

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN HISTORY • PROVIDENCE AND CHILDREN • DEVIANT WORSHIP-PART 3

# FrontLine

July/August 1997



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# Emotion That Acts

**T**he Lord Jesus often demonstrated astonishing miraculous powers in His ministry. In some ways even more impressive, however, He also embodied profound compassion. The Bible records on several occasions that He exercised His power over nature, disease and even death out of compassion. Jesus' compassion is mentioned in six distinct incidents. Three times He is said to have had compassion on the crowds following Him (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32). His compassion on individuals resulted in His healing two blind men (Matt. 20:34) and a leper (Mark 1:41). And once His compassion prompted a miracle of resurrection (Luke 7:13). The rabbis of the day disdained such "unclean" people and avoided them, but Jesus reached out with compassion and helped those in need. The church ought to be a caring family, mirroring the compassion that motivated our Lord.

Look closely at Luke 7:11-17, for instance, and you will see that compassion is not merely emotion but action. The story is familiar to us. A widow's only son had died, and she was accompanying the funeral procession as the body was carried out of the city for burial. "When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her" (7:13). In this incident of heartache and crisis, the Lord showed His great heart of compassion. What does genuine compassion do in the face of such need?

*Compassion sees!* "When the Lord saw . . ." (v. 13). The tears and heartache did not go unnoticed or ignored by Christ. Compassion is observant, sensitive to others' trouble, pain, suffering and need. Our church pews are laced with hurting people. How often do we ignore or fail to see the pain behind a forced smile? How observant are we? When Christ *saw*, His sympathy was aroused. In fact, in every case, Jesus' compassion was aroused by what He saw—sometimes explicitly (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; Luke 7:13) and elsewhere implicitly.

*Compassion feels.* "He had compassion on her" (v. 13). But compassion is not mere sentimentality or a fuzzy feeling. Compassion actually means to "suffer together with." The Greek word is even more graphic, literally referring to the bowels, or intestines, as the

**Compassion is  
not an armchair  
emotion.  
Compassion is  
love in action.**

place of deeply felt emotion. Seeing is necessary to elicit genuine compassion, but seeing is not enough. We must also so identify with the needs of those we see and so keenly feel for their need that we suffer along with them. (We find a similar exhortation in Hebrews 13:3 concerning our regard for persecuted brethren.) Christ's compassion feels the sufferings of those loved more keenly than the sufferers themselves.

*Compassion speaks.* Jesus "said unto her, Weep not" (v. 13). What a gentle intrusion the compassion of Christ made! We often place the burden of initiative upon the one in need. The other refer-

ences to Christ's compassion describe the needy taking that initiative to come to Him for help. But not here. Jesus Himself, seeing her hopeless despair and feeling keenly her loss, took the initiative to address her in her need. When we see such need, the initiative rests with us. We need not wait until we are asked. But it is not enough to pronounce piously, "Be ye warmed and filled" without extending ourselves to minister to others (James 2:15, 16). Compassion goes beyond seeing and feeling and speaking.

*Compassion acts.* What a gracious intention the compassion of Christ had, simply to lift the burden, to ease the pain, to meet the need. Quietly, unostentatiously, graciously, compassion moves into action. "He came and touched the bier. . . . And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. . . . And he delivered him to his mother" (vv. 14, 15). Note the effect of compassion—a total transformation of a humanly hopeless situation. That is what happens when the resources of a compassionate Christ are brought to bear, through us, upon the human condition.

*Compassion is not theory.* Compassion is not an armchair emotion. Compassion is love in action. Compassion is a "fitly spoken" word (Prov. 25:11), a timely benevolent act (1 John 3:17, 18). Compassion cannot be taught; it is caught when the heart is stirred by Calvary love in response to a seen need. May God give our churches a heart that is warm with the life and love of God, as we participate in the compassion of Christ.



Rod Bell



# THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN HISTORY



**P**rovidence" is a beautiful word. God is providentially ordering the steps of His children and providing for their needs. This word "providence" probably has more meaning to us in this generation of *video* than it has had before.

Linguistically the root of the word "providence" is two simple words: one is "before," or "for," or in "behalf of"; and the other is "to see." God *pro videos*; that is, God provides because He knows the way we take. Before we call, He answers. He sees what we need and therefore supplies. God uses the circumstances of the time to accomplish His purpose. He is not taken by surprise at what comes to pass.

