wants once again to bring people under the bondage of the Law rather than introducing them to the freedom from the Law we have in Christ.

Adventism and Ellen G. White

I inquired about Ellen G. White. "Do you believe that she was truly a prophetess and that her visions were really divine revelations?"

"Yes, we do."

Ellen G. Harmon White (1828–1915) began claiming visions at age 16, and in her long life claimed to have had more than 2,000 of them in all. Accounts of these visions, reportedly dictated to her husband immediately after their occurrence, fill some 10,000 written pages and have been published in 54 books.

There was a major scandal among Adventists in the 1970s when researchers published documented proof that at least part of White's vision accounts were really stolen from other authors. Yet virtually the whole of Adventism—Sabbath-keeping, dietary asceticism, soul sleep, and much else—rests squarely on the belief that her

visions and doctrines came directly from God. If her writings are fraudulent and not divine, the whole structure collapses.

Adventism and Soul Sleep

I continued. "Do Adventists believe that the souls of both saved and lost people are entirely unconscious between death and resurrection?"

"Yes, that is what we believe."

"But didn't Paul say he 'desired to depart and be with Christ' [Phil. 1:23] and that 'to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord' [2 Cor. 5:8]? Christ was conscious and in heaven at the Father's right hand, and Paul expected to go there immediately at death."

"Well, yes, but didn't Stephen 'fall asleep' [Acts 7:60]?"

"I'm glad you mention that passage, because it proves my point. In verse 59, Stephen entrusted his spirit to Jesus, and it departed. It was only his body that was described as asleep. The spirit abandons the body at death, as James taught [James 2:26]."

In truth, the Scriptures consistently teach that the spirits of both saved and lost people continue in conscious existence after the death of the body, and, in fact, that the spirit never, for all eternity, ceases conscious existence. After their physical deaths, the disembodied spirits of Abraham (Luke 16:23), Moses and Elijah (Matt. 17:3), Samuel (1 Sam. 28:12ff), Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:22, 23), Jesus (1 Pet. 3:19; Luke 23:43), the repentant thief (Luke 23:43); and vast multitudes in heaven (Rev. 7:9–15) are fully conscious and able to hear, speak, understand, worship, sing, and so on. There is no "soul sleep" in Scripture.

Adventism and Keeping the Law

I could also have inquired about the Adventist teaching regarding the eventual annihilation of the wicked—but had time for only one final question.

"Is keeping the Law essential to salvation?"

"After a person has been saved, yes, he must keep the Law."

"But doesn't that go against everything that Paul says in the book of Galatians? 'But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it

is evident, for the just shall live by faith' [Gal. 3:11]."

And indeed it does. From first to last, Adventism is the error of Galatianism, the teaching that salvation is either gained or kept by obedience to the law. Some evangelical writers have denied that Adventism is a cult (notably the late cult specialist Walter Martin), but they have been deceived. Adventism has virtually all the earmarks of a cult: a new prophet, a new revelation, and salvation by works. Their being Trinitarians (unusual for a cult) does not rescue them from deserving the designation of "cult."

Our flight and our conversation were over. I had learned that all the bad things I'd heard about Adventism were true. In denying salvation by grace, Adventism teaches "another gospel" which is, of course, no gospel at all.

* The key phrase (the last phrase of v. 19) is tied to the opening phrase of v. 18. "Purging" is in the nominative case, tying it back to the "he" in v. 18. So the idea is, "in saying this, He [Jesus] purged all foods"; that is, pronounced them clean.

Doug Kutilek is a commuting missionary to Romania based in Wichita, Kansas.

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The Highest Form of Selfishness

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"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's" (Exodus 20:1).

Not long ago, I heard a friend of mine say, "There is no prohibition in the Bible against gambling." My almost instant response was, "Haven't you ever read the Tenth Commandment? How is it possible to gamble and not be guilty of coveting something that belongs to your neighbor?" I did not intend to sound mean, but I do not understand why so many Christian people today are trying to rationalize and legitimize the deadly and dangerous vice of gambling. You would not believe all the foolish and silly statements I have heard from those attempting to justify their lustful desire to "win" something that belongs to someone else. Here are four I hear most often:

1. *"I don't think it's a sin unless it becomes an addiction."* Are you saying that it is fine for a man to gamble until he is addicted, but then he should quit? How will he be able to stop after gambling becomes an addiction? If you realize that gambling is addictive, why not avoid it altogether?
2. *"If I win, I'll tithe, and that would really benefit the church."* So, you would not rob the Lord, but you would attempt to bribe Him. Will the Lord ignore or excuse your sin because you gave some of the proceeds to the church?
3. *"I don't gamble all the time. I buy only one lottery ticket a year—and then only if the prize goes over 100 million dollars."* The greater the stakes, the greater the odds and the greater the certainty that you will lose. You are not a "smart gambler" because you wager only occasionally. You are just as foolish as the hard-core addict.
4. *"It's just an innocent form of entertainment."* There is nothing innocent or virtuous about the gambling industry. Gambling has laid waste to many a man's fortune. It has ruined countless marriages and taken food from the mouths of thousands of children. It has plunged many into despair and desperation and

caused many others to take their own lives.

Gambling is a sin because it violates the standard of Biblical law in Exodus 20:17 and is in direct opposition to many other Biblical principles. There are at least ten sound Biblical reasons that the Christian should have nothing to do with gambling.

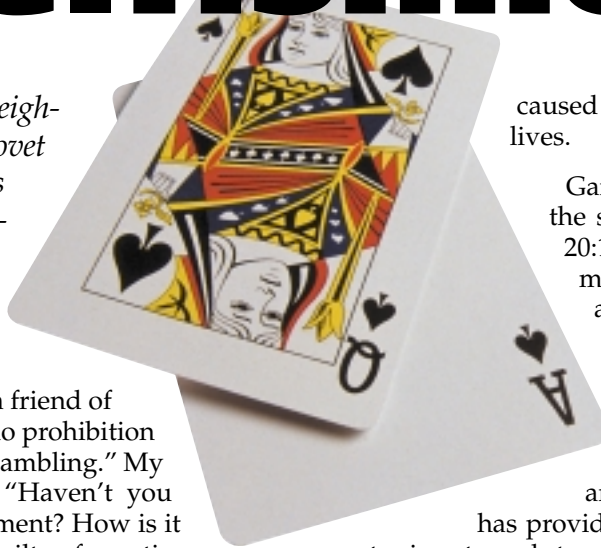
First, gambling is a clear violation of the principle of stewardship. Using that which the Lord has provided to support the gambling industry is not good stewardship. A faithful steward does not waste the money or resources which the Lord has provided by taking chances or "playing the odds" (Luke 16:9–12; 1 Cor. 4:2; Luke 6:38; 1 Pet. 4:10).

Second, gambling is a clear violation of the principle of industry. God honors labor and supplies the laborer with his daily needs. The Bible has a name for those who want "something for nothing." They are called "slothful" and "sloths," and they are always condemned in the Scripture. Idle dreamers do not want to work and wait; they'd rather risk and waste their future on a wish (Rom. 12:11; Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:10–12; Prov. 10:4; 12:11, 24, 27; 13:4; 18:9; 19:15; 26:16; 28:19–22).

Third, gambling is a clear violation of the principle of contentment. The Christian is to be satisfied and content with that which the Lord has given him. Those who seek "great gain" through gambling may want to read 1 Timothy 6:6 again: "Godliness with contentment is great gain." The man who is not content with little will not be content with great riches. Contentment is a matter of the heart, not the pocketbook (Phil. 4:11, 12; 1 Tim. 6:6–12; Prov. 23:4–5).

Fourth, gambling is a clear violation of the principle of self-control. Gambling is dangerously addictive and can quickly become a controlling master. No gambler ever intended to end up wagering his life savings on a game of chance, but that is just what happens in gambling halls across America every day (Prov. 25:28; Titus 2:2; 2 Pet. 1:5–7; Gal. 5:22, 23).

Fifth, gambling is a clear violation of the Lord's command that we live holy lives above reproach. Gambling does not become the life of a saint of God who desires to live "blameless" and "without rebuke." No gambling man can honestly say he has a "pure heart" and a "good conscience" towards God and man (1 Tim. 1:5, 3:7; Eph. 5:1–3; 1 Peter 2:12; Phil. 2:15; Acts 24:16; 2 Cor. 6:3).



SEEKING REVIVAL CONFERENCE

February 26 - March 1, 2001

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Hosted by: Falls Baptist Church, Menomonee Falls, WI

Because there is a lack of power in many fundamental churches evidenced through few souls being saved, baptized, and discipled, through conformity to the world in lifestyle issues, especially among young people, - through desensitized consciences because of compromises made with television, cable, video, and the internet, - through so-called "lesser" sins such as shortness of temper, bitterness, wrong attitudes, etc. being accepted as normal baggage for believers, - through materialistic goals and values, - through counterfeit life being embraced in the form of contemporary Christian music, - through prayerlessness and ritualistic unbelieving prayer, and - through a general deadness regarding the things of God, and . . .

Because there is an apostasy regarding the person and work of the Holy Spirit evidenced through a mere academic understanding of His person and work which has no personal impact, - through a lack of personal relationship with Him, and - through a lack of dependence on Him for holy living and powerful service, therefore . . .

We urge upon ourselves and all Christians who have a heart for God to seek the Lord for a merciful outpouring of His Spirit. We believe it is the desperate need of the hour. As long as we live in the age of grace - the age of the Holy Spirit - we believe God desires to revive His people so that they live on the plane of New Testament promises instead of the sub-normal conditions so prevalent.

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Sixth, gambling is a clear violation of the Lord's command that we "love not the world." It appeals directly to the "lust of the flesh" and the "pride of life," and like most fleshly lusts, gambling declares "war against the soul" of a man. A Christian cannot be a gambler and still be in obedience to the command that he "give none offence" (1 John 2:15-17; 1 Peter 2:11; 1 Cor. 10:32; Phil. 1:10).

Seventh, gambling is a clear violation of the Lord's command against evil associations. The gambling crowd is not the Lord's crowd. Gambling is and always has been associated with crime, corruption, and all the baser elements of society. We have a clear command to "abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22).

Eighth, gambling is a clear violation of the Lord's command to "love thy neighbor as thyself." Gambling is about love of self, not love of neighbor. You can win only if someone else loses; therefore your desire cannot be for your neighbor's good. This is the highest form of selfishness. It is more than the desire for gain; it is the desire for gain by another's loss (1 Pet. 1:22; Rom. 13:9, 14:21, 15:1; Luke 10:27; James 2:8; Hab. 2:9).

Ninth, gambling shows a basic lack of trust in the sovereignty of God. We are not to trust in the "deceitfulness of riches" but rather in the "riches of his grace." Dear Christian friend, you cannot believe

in God and luck. The two are mutually exclusive (2 Cor. 5:7; Mark 11:22; Matt. 6:33; Phil. 4:19; Ps. 37:23; Matt. 13:22; Eph. 1:7).

Finally, gambling is a clear violation of the Lord's command against covetousness and stands in direct opposition to the Tenth Commandment. Covetousness is the desire to have something that belongs to someone else. Betting your dollar with the desire to take dollars from your neighbor is covetousness (Ex. 20:17; Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:9, 10).

No Christian who desires to please God would involve himself with gambling in any form. Lotteries, raffles, sports pools, slot machines, horse tracks, and yes, even "penny ante" poker all clearly violate Scriptural principles. When a Christian gambles he is risking much more than money. He is risking his testimony for Christ.

Morris D. Hunsucker Sr. is an assistant pastor at Eagle Dale Baptist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana.

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FBF NEWS AND EVENTS

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SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

First Partaker

Preach-ing or Preach-er?

It's not my title. I'm borrowing it from William Quayle, pastor of large congregations in Kansas City, Indianapolis, and Chicago over a period of 30 years (1894–1925). Out of that extended, varied experience Quayle proposed something that every preacher sensitive to the state of his own soul comes to know all too remorsefully. There is little trouble to preach, if only there be a preacher, he observed. Preacher-ing, not preach-ing, is the task.

That thesis cuts to the heart of the question of what makes for empowered preaching. Unquestionably, natural abilities, supernatural gifts, training, hard work, providential opportunities, and a pleasing combination of many lesser factors play their part. But Quayle's contention was that it is impossible to exaggerate the critical contribution of the preacher's own spiritual life.

A given sermon is the preacher to date. The sermon is an act; and to this act the preacher brings himself, all himself, the acquisition of his years. . . . A sermon is not a piece of carpentry, but a piece of life—a spacious heart, a spacious brain, a spacious sympathy talking out loud. A great preacher like Paul did not fashion his speech, but fashioned himself. . . . and a preacher-man's business is to amass a life of cubic dimensions, to the end that he may evoke the great power and utter the great words.

Was Quayle overreaching to stress the preacher's life so dogmatically? It depends, perhaps, on what proportion of the preaching the preacher is himself. In what may be the most oft-quoted definition of preaching, another veteran, Phillips Brooks, proposed that proportion when he offered, "Our description of real preaching is truth through personality."

There are only two vitals to preaching, Brooks was arguing, and the preacher (personality is his word for it) is one half of them. Brooks, of course, was not dismissing the all-essential ministry of the Spirit when he defined preaching in this way.

He was simply describing the elements that the preacher, rather than God, is responsible for—his content and his life. Preaching, he was arguing, is not God's Word alone. Nor is it even God's Word through a human voice. Preaching is God's Word through a human being. Being is a *sine qua non* of preaching. Its power, therefore, is increased or diminished inevitably by the nature of that being.

The truth must come through the person, Brooks continued, not merely over his lips. It must come through his character, his affections, his whole intellectual and moral being. It must come genuinely through him. I think that, granting equal intelligence and study, here is the great difference between two preachers of the Word. The gospel has come *over* one of them and reaches us tinged and flavored with his superficial characteristics, belittled with his littleness. The gospel has come *through* the other, and we receive it impressed and winged with all the earnestness and strength that is in him.

Now I would like for us to consider that this emphasis is not a new, but an old Biblical law that preachers have been given from the beginning. It is necessary, the ancient and inviolable law commands, for an overseer to be 17 things, 16 of which have to do with *personal* life, not vocational skill (1 Tim. 3:2–7). Paul challenged Timothy to be a type continually in six areas of character and conduct (1 Tim. 4:12); for despite even chronological youth, such a six-fold example prevents your being despised personally. There is a *self-cleansing*, the apostle assured the same apprentice, whereby the Lord's workman shall be an honorable vessel who has been sanctified and is now useful to the Master, prepared for every good work (2 Tim. 2:21). And when it

"The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits"
(2 Tim. 2:6)

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comes to the use of the God-breathed Scripture in the man of God's own life, those holy letters are profitable for disciplining him in four ways so that *he* may be personally complete and completely equipped for every good work—especially that best and most necessary of all good works, preaching the Word (2 Tim. 3:16–4:2)!

It is the preacher's *being* that is emphasized in all of these texts, and in others as well. It's *thy profiting* which is to be to others a shining appearance of the first magnitude (1 Tim. 4:15). It's taking heed unto *thyself* which precedes even taking heed unto the fundamentals of the faith, and for want of which even the fundamentals fail to save either yourself or your hearers (1 Tim. 4:16). It's the man of God's *personal* pursuit of six blameless virtues which is one of the convincing confirmations of his confession that he has himself laid hold upon eternal life and is not one of those men depraved in mind and deprived of truth who are imagining that a show of godliness will profit their pocket. Therefore, be continually showing yourself a type, an impression formed by the blow of your doctrine upon *yourself*, in order that anyone who opposes you may be put to shame because he

his record; and, when he rises on Sunday in the pulpit, it is not the man visible there at the moment that they listen to, but this image, which stands before them and determines the precise weight and effect of every sentence which he utters.

Putting it sharply, Stalker argued, "The hearers may not know why their minister, with all his gifts, does not make a religious impression upon them; but it is because he is not himself a spiritual power."

Unless we're prepared to hear them humbly, these words will offend us. Or, perhaps more likely, we may be inclined to dismiss them because in our heart of hearts we know ourselves to be backslidden—"And yet," we rationalize, "the people I pastor do not seem to notice. Our services continue to be characterized by a good spirit, the giving is great, buildings are going up, morale is high, and people are still raising their hands and walking the aisles at invitations. So—I know I ought to be a better man—but somehow God blesses me anyway."

I think that if this is any man's line of reasoning it is imperative that he be summoned, before going any further, to give account of himself and his people with scrupulous honesty. Is it true that any of these appearances with which you're consoling yourself, or all of them combined, is any commentary whatsoever on whether God is blessing your ministry? Could not all of these same things be said of any number of charismatic or compromised ministries that you denounce? Does not all of this also characterize the ecumenical evangelistic campaigns that you shun? Do not sensuous televangelists confidently assure us of the same proofs of God's favor? But most fearfully, did not our Lord warn that unconverted ministers would mistakenly plead these very appearances as evidences of His favor (Matt. 7:21–23)? His word was "many"—*many* will plead these things in that day. They no doubt reassure themselves with them now.

There may be a minister who is reading this column right now who is not only self-deceived but, in addition, continually deceived by a flattering but carnal people. It seems plausible that just as a liberal denominational church may be made up of people who will praise their pastor for doing nothing more than holding one brief, placid service a week, marrying their children, and burying their dead, so a fundamental church may include a great number of people who are quite willing to flatter a pastor for doing little more than occupying them with a great many busy things. The bustling responsiveness of such a people to such a pastor says very little, if anything, about the presence of God in that ministry.

That is the really telling issue for any church or any Christian school. It's not the numbers that tell. It's not the bulging church calendar that tells. Nor is it the razor sharp line of separation, the huge Christian school, the strict standards, or the traditional hymns and shouting condemnation of the world's many sins. It is this, and this alone—when those people gather, are their gatherings characterized by an inescapable sense of the presence of God? Is there, in the very hour of their worship,

"Preaching is the art of making a sermon and delivering it? Why, no, that is not preaching. Preaching is the art of making a man and delivering that."

has nothing evil to say, not only of your doctrine, but of you (Titus 2:7–8).

No question, then, that Quayle was not exaggerating. His thesis stands the scrutiny of Scripture. He was right when he asked and then answered, "Preaching is the art of making a sermon and delivering it? Why, no, that is not preaching. Preaching is the art of making a man and delivering that."

Why More Preacher?

Brethren, if we dismiss this challenge to fully acknowledge the vital contribution of our own lives—to the very act and in the very hour of preaching—we are destined to failure in the pulpit. This will be true regardless of how successful we may be as administrators or even personal counselors. In his Lyman Beecher lectures on preaching, James Stalker explained the reason for this from the psychology of the listeners' perspective.

We are so constituted that what we hear depends very much for its effect on how we are disposed towards him who speaks. The regular hearers of a minister gradually form in their minds, almost unawares, an image of what he is, into which they put everything which they themselves remember about him and everything which they have heard of

the telling, convincing consciousness of His reality and nearness? Does anyone ever fall down on his face and “report that God is in them of a truth” (1 Cor. 14:25)?

This is not just rhetoric. This is the consistent, joyful experience of a Spirit-filled assembly. Once a church knows it, deeply and movingly, no amount of frenetic activity will compensate for its absence. The people will mourn until it’s recovered. And therein lies the burden of this column—that the recovery must generally begin with the preacher, not his preaching.

Oh, brethren! We stand in great need! Our being stands in need! Are we aware that people are saying of some of us that they like our preaching because we are “soooo funny”? Before God, how can we hear that reported of each other and not be afraid? What was going on in a man’s own soul in the hours before he preached like that! Is that what he got from God? Is that how he knows God?

This is just one alarming example that justifies the concern that some preachers are in trouble in their own souls. (Please don’t dismiss this by exaggerating the intent of the illustration. I’m not aware that anyone decries all use of humor. It has a sparing place, but it will quickly evaporate if the atmosphere is truly holy unto the Lord.) Thank God that some are genuinely grieved and want a starting place to work their way back. Where do we begin?

What Sort of Preacher?

For more than 25 years now it has been my priceless privilege to have part in the training of future preachers. If I were asked to state my single greatest burden for their growth, it would be the awakening of spiritual desire.

If I can make the observation without seeming to be harsh, some men, even some already in ministry, seem to be barely awake spiritually. Their lights are not on and burning brightly. Their attitude toward even the most absorbingly sacred subjects is disinterested and dull. One wonders if they have ever once opened their eyes to the dawning of some bright truth, ever once stretched or stood up to grapple with something great.

Young men training for the ministry need to be roused—startled, if necessary—out of this drowsiness. They need, desperately need, to come alive to the exquisite soul satisfaction of going hard after God. Their spirit needs to be awakened to the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ—His infinite person and redeeming work, His unswerving obedience to the Father, His unexpected graciousness, His comforting and abiding presence, His trustworthiness, His unfailing faithfulness, His truthfulness, His loving kindness, His sympathetic intercessions, His high and lofty place at the Father’s right hand. I’m trying to describe here just a sampling of our abundance in Christ. Anyone who has really awakened to it develops an appetite for more and more and yet more of the same heightened sense of divine things over and over and still over again.

I realize that it’s God’s own choice as to how ravishingly He reveals Himself to any one soul. But we can

pursue Him. I was reminded of this just this morning while reading portions of *The Journals of Jim Elliot*. He’s barely a senior in college, but he writes passionately,

Nothing satisfies—not nature, or fellowship with any, but only my Eternal Lover. Ah, how cold my heart is toward Him. But “our eyes are upon Thee” (v. 12). . . . Is not Christ enough, Jim? What need you more—a woman—in His place? Nay, God forbid. I shall have Thee, Lord Jesus. Thou didst buy

The really telling issue for any church is this, and this alone—are their gatherings characterized by an inescapable sense of the presence of God?

me, now I must buy Thee. Thou knowest how reluctant I am to pay, because I do not value Thee sufficiently. I am Thine at terrible cost to Thyself. Now Thou must become mine—as Thou didst not attend to the price, neither would I.

Here’s another entry in which he seems to wrestle with God. “Great struggles of soul last night and this morning, especially over Psalm 73:25: ‘There is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee.’ . . . Lord Jesus! Counselor! Mighty God! How could I desire aught upon earth but Thee? Savior, Thou dost know my heart; let me love Thee.”

And here is one almost too sacred to read.

“At thy right hand are pleasures. . .” (Ps. 16:11). Prayed a strange prayer today. I covenanted with my Father that He would do either of two things—either glorify Himself to the utmost in me, or slay me. By His grace I shall not have His second best. For He heard me, I believe, so that now I have nothing to look forward to but a life of sacrificial sonship (that’s how thy Savior was glorified, my soul) or heaven soon. Perhaps tomorrow. What a prospect!

It was 1948. Jim would see God in less than eight years, released into eternity by the sharp wooden points of Auca spears.