**Edward M. Panosian**



Christians need to remember that God is intervening and ordering the affairs of men and nations for His benevolent purpose. To the believer the "amazing coincidences" of history are but manifestations of God's divine intervention for His omniscient, benevolent purposes.

It is probably demonstrable that just about all we need to know of the workings of God in this world is that *God is great and God is good*. We teach little children these facts about God at table. But if you analyze them, there is not much else you really need to know. God is great in all His ways. He is omnipotent: nothing is too hard for Him. And He is good. His greatness without His goodness produces fear, and His goodness without His greatness is weakness. Neither satisfies alone, but His goodness with His greatness provides hope and faith.

Add to that knowledge another little phrase—Hagar's word in the wilderness—"Thou God seest me" (Gen. 16:13). That phrase tells me that He enables me to be the object of His goodness and to be securely safe within His greatness. "Thou God seest me" is both a warning and a comfort. It is both sobering and ennobling.

### **Providence over World Powers**

Who was responsible for the decree that went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered for purposes of taxation? Was that Caesar's business or was it God's business? The answer is both. It was God's business, and it was Caesar's business. Caesar was totally oblivious to God's having anything to do with it.

What does the Lord say? "Nebuchadnezzar, my servant." Wicked, idolatrous, heathen, proud Nebuchadnezzar—God's servant? It required a very profitable "field trip" before Nebuchadnezzar understood that (Dan. 4:28-37). But when he came back and was restored, his testimony was that those who walk in pride God is able to abase. Long before he knew it, Nebuchadnezzar was God's servant. So must the believer look at every man who raises himself up in opposition to God. He is God's servant. Even the wrath of man will praise God (Ps. 76:10). Jeremiah says in the fifty-first chapter: "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD's hand" (v. 7). The events of the past are but manifestations of the omniscient, the omnipotent, the benevolent hand of a sovereign God.

### **Providence in the Incarnation**

An example of God's providence is the preparation of the world for the coming of Christ. God worked out the framework of the Roman Empire so that it was a prepared world for a prepared revelation. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1, 2). God spoke directly to our first parents in the Garden. God then spoke through prophets to

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His people. Then He spoke through His Son, and now He speaks through His written Word. The apex of human achievement since the Flood was the century of Rome's transition from republic to empire. Under Rome there was one world, one language, one road system, one rule, one citizenship.

It was an empire of cities. Do you know that after the fall of Rome, there was not to be a Europe of cities for some eleven centuries? What is the significance of cities? Rapid communication of new ideas among great numbers of people. Great numbers heard a new message—the gospel of Jesus Christ—at one time.

The preparation of the Roman world for the coming of Christ involved natural circumstances

through which God was working out His omnipotent will. Augustus Caesar would have denied it if anyone had suggested to him that he was merely fulfilling Micah 5:2—"But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel." There is a God in Heaven ruling over all. What we read in history is not a series of unique and accidental circumstances.

### **Providence and Persecution**

We sometimes say that God rescues His people. God saves them from destruction by the turning of the tide, sometimes literally, sometimes figuratively. But it is no less true that when God does not deliver His people, He is still at work for their good. God has a purpose in His granting as well as in His withholding. It is not only when God wonderfully redeems His people from destruction that He is operating for their good. "Why do the righteous suffer?" has probably been asked more often than "Why are the righteous preserved?"

The history of persecution in the Christian church is a part of the providence of God. For three centuries Roman emperors persecuted Christians. The preservation of that infant church through such wicked efforts as men could devise is an evidence of God's providence. "All the labors of beast and bestial men," as one historian put it, were employed to destroy the Christians. The efforts to stamp out the "Nazarene sect" served rather to purify the church. No false believers ("goats") mixed with the sheep during the time of persecution. It strengthened the faithful, and all the weapons aimed at destroying the church served to prosper it. The church is never stronger in the world than when it is at war with the world system. This is the principle of Exodus 1:12, "But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew" (cf. Acts 8:1-4).

### **Providence and Ecclesiastical Corruption**

God's purpose was accomplished and man's purpose was frustrated until finally, in the fourth century, it became popular to be a Christian. This was actually a great loss for



the church. When nobody could be a martyr anymore, men sought the self-martyrdom of monasticism. Monasticism was an externalizing of what is supposed to be a spiritual principle: "I die daily." Death to self and life to the will of God are spiritual concepts. Roman Catholicism externalized spiritual concepts, substituting the visible for the invisible, imposing rules rather than coming under the rule of God. Monasticism was a counterfeiting of the truth. Satan's primary weapon is to counterfeit the works of God. Satan does not meet truth in open contest. He subtly counterfeits; he infiltrates; he makes error seem palatable. It is the error, in the mixture of truth and error, that is fatal. Yet God preserved His own through the dark period when Roman Catholicism was dominant.