My purpose for quoting these excerpts is to illustrate what awakened spiritual desire is like. The things it sees in the Scripture. The way it prays. The sound of its struggles. Its pulse. Its passion. Oh that I knew it more and more myself and could somehow be used to ignite it in others.

Happily and soul-satisfyingly, God shows Himself to us if we cry out after Him. Here is another example of what it can be like for us.

The first instance that I remember of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things that

I have lived much in since, was on reading those words, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever, Amen."

As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before. Never any words of scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up in him in heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in him forever!

I kept saying, and as it were singing over these words of scripture to myself; and went to pray to God that I might enjoy him, and prayed in a manner quite different from what I used to do; with a new sort of affection. . . .

From about that time, I began to have a new kind of apprehensions and ideas of Christ, and the work of redemption, and the glorious way of salvation by him. An inward, sweet sense of these things, at times, came into my heart and my soul was led away in pleasant views and contemplations of them. . . .

The state of our own personal lives has everything to do with whether or not we carry with us into the pulpit a quickening sense of the presence of God that irresistibly comes to pervade the whole atmosphere of our services. Without this we are nothing. Our preaching is scarcely more, except for what little Scripture it contains. The glory has departed.

The sense I had of divine things would often of a sudden kindle up, as it were, a sweet burning in my heart; an ardor of soul, that I know not how to express.

This is the testimony of a very young man. Yet he knows—often—a sweet burning in his heart from the

sudden kindling up of his sense of divine things. His name was Jonathan Edwards. He was not yet 18.

Here is another young man's satisfying experience.


My mind being now more open and enlarged, I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees, laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line and word. This proved meat indeed, and drink indeed, to my soul. I daily received fresh light, light and power from above. . . .

Oh, what sweet communion had I daily vouchsafed with God in prayer. . . . How often have I been carried out beyond myself when sweetly meditating in the fields! How assuredly have I felt that Christ dwelt in me, and I in Him! and how did I daily walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and was edified and refreshed in the multitude of peace! Not that I was always upon the mount, sometimes a cloud would overshadow me; but the Sun of Righteousness quickly arose and dispelled it, and I knew it was Jesus Christ that revealed Himself to my soul.

The young man who wrote these words in his journal in 1770 was George Whitefield. He was scarcely 21.

My space is nearly gone. There's so much more that should be said. But this has been enough to get these truths out into the open for any earnest preacher's consideration.

To put it into a sentence, the state of our own personal lives has everything to do with whether or not we carry with us into the pulpit a quickening sense of the presence of God that irresistibly comes to pervade the whole atmosphere of our services. Without this we are nothing. Our preaching is scarcely more, except for what little Scripture it contains. The glory has departed.

O brethren, watch therefore over your own hearts: keep out lusts and passions, and worldly inclinations; keep up the life of faith, and love, and zeal: be much at home and be much with God. If it be not your daily business to study your own hearts, and to subdue corruption, and to walk with God—if you make not this a work to which you constantly attend, all will go wrong. . . . Above all, be much in secret prayer and meditation. Thence you must fetch the heavenly fire that must kindle your sacrifices. . . . Therefore, go then specially to God for life: read some rousing, awakening book, or meditate on the weight of the subject of which you are to speak, and on the great necessity of your people's souls, that you may go in the zeal of the Lord into his house. Maintain, in this manner, the life of grace in yourselves, that it may appear in all your sermons from the pulpit—that every one who comes cold to the assembly, may have some warmth imparted to him before he departs (Richard Baxter). 



Dr. Mark Minnick is the pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, where he has served on the pastoral staff since 1980. He speaks frequently in churches and at conferences across the nation and ministers regularly on mission fields around the world.

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A Man for His Times and Ours

Thomas Manton, *Commentary on Jude*

We have fallen upon evil days both for thinking and reading. Sermons which contain thought and matter are increasingly rare. The inexpressible shallowness, thinness, and superficiality of many popular sermons in this day are something lamentable and appalling. Readers of real books appear to become fewer and fewer every year. Newspapers, and magazines, and periodicals seem to absorb the whole reading powers of the rising generation. What it will all end in God only knows. The prospect before us is sorrowful and humiliating.

These sobering words were penned by J. C. Ryle, Vicar of Stradbroke in Suffolk, England, in October 1870. They are as sad a description of our day as they were of his. Ryle regarded the writings of the well-known Puritan, Thomas Manton, as a deep source of spiritual refreshment in the midst of the homiletic and theological shallowness he deplored in his day. Of particular value are his commentaries on James, Jude, John 17, Psalm 119, and his treatise on the Lord's prayer.

Relatively unknown to most modern Christians, Manton lived a remarkable life in controversial and difficult times. Born March 31, 1620, and educated at Oxford, he began his public ministry when he was ordained a deacon at age 19. He pastored St. Paul's Covent Garden (a Puritan assembly) from 1656 until 1662. During the revolution in England, he was frequently asked to preach before Parliament and became a chaplain to Oliver Cromwell. After Cromwell's death, however, he was a vocal advocate for the restoration of the monarchy and was appointed as one of the king's chaplains. By 1662 he found himself out of favor along with many other religious leaders who were committed to the nonconformist cause and, as a result, was ejected from the official church in England. He continued to preach wherever Puritan congregations would have him until he was arrested and imprisoned for six months in 1669. He died in London on October 18, 1677.

Even Manton's enemies were hard-pressed to speak evil against his character. He was not only a man of untarnished reputation but also a skilled exegete of the Scriptures who knew how to apply the results of that exegesis to the lives and circumstances of his parishioners. Ryle observed:

Manton's chief excellence as a writer . . . consists in the ease . . . and clearness of his style. . . . He has a happy faculty of simplifying the point he handles. He never worries you with acres of long, ponderous, involved sentences like Goodwin or Owen. . . . I


find it easier to read fifty pages of Manton's than ten of some of his brethren's; and after reading, I feel that I carry more away.

Manton's commentary on Jude is perhaps the least read of his works. His commitment to exegesis is obvious in his extensive comments about every detail in each verse. I was initially intimidated by the volume of his comments and skeptical whether the investment of time required to read, for example, 50 pages of material on verse one would be worthwhile. However, almost every page yields an idea for a sermon or a subpoint in a sermon. He writes with a commitment to stir the heart toward God.

His section on separation is especially valuable. Manton wrote in a time of much discussion among theologians and preachers related to the issue of conformity and nonconformity to the established church in England. His observations as a nonconformist could as easily be made by modern Fundamentalists who are consistently charged by Evangelicals as being divisive and schismatic:

The fault and crime of the schism is not always in those that actually separate and withdraw, but in those that cause it. . . . Rome obstinately continuing her corruptions, and threatening death to those that warn her, the cause of the separation is Rome, not in us. Strings in tune must not be brought down to strings out of tune, but the other set up to them. . . . Though those that separate be the fewer, yet that nothing varieth the case. Noah and eight persons went into the ark and left the world in infidelity; Lot got out of Sodom with one family; Elijah was left alone to contest with Baal's priests. Not the greater, but the better part is to be regarded. . . . God's witness at the first may seem but a very handful.

His insights regarding separation in his own historical context and applied to the particular problems of his day can be profitably reinterpreted for our context and applied in the battle for purity that faces the modern church.

The diligent reader will find that the investment of time in reading Manton will yield rich food for the preacher as well as for his congregation. I have had his commentary on my shelf for years, yet I am only now discovering this treasure. C. H. Spurgeon reportedly asked a fellow preacher if he knew Manton's works. "Manton? Never heard of him." "And that, my brother," Spurgeon is said to have replied, "is why no one has heard of you." Brethren, let us rediscover the treasures left to us by this godly man of yesteryear. 

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*" . . . when
thou comest,
bring with thee
. . . the books"
(2 Tim. 4:13)*

Among the most difficult and controversial New Testament passages to interpret is Hebrews 6:4–6. The difficulty lies in harmonizing the description of those who have been made “partakers of the Holy Spirit” with the warning of their falling away and inability to be brought back to repentance.

Some interpreters conclude that the author of Hebrews is describing people who were once saved, later abandoned the faith, and consequently lost their salvation. These interpreters also argue that Christians who lose their salvation can be saved again. While this interpretation might appear plausible, it must be rejected for two reasons. The overriding problem is that it conflicts with a number of passages which clearly teach that salvation once received cannot be lost (e.g., John 10: 28–30; Rom 8:28–39). In addition, it cannot be easily harmonized with the statement in verse 6 that those who fall away are not able to be restored to their former condition.

A second approach interprets the entire passage as a hypothetical situation that, in actuality, could never happen. As with the previous view, verses 4 and 5 describe true believers. Likewise, verse 6 depicts apostasy (a rejection of the faith with the resulting loss of salvation) and denies that those who apostatize can ever be restored to the faith. The difference is that this second view takes verse 6 as a conditional statement, “if they should fall away,” which describes an impossibility. The thought is, “if true believers were ever to abandon the faith, which of course they could not do, they could never be saved again.”


This view has several liabilities. First, verse 6 is not a conditional statement, but continues a series of descriptive statements from verses 4 and 5, all of which the author assumes are true. In addition, virtually all interpreters agree that the author is issuing a warning. Warning the readers about something that could not actually take place, however, robs the author’s words of any force and becomes no warning at all.

A third approach softens the statement in the first part of verse 6 by taking the falling away as a falling away from Christian commitment and service, not from salvation. The last part of verse 6 would then indicate that those who fall away cannot have their original devotion to Christ restored. This view also faces serious problems. The first part of verse 6 presents a far more serious defection than simply a loss of Christian commitment. The parallel passages in

Hebrews indicate that nothing short of a turning away from Christ as the basis of salvation is in view (cf. 10:23–25, 35–39). Furthermore, if 6:6a describes merely a loss of devotion, how is it that such a falling away cannot be remedied as 6:6b states?

The best view is to take verses 4 and 5 as describing those who had been closely associated with the gospel but were never saved. Although the statements in these verses when taken in isolation appear to describe believers, the immediate context argues against this understanding. Rather, the verses describe individuals, such as Judas Iscariot, who had been exposed to the gospel and had participated in many of the blessings of the believing community, but who ultimately were never saved. Such counterfeits mimic the trappings of salvation, as verses 4 and 5 indicate, but in actuality fall short of it. Verse 6 depicts these as apostates who, having been on the very threshold of salvation, cannot be brought again to the place of repentance and faith. Such a restoration is impossible because, by coming to reject Christ, the apostates have repudiated the sole means of salvation and have placed themselves under God’s judicial hardening.

The illustration in verses 7 and 8 supports this interpretation. In verse 7, the land that receives rain and brings forth productive growth is blessed. On the other hand, the land in verse 8 that receives rain but produces thorns and thistles is near to being cursed. The application is clear. Those who hear the gospel, who make a profession of faith, and who bear fruit consistent with the gospel are blessed. Those who hear, who make a profession of faith, but who do not bear the proper fruit are on the verge of being judged. The specific fruit the author has in view here is that of persevering in the faith (cf. 4:14; 10:23). The point is not that such fruit is a condition for salvation, but that such fruit is the evidence of salvation—in fact, the necessary evidence (cf. 3:6, 14). Those who persevere show that they have been truly saved; those who fall away show that they never were.

This passage serves as both a powerful exhortation and a sober warning. For the redeemed, it would be used of the Spirit to advance perseverance and sanctification. For others, it would be a reminder that salvation is found in Christ and in Christ alone. Although the author assumes that the readers were saved (vv. 9ff.), if any were to reject Christ and, in this case, embrace Judaism as the means of salvation, they would demonstrate that they were never saved and, furthermore, their position would be without remedy. 

*“Rightly
dividing
the Word
of Truth”
(2 Tim. 2:15)*

Dr. R. Bruce Compton, Professor of Biblical Languages and Exposition at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, has a longer article on Hebrews 6:4–6 in the *Detroit Baptist Theological Journal*, Vol. 1 (1996), pp. 135–167 (also accessible at www.dbts.edu).

Some Christians are apologetic when a speaker or writer addresses the issue of giving. However, giving needs no more apology than does praying. In the Scriptures 1539 passages refer to giving, while only 523 pertain to praying!

Establishing a godly testimony in finances is critical to the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The poor reputation of many televangelists and religious leaders is reflected in the story of the little boy whose unchurched mother asked when he came home from the Sunday morning service, "What did the pastor preach about today?" The youngster was ready with his answer: "He said a man went from Jerusalem to Jericho and was beaten up by thieves and thrown into a ditch. By and by, two preachers came along, and when they saw the man had already been robbed, they passed by on the other side."

The gaining of money may involve the greatest danger to the Christian, but the giving of money is likewise fraught with peril—hence the need for considering ethics in giving.

In 2 Corinthians 8:10–15 the apostle Paul sets forth three ethical principles for our giving to make sure that we honor God both in what we give and in the way we give.

The Importance of Integrity in Giving (2 Cor. 8:10–11)

The Corinthian church had failed to keep a promise to give to the needs of the saints at Jerusalem, marring and hindering their testimony of Christian stewardship. A year earlier they had made a pledge to God and to His people, but lacked the integrity to follow through. The apostle tactfully offers his advice.

Making a commitment to God, His work, and His people means honesty and timeliness in fulfilling that commitment. "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee" (Deut. 23:21).

The cheetah, a sleek, beautiful member of the cat family, survives on the African plains by running down its prey. The big cat can sprint 70 miles per hour. But the cheetah cannot sustain that pace for long. Within its long body is a disproportionately small heart, which causes the cheetah to tire quickly. Unless the cheetah catches its prey in the first flurry, it must abandon the chase.

Sometimes Christians seem to have the cheetah's approach to commitment to God. We speed into spiritual obligations, not considering if they are truly the will of God for us. We fail to count the cost, to see if we have enough to "finish our tower." Lacking the

heart for sustained effort, we fizzle before we finish. What is our need? Like the cheetah, we are desperately in need of a bigger heart, one that can be given only by God as we seek Him and allow Him to give us grace and endurance, integrity to do what is right, regardless of the circumstances.

One local church pastor captured the concept of ethical giving in relating the following, "My heart was greatly encouraged some years ago when honesty in giving affected an unknown donor within the fellowship of the church I was pastoring. Whoever it was put an envelope in the collection plate with only one word upon it: 'Restitution.' In that envelope were six \$100 bills. This was honesty in keeping a trust with God."

The Importance of Willingness in Giving (2 Corinthians 8:12)

Paul's words are clear. God holds all men and women responsible for having a willing heart attitude in giving.

Willingness means giving without grudging. Mark Twain quipped that when some men discharge an obligation, you can hear the report for miles around. An elderly gentleman who was hard of hearing attended a church service where the congregation was attempting to reach a certain goal in the offering. The ushers passed the plate, and he put in a token amount. Later in the service, they passed the plate again. Reluctantly, he gave a little more. When the plate came around the third time, he was overheard saying, "What are they going to do next, frisk us?"

It has been said that there are three kinds of givers—the flint, the sponge, and the honeycomb. To get anything out of a flint you must hammer it, and then you get only chips and sparks. To get water out of a sponge you must squeeze it, and the more pressure you apply the more you will get. But the honeycomb just overflows with its own sweetness. God's desire is for our lives to overflow with the sweetness of Jesus Christ that we might be honeycomb givers.

Willingness means giving without unbelief. A church member was having trouble with the concept of tithing. One day he revealed his doubts to his minister: "Pastor, I just don't see how I can give ten percent of my income to the church when I can't even keep on top of our bills."

The pastor replied, "John, if I promise to make up the difference in your bills if you should fall short, do you think you could try tithing for just one month?"

After a moment's pause, John responded, "Sure, if

"To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, 'A window shalt thou make in the ark.'"

Charles Spurgeon

you promise to make up any shortage, I guess I could try tithing for one month.”

“Now, what do you think of that,” mused the pastor. “You say you’d be willing to put your trust in a mere man like myself who possesses so little materially, but you couldn’t trust your Heavenly Father who owns the whole universe!” The next Sunday, John gave his tithe and continued faithfully thereafter.

The Importance of Equality in Giving (2 Corinthians 8:13–15)

Albert Barnes comments on verse 12, “Probably the Corinthians were able to contribute more than many other churches, certainly more than the churches of Macedonia . . . and Paul therefore presses upon them the duty of giving according to their means, yet he by no means intended that the entire burden should come on them.”

The principle of equality teaches that the rich are not to be expected to bear the load alone, and the poor are not to be excused from proportionate responsibility. Not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice.

In prosperity we are to give of our abundance. J. S. Basford rightly said, “It requires a strong constitution to withstand repeated attacks of prosperity.” Proportionately, church stewardship experts say that the more church members make, the less they give. In 1990, American households with incomes of less than \$10,000 gave an average of 5.5 percent to charity; and those making more than \$100,000 gave only 2.9 percent.

A churchgoing IRS agent recorded the following story several years ago. “The other day I checked a queer return. Some guy with an income under \$5,000 claimed he gave \$624 to some church. Sure, he was within the 20 percent limit, but it looked mighty suspicious to me. So I dropped in on the guy and asked him about his return. I thought he’d become nervous like most of them do, but not this guy. ‘Have you a receipt from the church?’ I asked, figuring that would make him squirm. ‘Sure,’ he replied, ‘I always drop them in the drawer.’ And off he went to get his checks and receipts. Well, he had me. One look and I knew he was on the level. I apologized for bothering him, explaining that I have to check on deductions that seem unusually high. As I was leaving he invited me to attend his church. ‘Thanks, I belong to a church myself.’ ‘Excuse me,’ he replied, ‘that possibility never occurred to me.’ As I drove home, I kept wondering what he meant by that last remark. It wasn’t until Sunday morning when I put my usual dollar in the offering plate that it came to me.”

John Wesley wrote concerning the importance of giving from our abundance: “I fear wherever riches have increased [that] the essence of religion, the mind that was in Christ, has decreased in the same proportion. Therefore I do not see how it is possible, in the nature of things, for any revival of true religion to continue long. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and

frugality; and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches. What way then can we take that our money may not sink us to the nethermost hell? There is one way, and there is no other under heaven. If those who ‘gain all they can,’ and ‘save all they can,’ will likewise ‘give all they can,’ then the more they gain, the more they will grow in grace, and the more treasure they will lay up in heaven.”


A bumper sticker read, “Tithe if you love Jesus. Any idiot can honk!” But a Bible teacher was closer to the Biblical concept: “Giving a tithe means nothing if God has enabled you to give 50 percent and you give only a tithe.”

In poverty we are to give of our adversity. Christians are sometimes put to shame by unbelievers in the matter of giving in the midst of adversity. A number of years ago the *San Francisco Chronicle* carried the following story. “One of the poorest countries in Africa has a Rotary Club with a heart. Last February, Carmen McCabe, president of the Rotary Club of Guerneville, California, received a letter from Laurent Nzeyimana, president of the Rotary Club of Bujumbura, capital of Burundi. ‘In the spirit of Rotary International,’ the letter read, ‘a club even as poor as ours wishes to share this modest contribution from the members in response to the flood that has devastated your area. We trust this minute contribution would display our solidarity with you in your time of grief.’ Enclosed was a check for \$200.”

Several years ago there was a terrible earthquake in Alaska. The city of Anchorage was devastated. Many people wrote the governor and demanded that he do certain things for them. They outlined the suffering they had endured and demanded that the state take responsibility. Later the governor appeared on television and reported that among all the demands that he had received in the mail came a letter from a small boy, written on a 3 x 5 card, with two nickels taped to it. He had penned these words: “Use this wherever it is needed. If you need more, let me know.”

A woman with no money and too old to work began to pray, “Teach me how to obtain. Give me something to send out to a missionary.” Before her death she was supporting 93 missionaries!

To illustrate the importance of ethics in giving and receiving, the apostle Paul in verse 15 cites an incident in Israel’s history from Exodus 16:18 pertaining to the gathering of manna. The person who greedily appropriated more than his share found that the residue spoiled and was lost. On the other hand, the individual who gathered only that which he needed had no lack at the end of the day. In all things, the Israelite was expected to follow God’s will and Word in receiving and giving.

God expects integrity, willingness, and equality in our giving. When we have fulfilled His will, let’s not be proud of our obedience, but rather thankful for the heavenly grace that has enabled us to give back something to the One who gave His all for us. 

Bud Steadman pastors Community Baptist Church in South Bend, Indiana.



Randall Studdard—'89 BJU grad,
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Gene Edward Veith Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Crossway Books, 1994) 256 pages.

James E. Singleton

Since the early 1900s Fundamentalists have fought Modernism, the attempt to integrate Bible truths with elements of modern thought that emerged in the middle of the 1850s. But in recent decades the new kid on the block is more deadly and dangerous than Modernism. His name is Postmodernism, and his thought patterns have radically affected every area of our present existence—art, history, architecture, law, politics, and even our churches.

Postmodern Times by Gene Veith Jr. examines this movement Biblically and historically, shows where it is affecting our culture and the church, and reveals the challenge and opportunity that it presents to the church in its evangelistic mandate. The subtitle of the book indicates the author's purpose in writing: *A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*.

Part One deals with postmodern thought. The author, however, reaches back to pre-modern times when Western civilization believed in the supernatural and a spiritual realm. Beginning with the ancient Greeks, the theme is pursued through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment, which placed human reason above divine revelation.

This rationalism, however, gave way to Romanticism (which appealed to the emotions), and then Existentialism, which was experience-centered. Veith argues that Existentialism is the philosophical basis for Postmodernism.

While Modernism believed in absolute truth (although Fundamentalists argued that their concept of truth was false), postmodernists say, "There are no absolutes." Each person spins out of the web of his own mind his version of truth. The result is the deconstruction of previously held concepts of truth and the dismissal of any thought of "foundationalism." While the Enlightenment left God out in favor of reason, Postmodernism leaves reason out for (fill in the blank).

Though Postmodernism is philosophically based, its influence has been popularized through films, television, and other mass media. Part Two shows the ramifications of Postmodernism in art, performance, architecture, television, movies, and literature. Veith shows that since Postmodernism believes that reality is socially constructed, its art tends to be political.

Part Three discusses the impact of Postmodernism on society. Since absolutes do not exist, society is fragmented into many cultures and subcultures as people scramble to find some type of identity. The lack of a common language means that communication and persuasion are impossible for various subcultures. We may have the same vocabulary, but we have different dictionaries. Thus, what you say is not what people hear.

The fourth part of the book deals with postmodern religion—religion in which people seek for spirituality apart from objective truth. An individual can claim to be Christian, believe in reincarnation, and dabble in the New Age

movement—all at the same time! The result of Postmodernism is a mix-and-match theology.