### **Providence and the Crusades**

The Crusades may be considered as a wonderful providence of God. Nominal Christians of the West came to the assistance of nominal Christians of the East against the incursions of Islam. The Crusades were launched against the Turks (the Muslims), who were thought of as hated infidels and blasphemers. So in an effort to win the region for Christianity, the western Europeans came to the East where a superior culture had been preserved, and in doing so, brought back to the West the fruits of the classical culture.

The West had been feudalized and barbarized. In the East, Constantinople—with the introduction of Muslim medicine, science, art and mathematics—shone as a jewel of civilization. The Crusaders who retreated to the West after their futile mission took with them experiences and samples of goods, just as an overseas traveler brings home in his suitcase little things that he has picked up along the way. Such souvenirs included packets of a strange powder called cinnamon, and other spices. Spices were a precious novelty in a feudal economy in which the only means of preserving food was either drying, root cellaring or salting. No matter which meat people ate, it all tasted like salt. The introduction of spices in the West seems such a simple thing, but a crusader's coming back home with a pinch of nutmeg in his tunic was nearly as significant as Columbus's discovery of a New World.

The Crusaders never permanently rescued the Holy Land or retarded Muslim advance; they never liberated Constantinople—they plundered it. But they wrought a revolution. Just as the Roman emperors merely helped to strengthen Christianity centuries earlier, so also the Crusaders accomplished God's purpose in opening up the learning of the East to the West. That resurgence of ancient learning served as a foundation for the Reformation.

Crusaders brought with them the Greek language, the language of the New Testament. What had prevailed in the West? Why in part had the Western church become corrupt with traditions? The official language of the West was Latin, the language of law and government, not the language of revelation of either the Old or the New Testament, not the language of philosophy and religion. Greek was the language of philosophy and religion. As an example of the difference between the languages, there is no word in Latin that corresponds to "repent." Repentance is

a change of heart attitude. Greek is a language of thought. Latin is a language of action. The Latin term for repentance translates into "do penance." It is easy to see that the deficiencies of language contributed to theological perversion in the Middle Ages.

### **Providence in the Renaissance**

Again, natural means were supernaturally employed in this instance. Now that the Scriptures were recoverable in the original languages, there was a concern to compare the received text with the original. The researchers saw discrepancies. It is significant that in Erasmus's publication in 1516 of the New Testament in Greek, he presented parallel columns to contrast it with the received Vulgate (the Latin). The contrasts were illuminating to those who read it. Just as much as the Greek New Testament became a tool that Tyndale used in translating the Bible into English and that Luther used in translating it into German, it also had the effect of pointing out the corruptions of the Latin text. Now that this "new learning" was restored to the West, it produced a revival of learning—the Renaissance—and it in turn ushered in the Reformation.

### **Providence and the Reformation**

Consider the providence of God in the matter of movable-type printing. The Chinese had used movable type for centuries before it was introduced to the West; and it was introduced to the West just before the Reformers of the sixteenth century were born. Wycliffe's New Testament in the fourteenth century did not produce the Reformation. God's sovereign timing arranged that movable-type printing be introduced at just about the time God was ready to do a special work for man. So quickly were Luther's pamphlets set in type, printed, duplicated, sold and dispersed throughout the realm, that Luther said it was as if angels were his couriers. Wycliffe had no such opportunity, but Wycliffe was no less faithful. John Huss was burned for having said and taught the same thing that Luther eventually taught for twenty-five years until he died a natural death.

Luther's natural death was itself a miracle of God's providence. The year of Luther's death was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Edict of Worms, which had declared him an outlaw and had authorized anybody to put him to death with the promise of reward from the emperor. Though that ban was never lifted, Luther died peacefully. Luther knew that it was not in men to destroy the instrument that God intends to use again, and it is not in men to preserve the instrument with whom God is finished.

### **Providence over the Nations**

The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 is an example of God's providence. It has now been over nine hundred years since England was last invaded successfully. There has been no absence of attempts to invade England in those years; but England embraced the Reformation, however imperfectly, and that nation is blessed whose God is the Lord.