And yet Veith is not pessimistic; he sees in Postmodernism a great challenge and opportunity for the Christian faith. This openness of Postmodernism to all thought patterns raises the possibility of discussion of alternative ideas as we seek to contextualize the gospel in a culture dominated by this philosophy. Christians, however, must not create their own subcultures in which they withdraw from the secular world; separation must never become isolation.

Our temptation as we seek to invade a postmodern world, however, is that of accommodation. While we must understand and relate to people where they are, the essentials of the Christian faith must not be negated or diluted—errors that Modernists and New Evangelicals both make.

Postmodernism demands a radical rethinking of our faith, mission, evangelism, discipleship, and outreach. The author rightly contends that we must get our house in order and not sell out either to Modernism or to Postmodernism. Seeing the real possibility of outright persecution as Christians contend for absolute truth in a culture that becomes increasingly lawless, Veith reminds us that not even culture can overcome the church (Matt. 16:18).

How do we live out the implications of our Christian faith in a postmodern culture? One way is to live in a credible community. A local church should not simply theologize the gospel, but display it in a way that will be an apologetic to the postmodernist, who is interested in personal relationships. In the New Testament, Christ not only proclaimed the demands of God the Creator on individuals but demonstrated the results of seeking first the kingdom of God.

Churches must express concern for the total person, not simply for saving souls. This concern would involve interest in every aspect of people's daily lives, including their homes, marriages, children, and businesses—and Biblical instruction in each of these areas as well (i.e., genuine discipleship).

While there are texts that delve more deeply into the philosophical foundation for Postmodernism, Veith has chosen to produce a volume that, while not neglecting the theological bases and history of this philosophy, works through its ramifications for our lives, churches, and communities. And though Postmodernism is a complex topic, Veith writes not for academic specialists, omitting the more technical aspects of postmodern thought. He helps us understand Postmodernism's nature and practical outworking in our culture and churches. Only then can we learn to invade and interact with it to produce an evangelistic harvest.

Those desiring to read further could consider *Postmodernizing the Faith* by Millard J. Erickson and *A Primer on Postmodernism* by Stanley J. Grenz.

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Write It Down

Shirley C. Houk

When our grandson, Joel, was four years old, he stayed with us for several months. Every night when I put him to bed he would say, "Grandma, tell me about the farm." Joel lived in a third-floor apartment in Brooklyn, New York, surrounded by concrete sidewalks and streets. I would reach back into my memory and tell him about Daddy sitting on a three-legged stool milking a cow and occasionally squirting milk into the mouths of the many cats who were waiting for their evening snack. Or I would tell him about walking barefoot behind Daddy as he plowed a furrow in the cool, damp earth. Sometimes I told him how sweet and juicy a just-picked peach tastes, or how much fun it was to ride Jimbo as he pulled the hayfork up the side of the barn and into the mow. At other times I told him about summer evenings when we children played hide-and-seek, Run Sheepie Run, and captured lightning bugs in glass jars. As I began to reach further back in memory I thought, *Joel and our other grandchildren will never know about the carefree life we lived in the wide open spaces of the farm unless I write it down for them.* This was the catalyst that started my writing down memories from my life on the farm in the 1930s. Eventually I had a 74-page book, a copy of which I gave to each sibling, daughter, and son.

Suppose God's Word had been handed down only orally from one generation to the next. Do you think we would have it as God gave it? Of course not. That is why God had men write it down. In Exodus 34, God had Moses hew out tablets of stone on which His Word would be written. The first ones had been destroyed when Moses came down from the mount and found Aaron and his people worshipping the golden calf. In verse 27, God says, "Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel." In the next verse we read, "And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments."

Under his reign in Judah, Josiah instituted many reforms. One was repairing the temple. In 2 Chronicles 34, we read that during the restoration the Book of the Law was found. Upon hearing it read, the king rent his clothes and said, "Great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book" (v. 21). King Josiah then read the book to his people. "And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book" (v. 31). Because of the reading of the book, Josiah served the Lord the rest of his days. Until they read the words of the Lord they didn't know what He had said.

But His Word was preserved in the book. How thankful we are for God's written Word!

There are many ways we can use our written words to serve and glorify the Lord. We can write letters to witness, to instruct, to encourage, to keep in touch. Several years ago I wrote a Christmas letter to my high school classmates telling them how the Lord had saved me. When our children went away to school they thought they had all the answers, but there came times when Mother had to write a letter of instruction. I recently wrote a letter to a young woman who has moved to another state. She answered, "Hearing from you and knowing you pray for me is such an encouragement to me." Use your writing skills to encourage. Don't just send a sympathy card. Write a personal note from your heart. Add a Scripture verse.

We can use letters to pass on our Christian heritage. My brother has put together a book that is a compilation of letters written by my great-great-grandfather to his daughters who had moved to Ohio from Connecticut. His letters are sprinkled with Scripture, and he often speaks of the goodness of the Lord. One tender letter is written to a teenage grandson who had just returned home from his one and only visit to his grandfather, who urged him to follow the ways of the Lord and to remember his Creator in the days of his youth. What a testimony to his family and those of us who are descendants!

When our children were at home, every week I sat down at my typewriter, rolled in paper and carbons, and wrote a letter to my parents and siblings. I kept one copy for myself—no e-mail or copiers in those days. When I read over those letters I'm reminded again of the faithfulness of the Lord in trials and His goodness to us.

We can cheer our missionaries with our letters. And now with e-mail, it is easy to write and tell them what is happening. They want to hear about our family, our hobbies, entertainment, and everyday cares and joys. For church news they like to hear about special meetings, spiritual growth in the lives of the people, projects in which the ladies' group is involved, and funny things that happen in church or at home. One missionary wrote, "Sometimes something American is very much welcomed. We do sometimes get just a little homesick. I have a friend who sent me a book of American scenery. When I get really homesick I open my book and travel down the roads to the lovely places I am missing. What a time I have!" So when you write to your missionaries tell them about the new Wal-Mart that is being built down the street and the new McDonalds in the mall.

Remember our shut-ins. They like to hear about the church services they miss. What did the pastor preach about? Which of my friends were there? They have plenty of

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And let us give thanks for having One to thank.
—Gerhard E. Frost

Thanksgiving, to be truly thanksgiving, is first thanks,
then giving. —a proverb

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child! —King Lear, Act 1, Scene 4

This is the holy reasoning of love; it draws no license
from grace, but rather feels the strong constraints of
gratitude leading it to holiness. —Charles H. Spurgeon

We are having the usual thing for our Thanksgiving dinner:
relatives. —Unknown

A thankful heart is the parent of all virtues. —Cicero

O Thou who has given us so much, mercifully grant us
one more thing—a grateful heart. —George Herbert

In old Anglo-Saxon, to be "thankful" meant to be "think-
ful." Thinking of one's blessings should stir one to grati-
tude.

The truly great are the most grateful.
—William Arthur Ward

Filling the world He lies in a manger. —Augustine

God clothed Himself in vile man's flesh so He might be
weak enough to suffer. —John Donne

In the humanity of Jesus, God was truly speaking our
language. —John Powell

Christ did not only come into our flesh, but also into our
condition, into the valley and shadow of death, where
we were, and where we are, as we are sinners.
—John Bunyan

No one could ever have found God; He gave Himself
away. —Meister Eckhart

Grace is young glory. —Alexander Peden

Deny the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, and you paralyze
the whole scheme of redemption by Jesus Christ.
—I. M. Haldeman

In the form of a servant is the Lord, and God in cradle
lies. —T. Pestel

His life is the highest and the holiest entering in at the
lowliest door. —Oswald Chambers

He stretched skin over spirit like a rubber glove, aligning
Trinity with bone, twining through veins until Deity
square-knotted flesh. —Marjorie Maddox Phifer

Grace and glory differ very little; the one is the seed, the
other is the flower; grace is glory militant, glory is grace
triumphant. —Thomas Brooks

Observe your enemies, for they first find out your faults.
—Antisthenes

It takes less time to do a thing right than it does to
explain why you did it wrong. —Henry W. Longfellow

Friendship is like a bank account. You can't continue to
draw on it without making deposits. —Unknown

If you [General Bertrand] do not perceive that Jesus
Christ is God, very well: then I did wrong to make you a
general. —Napoleon Bonaparte

We cannot rely on [God's] promises, without obeying his
commandments. —John Calvin

The worst thing that can happen to a good cause is not
to be skillfully attacked, but to be ineptly defended.
—Frederic Bastiat



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How Is Your Walk?

Deb Craven

"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more" (1 Thess. 4:1).

Abby was going down into the basement to put a box of dishes in storage when she slipped and fell, taking the last nine steps as one. She severely fractured her knee, requiring surgery and months of rehabilitation before she was able to walk again. Geri was at the hospital to take her newborn son in for a checkup when the valet attendant accidentally ran over her foot while parking her car, breaking one of the bones and causing some other damage in her foot. She has been going to therapy for over three months now and still walks with a limp. Frank has diabetes that has affected his circulation and had to have his lower leg amputated. He is learning to walk again with the aid of a prosthesis. These three people are all struggling with their physical walk. Something painful happened to each one of them that changed their walking pattern, and now they are working to regain this important skill. They would tell you that learning to walk again is difficult work that requires a good attitude. To succeed, one must first be willing to listen to the instructions of the therapist and then obey them. Secondly, one needs to be willing to work—to put forth effort on a consistent basis. And finally, one needs to be willing to wait. Success, unfortunately, does not come overnight and requires continued effort and patience on the part of the learner.

What Abby, Geri, and Frank have experienced parallels the Christian's experience in his walk with God when sin enters his life. When a person has fallen into sin or broken one of God's commandments, his walk with the Lord will be affected. Isaiah 53:10 says, "Your sins have caused a separation between you and your God." When we suffer the loss of something or someone close to us, our walk with the Lord can also be altered because of our grief. Psalm 31:10 tells us, "For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed." When we are not walking with our hands in His, letting Him lead to the correct path, we will surely stumble, and our ability to serve will be diminished.

How do we get back on track again? We follow the same principles as in our physical walk; willingness to listen and obey, willingness to work hard, and willingness to wait on the Lord's timing and be patient for His best in our lives.

It doesn't do Abby any good to go to therapy if she refuses to listen to and obey the therapist. She will not be able to make any gains towards improving her walk. It is

the same for me as a Christian. If I refuse to listen to God or to obey Him as the authority in my life, I am saying that I don't trust Him to know what is best for me. When His Word says, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, . . . not in strife and envying" (Rom. 13:13), and I choose not to obey, then my Christian walk will be more of a stumble.

Geri's advancements in therapy will be small if she does not like to work hard. When the assignment is to do 50 repetitions of an exercise and she does only ten, then her progress will be minimal. It will be the same for me if I become lazy in my Christian walk. Colossians 1:10 says, "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." There will always be some area of my walk that requires work because God says I must be fruitful in every good work, not just a deed here and a deed there. He declares that His children should ever be increasing in the knowledge of Him, and we cannot do that without the consistent intake of His Word into our hearts and then putting forth the effort to apply it.

Frank is a hard worker, but he occasionally gets discouraged. He is struggling to learn to walk with his prosthesis, but he keeps running into delays. Frank is learning patience. If our walk is to be pleasing to the Lord, we also must learn to be patient. A closer walk with the Lord takes time to cultivate. It requires a willingness to wait, for "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint" (Isa. 40:31). God has created us with a heart that longs for just such a walk: a walk that is full of strength, that does not grow weary or faint.

So how is our walk? To answer this question we must first check to see if we are willing to obey the Lord Jesus. Are our hearts tuned to His instructions and our feet ready to respond to His commands? Secondly, we need to discover whether we are willing to work diligently in the areas where the Lord has already directed. Are we being lazy by putting off what we know we ought to do? Finally, we must remind ourselves to be willing to wait on the Lord for His perfect will and timing in our lives. Do we often want to step out into paths of our own choosing rather than wait for God's leading and timing? Our willingness to respond positively to these three principles, just as Abby, Geri, and Frank are doing in their physical walk, will lead to a spiritual walk that is upright and worthy of our Lord, in whose steps we seek to follow.

Debbie Craven is a physical therapist who lives in Macomb, Michigan.

The Fatal Choice

Jack Shuler

"What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matt. 27:22).

The record of Pilate is one of desire and choice. The text in itself indicates the greatest of miracles. That Pilate, or any man, should have discretion with the Incarnate God is the wonder of all wonders of all ages.

In reviewing the scenes of Christ's trial and crucifixion we are bound to confess that the mystery of it all is too deep to fathom. Here we behold hands of flesh striking the cheek of God. Here we witness lips of clay forming vile spittle to fling upon Him. Here we find mortal fingers clinching a scourge that stripes the broken, bleeding back of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Christ is at the mercy of men.

What brought it about? Put history in reverse and trace it back to its source, and you will discover the significance of the first line of Holy Writ: "In the beginning God. . . ." Standing on the rim of eternity, the great Creator gazed down through the valley of space and said, "Let there be light!" And, lo, the morning stars broke forth in chorus, and the lightning shafts of a thousand suns sent flaming brilliance to the darkest recesses of infinite gloom. "Let there be earth!" And, behold, a sphere destined to become the cradle and grave of all humankind began to revolve along its ethereal circle. "Let there be man!" And a creature stirred from out of the dust, stretched, balanced, and walked forth a living soul. And God saw that it was good. But it was not good for long. Hell rose up against heaven to vie for God's creation. Sin, that satanic ambassador from the kingdom of all darkness, invaded earth and knocked at the door of Adam's heart, and man fell. And so it was that mankind lost the image of God, and from his loins came murderers, drunkards, warmongers, and doers of every lewd and lawless act in the sight of God!

That's what brought it about—this murderous, milling press in the council hall. A degenerate race in a hell-bound world needed a Savior, and God's only Son volunteered. By way of a virgin's body He entered the realm of flesh. His locks damp with the view of Jordan, He forged His way through the wilderness and on to Gethsemane. And now, as He nears His goal and is but a step from the cross, the drama of destiny takes place. Man faces God across a judgment bar. The creature is met in the council chamber with his Creator. The significance of the occasion flashes across the mind of Pilate, and he blanches! Frantically he looks about for an avenue of escape. But the question is absolutely

inescapable. Hear it, guards and soldiers! Hear it, men and angels! Hear it, earth and heaven! "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"

An old legend has it that every man, during his span of earthly years, is given his special five minutes. It is the time when the tide rises and the breakers sweep most surely toward the strand. To take that tide at the crest is to be borne to safety. To hesitate is to lose the only current which can carry the soul to its rightful destination. But the tide rose and fell that day while the judge tarried to wash his hands in a laver of water. Pilate's five minutes were gone when he turned back to the howling mob. And as his gavel sounded on the judgment bar, another gavel was heard to resound throughout the universe. It was the gavel in the hand of the Judge of the universe. For while Christ was on trial before Pilate, Pilate was on trial before God; while Christ awaited sentence from a man who deemed Caesar's friendship more precious than life eternal, a soul was weighed in the balance of heaven and found wanting.

Foolish Pilate! In a few months his robes adorned another's back, and his gavel was lightly fondled by another hand! At last he was laid away in an unmarked tomb, and the lips that said, "I wash my hands of this just man" said not another word, and the hands that felt the tepid water in the bowl was stark and stiff and still.

His was a fatal choice.

Jack Shuler, evangelist for more than 25 years and author of this article, died in 1963. His brother, evangelist Dr. Phil Shuler (philshuler@juno.com), is based in Rocky Mount, North Carolina.

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MALACHI: HEALING FOR

Israel felt the heavy hand of divine chastening when the Babylonians came crashing down on her people, her land, her capital, and her temple—exactly as God had warned they would (primarily through Ezekiel and Jeremiah). But the year 539 B.C. inaugurated a startling change in the fortunes of God’s people, as Persia took over Babylon—exactly as God had said they would (Jer. 25; Dan. 2, 7). She had endured 70 years of exile only to see God, contrary to all human hope or expectation, bring her back into her land—exactly as God said He would (Jer. 29; Dan. 9). External changes alone, however, never change people internally.

Historical Context

Time and again she experienced God’s providential intervention and protection on her behalf, moving the hearts of kings and confounding the conspiracies of her enemies.

■ In 538-537 B.C., the Lord “stirred up” King Cyrus’s spirit not merely to allow but to encourage the Jews to return to their own land and to help finance the rebuilding of their temple (Ezra 1).

■ In 520, God used the wrath of His enemies to praise Him (Ps. 76:10) when their letter of complaint to King Darius prompted him to confirm Cyrus’s previous permission to rebuild the temple, and to command the Jews’ enemies not only to leave them alone but to provide whatever materials or financial assistance the Jews needed to complete this task (Ezra 5–6).

■ About 482, the God who (Daniel 2:21) removes kings (and queens) and sets up kings (and queens) removed Vashti and set up Esther as the queen of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) in order to foil the genocidal plot of Haman, which posed a direct threat not only to the Jews in Susa but throughout the kingdom of Persia, including the ones back in Palestine (Esther 1–10).

■ In 458, God moved the heart of King Artaxerxes to commission Ezra the scribe with virtual governorship powers, authorized him to take another contingent of Jews back to Judah, and encouraged him to teach the people the law of God (Ezra 7).

■ In 445, God again moved Artaxerxes’ heart to commission his personal butler, a Jew named Nehemiah, with explicit powers as governor and authority to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1–13).

About 430 B.C., at the conclusion of Nehemiah and after the expiration of his first 12-year term as governor—

and at the end of this remarkable series of divine interventions on Israel’s behalf—Malachi appears as God’s last prophetic voice before the hushed twilight of the intertestamental era.

Spiritual Diagnosis

Having been re-established and protected and prospered in the land so unmistakably by the hand of God for a century, one would expect the Jews of Malachi’s day to be confident in their God and prospering spiritually. They are, in fact, in a deplorable state. How could this be? What more could God have done for them? What was their problem? In part, it was disappointment with God and frustration with the apparent failure of His Word.

Back at the beginning of the restoration in the land, God had sent Haggai and Zechariah (520 B.C.) with some startling prophecies and explicit promises—predictions of God’s earthly glory in their temple, Israel’s universal prominence, and Gentile subservience under David’s heir. Now nearly a century had passed, yet it seemed nothing had changed!

The nation was subject to the same foreign power, and still there was no immediate prospect of a king on David’s throne. The people were not experiencing the blessings that they assumed God had promised and that they thought they most certainly deserved. Believing that they had done everything God had demanded, they were growing more and more impatient for the blessings. Because God did not act according to their agenda and schedule, they began to doubt His word and His ability to keep His promise.*

In their minds, God already had plenty of time to make good on His promises and had failed to do so. They were still “doing worship” because it was the “right” thing to do, but it was a heartless worship that insulted God. One of the causes of heartless religion is a bitterness born out of a disappointment with God—a feeling that you have not seen Him do things for which you have prayed or things He has promised to do in His Word. Had He forgotten them? Their mistrust of God’s Word bred a materialistic selfishness, a weariness with God’s worship, a disdain for God’s service, and a complaining and argumentative spirit—all of which are evident throughout the book of Malachi. The book fleshes out the subtle danger of disappointment with God. Disappointment breeds further doubts about God and His Word, doubt deteriorates into heartless formalism,

HEARTLESS RELIGION

and formalism degenerates into disdainful weariness and outright disobedience. After all, they reasoned, “a God who [apparently] had lost interest in His people was not likely to be concerned with whether His laws were being strictly observed.”**

Their disappointment with God found tangible expression in certain actions and attitudes that God addresses in a series of eight conversations. He unmasks the ugly irreverence of their secret thoughts, private opinions, cynical remarks, and under-their-breath complaints with frightful bluntness.

Overview: God Protests, Israel Retorts

In Malachi’s 55 verses, the phrase “saith the LORD (of Hosts)” appears 26 times. In contrast, what God says is met on 13 occasions with, “(But) you say. . . .” The prophecy recounts the contentious conversational exchanges between God and His people.

Every assertion by God is met with an injured but contentious “prove it” from His people.

God’s Love Doubted (1:2ff)

- I have loved you.
- How have You loved us?

God’s Name Despised (1:6)

- Where is My honor? You have despised My name.
- How have we despised Your name?

God’s Worship Defiled (1:7ff)

- You offer defiled food on My altar.
- How have we defiled You?

God’s Acceptance Forfeited (2:13ff)

- You cover the altar with tears . . . yet I do not regard it nor receive your offering with good will.
- Why not?

God’s Patience Tried (2:17)

- You have wearied Me with your words.
- How have we wearied You?

God’s Appeal Impugned (3:7)

- Return to Me and I will return to you.
- How shall we “return”? (i.e., What do You mean “return”? Are You implying we’re “away” from You?)

God’s Resources Robbed (3:8ff)

- You have robbed Me.
- How have we robbed You?

God’s Character Maligned (3:13ff)

- You have used strong words against Me.
- What have we said against You?

Symptoms of Heartless Religion

Underlying Israel’s specific, historical expressions of heartless worship are timeless principles that are alarmingly applicable to us.

- The people harbor disdain for the privilege of divinely appointed worship, offer God their leftovers, and regard their service as a tiresome thing (1:7–13).

- The spiritual leaders themselves depart from God’s ways, causing others to stumble by their example and corrupting their privileged position (2:8).

- The people and/or leaders ignore God’s explicit precepts for personal holiness (cultural/spiritual separateness) and practical righteousness (fulfillment of obligations) (2:11ff).

- The people withhold their God-given financial resources from the Lord and His work (3:8–9).

- The people allow appearances to cause them to question the veracity of God and the trustworthiness of His Word (2:17; 3:13–15).

The Heart of God in Malachi

God’s opening words (1:2) depict His posture throughout the book. Our tendency in dealing with the kinds of blatant disrespect exhibited by Israel would be to start with something Mosaic: “Hear now, you rebels, ingrates, hypocrites!”—which is all true. But God begins here: “I have loved you!” He is not merely stating a past historical fact, though He is calling their attention to all the evidences of His love ever since the inception of their existence as His people (and will remind them that His unchanging love is the only reason He has not destroyed them, Mal. 3:6). He is appealing to them on the basis of, and attempting to elicit a response to, His unchanging love (e.g., 3:7).

But how could God possibly love such perpetually perverse and faithless people? God’s unchanging love toward them was not rooted in their loyalty or obedience or merit; it was rooted solely in His sworn promises to them through Abraham and David. In that sense, God loved them “in Abraham” and “in David.”

Dear Christian, God’s love toward you is not rooted in or dependent on how faithful or obedient you are. When

we think that God would be more inclined to hear and answer our prayer if only we walked more faithfully each day as we should, we are succumbing to an insidious misconception—that our faithfulness somehow merits God’s love and attention.