That nation will be chastened who departs from the



Lord. Consider what happened in France in the eighteenth century. In the sixteenth century France rejected the Reformation. France had once grudgingly tolerated Protestantism as evidenced by the Edict of Nantes, issued in 1598, granting limited religious and civil liberties. With the revocation of the edict in 1685, France sealed her decline. France has been a third-rate power ever since, known for philosophical radicalism and moral declension. France rejected the Reformation eventually and suffered a bloody revolution. It has been said that while in England tears were flowing down the coal-blackened cheeks of miners in the fields as the gospel was proclaimed by the Wesley brothers and Whitefield, rivers of blood were flowing in the streets of Paris from the feet of Madame Guillotine. To paraphrase Galatians 6:7, "God is not mocked; whatsoever a nation soweth, that shall it also reap."

The hand of God directed many aspects of imperialism in the British Empire of the last two centuries. Imperialism, though it is not thought of with admiration today, was a blessed process by which God proclaimed the gospel to the world. Because England lost the Hundred Years' War with France in the fifteenth century, she sought em-

pire elsewhere than in Europe, and eventually Queen Victoria could boast that the sun never set on the British Empire. But what did this mean for the proclamation of the gospel? Missionaries went under the auspices of Britain where they had not been able to tread for centuries before. God was working out His purpose, and He gave the fruits of Western civilization—including the gospel—to many peoples.

### Conclusion

An understanding of how God has worked on behalf of His people in the past assures us of His direction in the affairs of men present and future. In history we find evidences of how God benevolently cares for His own. May God, who is great and good in all His ways, who withholds no good thing and gives nothing but good, give us the confidence that "thou God seest us."

Adapted from *The Providence of God in History*. © 1996 Bob Jones University Press. Reproduced by permission. All rights reserved. The booklet is available from BJU Press. (See review on page 18.)

## DISCERNING THE WILL OF GOD IN UNCLEAR CIRCUMSTANCES

### How May a Christian Discover the Will of God and His Own Duty under Dark and Doubtful Providences?

Providence in concurrence with the Word may give some encouragement to us in our way; but no testimony of Providence is to be accepted against the Word. If Scripture and conscience tell you such a way is sinful, you may not venture upon it. . . . Take this therefore for a sure rule, that no Providence can legitimize or justify any moral evil.

If in doubtful cases you would discover God's will, govern yourselves in your search after it by the following rules:

1. Get the true fear of God in your hearts. Be really afraid of offending Him. God will not hide His mind from such a soul. [See Psalm 25:14 and Proverbs 1:7; 9:10.]
2. Study the Word more and the concerns and interests of the world less. The Word is a light to your feet (Ps. 119:105); that is, it has a discovering and directing usefulness as to all duties to be done and dangers to be avoided. It is the great oracle at which you are to enquire. Treasure up its rules in your hearts, and you will walk safely. [See Psalm 119:11.]
3. Reduce what you know into practice, and you shall know what is your duty to practice. [See John 7:17; Psalm 111:10.]
4. Pray for illumination and direction in the way that you should go. Beg the Lord to guide you

in straits and that He would not permit you to fall into sin. [See Ezra 8:21.]

5. And this being done, follow Providence so far as it agrees with the Word and no further. There is no use to be made of Providence against the Word, but in subservience to it. And there are two excellent uses of Providence in subservience to the Word.

Providences, as they follow promises and prayer are evidences of God's faithfulness in their accomplishment. [See Psalm 41:10 and 11 and 86:17.]

Also providences give us loud calls to those duties which the command lays upon us and tell us when we are actually and presently under the obligation of the commands as to the performance of them. Thus when sad providences befall the Church or ourselves, they call us to humiliation; and let us know that then the command upon us to humble ourselves at the feet of God is in force upon us. [See Micah 6:9.] And on the contrary, when comfortable providences refresh us, it now informs us this is the time to rejoice in God [Eccles. 7:14]. . . . It is our duty, therefore, and our wisdom to distinguish seasons, and know the proper duties of every season; and Providence is an index that points them out to us [Eccles. 3:1–11].