God’s love for us is firmly and unchangeably grounded in promises He has made to us *through Christ*. All God’s promises to us are centered in Christ, so all those promises are firm, constant, and reliable only if, and only *because*, we are “in Christ” (2 Cor. 1:20). God does not love us because of any merit that we possess or earn, or any faithfulness that we maintain, but precisely and purely because we are “in Christ,” “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6). To doubt God’s love toward us, then, is to doubt God’s love for His own beloved Son. When this thought thoroughly captures God’s people, it engenders neither arrogance nor presumption, weariness nor heartless religion,

but profound love and loyalty and affection in return.

Concluding Thoughts

God mixes stern rebukes with gracious prophetic reassurances (3:1–4; 4:1–3)—but changes none of their external circumstances. Some argued with God’s assessment to the end, but others responded humbly to the message—and God took note (3:16–18). Interestingly, He takes them right back to the beginning of the revelation they had disregarded and reinforces it once more (4:4).


Our need is not new revelations or scintillating signs or dazzling divine interventions, but God’s grace for a revived heart-delight in Him and a renewed confidence in His Words.

* Michael P. V. Barrett, “The Message of Malachi: An Analysis of Dead Religion,” *Biblical Viewpoint*, November 1998, p. 33.

**H. L. Ellison, *From Babylon to Bethlehem: The People of God Between the Testaments* (Baker, 1976), p.25.

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Vatican Declares Only the Catholic Church Brings Salvation

The Vatican's restatement of its position was outlined in a complex theological document that repeated church teachings and that other Christian churches had "defects," partly because they did not recognize the primacy of the pope. The clarification and restatement of the official Catholic position said that only the Catholic Church possessed and had been entrusted with "the fullness of grace and truth." (Reuters, 9/5/2000) As described in the lead paragraph of a *Washington Post* story, the document "declares that individuals can attain full salvation from earthly sin only through the spiritual grace of the Catholic Church and that other faiths—including Protestant Christian ones—have defects that place their followers in a 'gravely deficient situation' in seeking salvation." As recounted in the lead paragraph of a *Los Angeles Times* story: "Referring to the Anglican and Protestant churches, the document said, 'The ecclesial communities which have not preserved valid episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the eucharistic mystery are not churches in the proper sense.'" Vatican officials said the document has the explicit approval of Pope John Paul II. (Baptist Press, 9/6/2000)

Catholics Asked to Shut Down Lotteries

Catholic churches in Philadelphia will have to shut down their lotteries after questions were raised about their legality. Lotteries are used by some parishes to fund parish or school expenses, but the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that running high-stakes games of chance such as the \$40,000 Pot of Gold jackpot appeared to violate state gambling laws. The law allows fraternal and charitable groups to raise money with small games of chance, but not lotteries. (ReligionToday.com, 8/01/2000)

Presbyterians Disagree on Gambling

Presbyterian ministers and members disagree sharply on whether gambling is immoral, according to the February 2000 Presbyterian Panel survey conducted by the Presbyterian Church (USA) Research Services office. Among church members, 35 percent agree and 51 percent disagree that "all gambling is immoral." The numbers are almost exactly reversed for ministers, with 52 percent agreeing and 36 percent disagreeing that gambling is immoral. Almost two-thirds of members (64 percent) and elders (65 percent) and almost half of pastors (44 percent) and specialized clergy (49 percent) reported participating in some

form of legal gambling in the past year. (PCUSA News, 8/30/2000)

Southern Baptist "Moderates" Launch Offensive

A "moderate" Southern Baptist group, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF), has gone on the offensive against convention conservatives. A new Sunday school curriculum disputing the Southern Baptist Convention's revised and strengthened statement of beliefs has been published by the CBF-supported Baptist Center for Ethics. CBF leaders, particularly those affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT), are among the harshest critics of the changes made at last

summer's Southern Baptist Convention. Marv Knox, editor of the *Baptist Standard* uses the pejorative term "Fundamentalists" to characterize conservative SBC leaders who believe in the authority of the Bible. (Baptist Press, 8/30/2000) Statements by the current BGCT president, Clyde Glazener, pastor of Gambrell Street Baptist Church, Fort Worth, and Russell Dilday, the immediate past president of the state convention, in recent weeks have indicated the distinct possibility of BGCT withholding funds from the SBC or specific SBC entities. Both Glazener and Dilday regularly use the term "Fundamentalist," which they consider to be a pejorative term, when referring to current SBC leaders. (Baptist Press,

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8/4/2000)

Southern Baptist “Moderates” Identical to Liberals

A newly released BGCT Seminary Study Committee Report points to scholars who hold to liberal views—such as that faith in Christ is not necessary for salvation or that the Bible contains errors—as examples of “historic Baptist theology” worthy of support from Texas Baptists. (Baptist Press, 9/21/2000) On October 1 the CBF began offering a retirement plan in partnership with the liberal American Baptist Churches in the USA’s Ministers and Missionaries Benefits Board. (Baptist Press, 8/21/2000)

Sick People Die at Hinn’s Healing Crusade

Four sick people, including two young children, died while attending Benny Hinn’s healing crusade in Nairobi, Kenya, last May. Reuters news service said police told a local newspaper that “the four had been released from a hospital to be cured at Benny Hinn’s ‘Miracle Crusade.’” In addition to the four deaths, ten other people reportedly suffered serious injuries after falling from trees they climbed to view the preacher. Media coverage of the event was sparse, however. Hinn appears to be trying to control and filter crusade details. The local press were prevented from entering the crusade compounds, said a reporter for the *Daily Nation News*. (*What In The World!*, Vol. 28, No. 2)

Abortion Industry Lawsuits

A lawsuit against an abortion clinic in Fargo, North Dakota, might be an opening for a series of class action

NOTABLE QUOTES

Most certainly, if you compare the Pope, and his abominable clergy, with the Pharisees and Sadducees, the mildest possible way of dealing with them will be, to throw them all into one bundle. Those whose ears are so delicate, that they cannot endure to have any bitter thing said against the Pope, must argue, not with us, but with the Spirit of God.—John Calvin

Those of us who venerate freedom, be we Jewish or Christian, be we religious or secularized, have no option but to pray for the health of Christianity in America. No other group possesses both the faith and the numbers sufficient to hold back the ever-encroaching, sometimes sinister, power of the state.—Orthodox Jewish rabbi Daniel Lapin, in his book *America’s Real War*

[M]y Christian sect was very intolerant—Christians thought they were the only ones going to heaven—and I said heaven is going to be a mighty empty place with nobody else there. —CNN founder Ted Turner, referring to his Christian upbringing

The true theory of our Constitution is surely the wisest and best, that the States are independent as to everything within themselves, and united as to everything respecting foreign nations. Let the general government be reduced to foreign concerns only . . . and our general government may be reduced to a very simple organization and a very inexpensive one—a few plain duties to be performed by a few servants.—Thomas Jefferson, in a letter written in 1800

Americans spend 5.4 billion hours each year complying with the federal tax code—roughly the equivalent of 3 million people working full time. If it were employed in productive activity, the labor now devoted to tax compliance would be worth \$232 billion annually. The federal cost of hiring 93,000 IRS employees is \$6 billion. If these Americans weren’t fooling around with the tax code, they could produce the entire output of the aircraft, trucking, auto, and food-processing industries combined.—Dr. Walter E. Williams, professor of economics at George Mason University

It’s the right thing to do.—Omni Hotels president James Caldwell, when Omni became the first national hotel chain to remove pornographic pay-per-view movies

suits against the abortion industry for failing to disclose the dangers of the procedure, according to an Aug. 9 report on CNSNews.com. The suit, *Mattson v. Red River Women’s Clinic*, was filed on behalf of a woman who says she was the victim of false advertising because she was not informed of the connection between breast cancer and abortion. According to Mattson’s attorney, if the suit is successful it could “open the abortion industry up to hundreds of tobacco-like lawsuits. . . . There are millions of women with potential causes of action out there.” (Baptist Press, 8/11/2000)

Homosexual Lobby Attacks Boy Scouts

The U.S. Supreme Court recently ruled that the Boy Scouts were well within their constitutional rights as a private organization to bar homosexuals from being members or from serving as leaders. But homosexual activists have been trying to use city and state laws which forbid discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation to restrict funding for the Boy Scouts and limit the organization’s use of public facilities. (*AFA Action Alert*, 8/31/2000) Homosexual-rights groups are encouraging American corporations to eliminate funding of the Scouts. They are also urging the United Way, which contributed more than \$83 million to Scouting programs in 1996, to reconsider its funding of the organization. Published reports indicate that United Way chapters have already cut off millions of dollars in support for the organization. The Scouts recently reported that donations and support for the group has indeed dropped following the Supreme Court ruling.

(Liberty Alliance, 8/31/2000)

Boy Scouts Grows to a Record Enrollment

Activists for homosexuals have battled publicly with the Boy Scouts of America for nearly two decades over the Scouts' ban on homosexual leaders, but membership in the Scouts has climbed as the conflict has intensified. "During the last three years, we've grown by 7 percent," said Gregg Shields, spokesman for the Boy Scouts, which finished last year with near-record enrollment of 6.2 million members—5 million youths and 1.2 million adults. Membership growth in the Boy Scouts has been particularly strong in the heavily homosexual San Francisco area. "We're the fastest-growing metro council in America," said Steve Barnes, executive director of the San Francisco Bay Area Council of the Boy Scouts. (*Washington Times*, 9/5/2000)

Russian Messianic Jews Deported From Israel

After four years of working in Israel establishing several Messianic congregations there, the Israeli government has deported Victor Redko and his family for their missionary work in the country. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 8/18/2000)

Clinton Administration Joins Local Gay Rights Case

The U.S. Department of Justice filed a friend-of-

the-court brief August 15 on behalf of a local Kentucky gay-rights employment ordinance, pitting the federal government squarely against a Southern Baptist doctor who claims that the ordinance—which went into effect last year—is unconstitutional because it violates his First Amendment right to freedom of religion. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 8/18/2000)

Hollywood Markets Violence to Children

A Federal Trade Commission report released in September showed that the movie and music industries market violent entertainment to children. The study found that fully 75 percent of the R-rated movies in the study tested rough cuts on audiences that included teens under 17. The FTC also studied marketing plans for explicit music, finding that 27 percent identified teens as part of a target group, while 73 percent placed advertising in media with large teen audiences. (*World*, 9/23/2000)

ACLU Defends NAMBLA

The American Civil Liberties Union has decided to defend the North American Man/Boy Love Association—a group that advocates sex between men and boys—against a lawsuit brought by the family of a ten-year-old boy who was murdered by two molesters. The family of Jeffrey Curley, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, claims that NAMBLA, through its web site, incited the molesta-

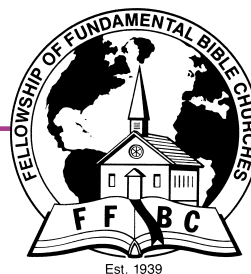
tion and murder of the youngster in 1997. Using the First Amendment's guarantees of freedom of speech and freedom of association as their legal justification, the Massachusetts chapter of the ACLU said it will defend NAMBLA. (Liberty Alliance, 9/7/2000)

United Religions Initiative Launched

The United Religious Initiative charter was signed June 26, 2000, at the URI Global Summit held at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. Groups represented at the summit ranged from liber-

al Christian groups to several Eastern religions, and even included Wiccans. The URI purposes to "bring religions and spiritual traditions to a common table, a permanent, daily, global assembly." The charter "includes prohibitions on aggressive recruitment," according to a *Los Angeles Times* report. (*Foundation*, July/August 2000)

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What Is at Stake in the Music Debate?

You have seen those timeless pictures. Nothing has changed but the body styles of the automobiles burning in the background or the style of the Nikes worn by the boys throwing the rocks which dominate the landscape of Israel. Where soil has been washed away after centuries of invaders stripped the country of its trees, stone has emerged as the dominant feature of the land. Most buildings are built of it, and it yields an arsenal of ready weapons for passionate young warriors seething with frustration over the riddle of irreconcilable tension in the Middle East.

While Christendom adorns itself for the profitable season of "Peace on Earth," we have entered another round of conflict in the so-called peace process between Israel and her neighbors. Popular "can't-we-all-just-get-along" diplomacy has reduced the issue to an unsatisfying and unending "peace process" remote from anything resembling real peace, which awaits the return of Christ in glory. The whole world shares the burden of this land that heard the heavenly host so long ago, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

For the average American these words mean nothing more than, "Hey, it's Christmas, let's try to be civil"; another way of saying, "I'm enjoying the cruise, don't rock the boat." As I perused the newspaper recently, I took a closer look at one of those pictures. Most of the rock-throwers, like the well-armed youths caped in Kevlar facing them, were

nameless combatants in a conflict far away. The camera caught the emotion of the struggle. Standing in the rubble of his low-budget battle, in the center of the frame was a young man barely a teenager. As his arm drew back with Davidic familiarity, his crude sling still held the stone that he would send into the fray.

It seemed there was more anger on his young face than his years could have collected. Could he possibly understand the issues for which he was fighting? Did he even choose which side he would join? No, the causes behind his cause are as old as the stones themselves. He fights because of where he was born, how he was raised, what he has heard and seen in his short life. He hates the man he doesn't even know because he is the enemy and always has been. He may be fighting for peace, but like the rest of us, it is peace on his own terms that his nature demands. Fallen man wants to be free to do as he pleases, and he wouldn't mind if someone else would pay his way.

That wasn't what the angels announced, and it isn't what Christ was offering. His mission was not to provide peace to promote prosperity to fund the indulgence of human pride. The angry heart that hates his brother will not be happy when the final stone is thrown. The situation in the Middle East is complex, but the problem in the human heart is simple. Man wants to be happy but he doesn't know how. He wants a

god to help him along the way but not to hinder his will. His prayer is, "Meet my needs and leave me alone." Like spoiled children around the Christmas tree, men look at God's blessings and ask, "Is that all?"

The promise of "Peace on Earth" has never been the mere by-product of emulating the gentleness of Jesus. "What would Jesus do?" is not a bad question, but it is not always the right question. "What *did* Jesus do?" will get us to the answer. He didn't come just to help rebels against Him make peace with each other, but to reconcile them to Himself. The offer was, "Peace between men on Earth and God, when their wills are right toward Him."

We know the tragedy of war makes casualties of those who little understand the complexities of its causes. What reasonable person doesn't pity the foot soldier who simply does his duty, giving his life for a few feet of land that will be lost again tomorrow? We pray that he would at least be motivated by a higher sense of duty born of a knowledge of Jesus Christ. Romans 13 makes clear that there is a just cause for combat. Christianity is not synonymous with pacifism. There won't be peace on earth until the Prince of Peace establishes and enforces it.

This truth need not fan the flames of partisan passion. None of us is immune to the tendency to sling the stones at hand toward the unknown man on the "other side." Contending for the faith is not an option, but we would do well to remember that "only by pride cometh contention." Those of us who know what "Peace on Earth" really means should keep the peace when possible.

*The offer was,
"Peace
between men
on Earth and
God, when
their wills are
right toward
Him."*



DR. JOHN C. VAUGHN

What's on the Web

Bob Whitmore

It seems the longer I use the Internet, the more good web sites I discover. The challenge for me becomes one of deciding which web sites to discuss in this column. Sometimes I am able to assemble a number of sites on a particular theme, such as missions, cults, or evangelism. At other times, however, I seem to find an eclectic mixture of interesting sites. This column is an example of the latter.

In keeping with the Thanksgiving holiday, the first web site we'll review is plimoth-on-web (www.plimoth.org). It's primarily about the Plimoth Plantation museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts, but its library section contains interesting articles about the first Thanksgiving and the Pilgrim story. At this web site you can also take a virtual tour of Plimoth Plantation.

Secular universities sometimes post useful information on religion on the Internet. An example is the Religious Movements Homepage at the University of Virginia (www.religiousmovements.org). In addition to news on contemporary religious movements, the site contains sections on group profiles and links, cult group controversies, religious freedom, and religious broadcasting. I used the site's search engine to search on the word Fundamentalism, which turned up a long list of hits. Number 3 on the list was a link to the Religious Movements' own page on Fundamentalism, which included much good (and some erroneous) information—a profile report, problems in analyzing Fundamentalism, hyperlinks to other Fundamentalism web sites, a select bibliography, and even video materials.

My continuing interest in Baptist history and missions led me to the Kansas State Historical Society web

site. It contains a section called "Indian Missions and Missionaries: A Selected Bibliography" (www.kshs.org/library/bibmissn.htm). There you can read short profiles about Baptist missionaries Jotham Meeker (1804–1855) and Isaac McCoy (1784–1846) and their work among the Indians in the early 19th century. The bibliography lists many books, articles, and other sources of information about non-Baptist missionaries as well.

I think maps of Bible lands are great study tools. So when I found a source of free downloadable Bible atlas maps, I thought it was wonderful. Bible Atlas Maps is a set of 40 maps "of the Holy Land and other Bible-referenced locations, from the Garden of Eden to modern Israel. The maps are in a single Microsoft PowerPoint .ppt file, which makes them perfect for use with video projectors or PC/TV converters when studying the Old and New Testaments. Many of the maps make use of NASA satellite images. Individual maps can be copied and used in your own Sunday school PowerPoint presentation or printed on a color printer." The maps were designed to be used with Microsoft Powerpoint 97, but they have been used with Powerpoint 2000 with no problems. You'll find Bible Atlas Maps on ZDNet at www.zdnet.com/downloads/stories/info/0,0012NS,.html. (Those are zeros, not capital letters.)

More than one reader has suggested that I mention PreachingToday.com's (www.preachingtoday.com) database of sermon illustrations, which they have found useful. So, consider it mentioned. And if you have found a particular web site to be especially useful and would like to share it with other *Frontline* readers, contact us at FBFLINE@aol.com.

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to enjoy your letters.

Why not write a letter to the editor of your local paper giving a Biblical view on issues such as abortion, gay rights, or violent and immoral TV programs? A year or so ago the city government in our area was harassing a local pastor who was ministering to the homeless on his church property. On the Letters to the Editor page I read letters of support for this pastor in what he was doing.

A daily journal or diary can be a source not only of family history but of assessing our spiritual growth. What thing did I get victory over last week or last month? How did the Lord show His faithfulness? I recently came across a written note in my Bible, "Salvation is free, but the cost of discipleship is high." I needed to be reminded. Although Jim Elliot was killed by the Auca Indians in the 1950s, we can still read about the daily spiritual struggles and victories of this missionary because he kept a daily devotional journal. I can read details of the life of Abigail Adams, wife of President John Adams, because she kept a diary. Missionary Narcissa Whitman, through the words written in her diary, tells us about her trials and victories as she sought to win the Nez Perce Indians to the Lord.

A good way to get started "writing it down" is to write about your personal experiences. What was that cute thing your two-year-old just did? Write it down and send it to your mother. What were those words of mature wisdom your teenager just spoke? Write them down. Or maybe you're an older person like me. One of the first stories I wrote was an account of a sleigh ride on a long-ago Christmas with my

grandfather and cousins. My siblings enjoyed receiving this in their Christmas card. You are the only one who can write the story of your salvation, so put on paper how the Lord spoke to you. What verses did He use? Who spoke to you about being saved? A friend, relative, or pastor? What was your reaction? Other details can be added. Were you at home, church, camp, or some other place? Was it nighttime or daytime? What season? Were you a child, teen, or adult?

Writing your testimony can be used to witness to neighbors and friends. One church publishes tracts with members' testimonies and their pictures on the front. One woman who took part in this said that while many people may not read a generic tract that she gives them, they accept and read "her" tract. She just tells them, "This is my story." My friend Susan, who writes such beautiful and interesting Christmas letters, says, "One Christmas we did up a tract about the story of the candy cane, and attached a real candy cane on the front—that one was well accepted." One Easter Susan and her family made up a special greeting, including the plan of salvation, and presented it to neighbors along with some baked goodies. There are so many ways we can witness through the written word.

Whether you write letters, keep diaries or journals, write for your church or school, or use your written testimony to witness, do it for the honor and glory of God. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17).

Shirley C. Houk is the mother of five children and grandmother of 12 grandchildren. This material was originally given as part of a workshop she presented at a Ladies' Retreat at Ironwood Christian Camp in Newberry Springs, California.

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I Am the Chaplain

Gary Fisher

It's quiet. It's early. My coffee is hot. The sky is black. The world is yet asleep. The day is coming, but the dawn is hours off. The calm of solitude in my morning drive will be replaced by the pounding feet of soldiers on a race to morning chow. They know they must run miles before they eat. In the air rings the familiar cadence, the unforgettable sound of the dedicated drill sergeant. The refuge of the early morning will be invaded by the yet-untold problems and crises of the soldiers of the 1st BN 34th Infantry Basic Combat Training. For the next 12 hours I will be exposed to every conceivable problem and issue known to fallen man. But I must always be fresh and ready with an encouraging word that comes from my own personal relationship with God—for I am the chaplain.

A U. S. Army unit is my flock and congregation. Our mission is to train initial entry soldiers in Basic Combat Training. These soldiers come from every walk of life and every corner of America. It is our job to mold and develop within them the spirit of a soldier, an individual prepared to meet the challenges of the mission of the Army today. My mission is simple: to bring God to the soldier and the soldier to God—for I am the chaplain.

I am the chief adviser and confidant for my commander. He looks to me to advise him in all areas concerning religion, morals, morale, and spiritual fitness. I also help him to have a sense of the command climate,

quality of life, and safety issues in the unit. I must be his eyes and ears in the unit, helping him to be more effective as a commander. Therefore, I must look to the Lord for His wisdom and direction as I fulfill this role—for I am the chaplain.

I must be physically fit to be where the soldiers are, engaging myself with them as they train, participating in the training when possible. I crawl when they crawl, I walk when they walk, I run when they run—for I am the chaplain.

I am a staff officer. I must be able to work with other staff heads in order to get the work of the Unit Ministry Team done. I must maintain my military bearing and be the best example of a military officer. Others may be able to slip, but not me—for I am the chaplain.

Finally, I am a soldier. I must be able to perform and conduct myself as a soldier. I must be a leader for those to whom I minister. I must follow in the finest tradition of those who have gone before me. For my wife and me, this is our mission field. We are compelled to go. The challenges are ever present: drug problems, alcoholism, racial confrontations, sexism, financial problems, changing morals, social upheaval, an ever-changing Army. This is my ministry; this is what I do—for I am the chaplain.

Capt. Gary Fisher is a chaplain endorsed by the FBF stationed at Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina.



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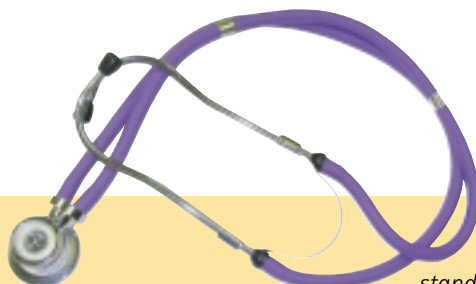
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