—John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence*, pp. 188–190

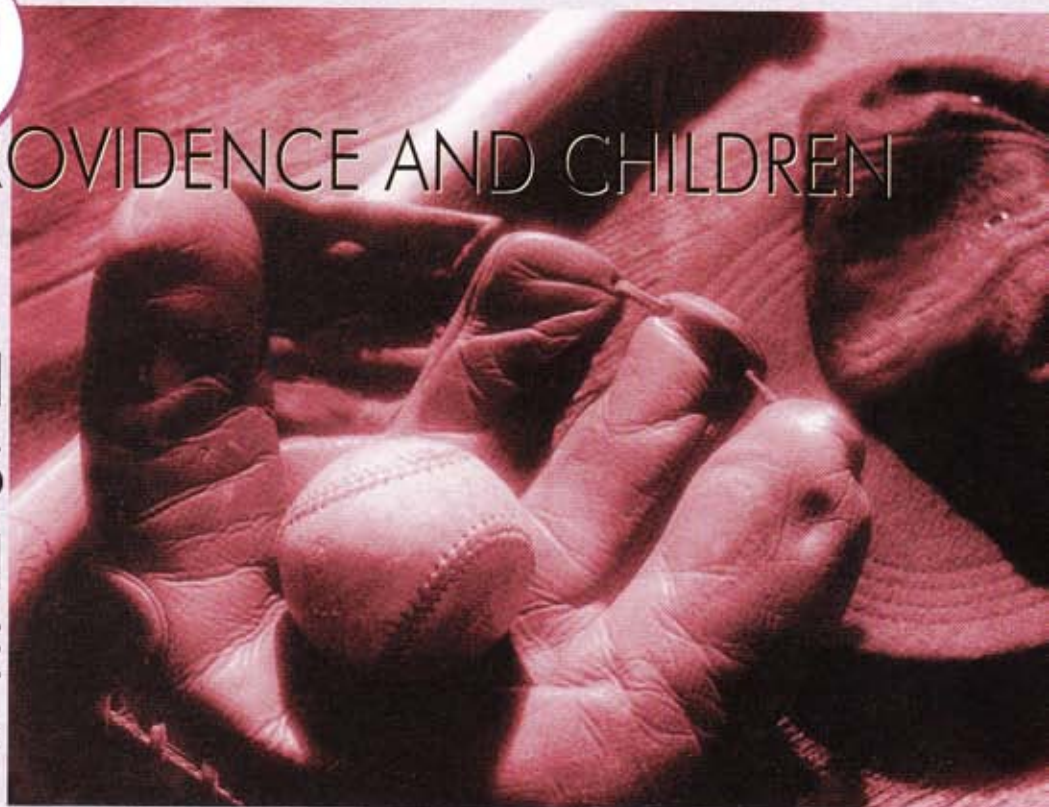




# PROVIDENCE AND CHILDREN

## GUARDIAN ANGELS ON OVERTIME

Layton Talbert



Ever wonder about all those angels “ascending and descending” that ladder between earth and Heaven in Jacob’s dream? What were they doing? That dream revealed in picture form what the Scripture later clarifies explicitly: that angels are God’s real but invisible ministers to those of us on earth. Some of us give them a lot more work to do than others, but surely children are the most demanding of all the angels’ charges.

When I was around age five, I was at my grandparents’ house and noticed a board with a nail sticking up out of it. I remember thinking (honestly), *I wonder if that would go through my shoe? I wonder what it would feel like if I stepped on it?* One man’s stupidity is another man’s scientific curiosity, willing to sacrifice one’s personal comfort in order to expand the bounds of human knowledge. (It is uncanny, and a little scary, to see how much my youngest son thinks like I did.) Having thus expanded the bounds of human knowledge, I am happy to be able to announce that it is now no longer necessary for anyone else to explore

the physiological sensation of stepping on a nail, with or without tennis shoes. Trust me. Neither is it necessary for anyone to discover what happens when you poke a slot-head screwdriver into an electrical outlet. Take my word for it, it’s a perfect fit.

(Perhaps reading about my own occasional lapses of sanity will give some readers a sense of exonerated for their own acts of sheer stupidity. Surely, I cannot be the only one who has done things like this. Can I?)

The survival rate of loggerhead sea turtle offspring to adulthood is said to be less than 1 percent. I would conjecture that most wild species also face unusually low survival rates (with the unfortunate exception of starlings, rats and cockroaches). My own experience has led me to marvel at the disproportionately high survival rate of human offspring to adulthood. One thing definitely in our favor is that we are at the top of the food chain. Otherwise, we’d be done for within a couple of generations. What the predators didn’t eat would self-destruct via what I call JIS (Juvenile Idiocy Syndrome).

But then there’s the other invisible factor—Providential protection through guardian angels who, in some cases, must do overtime that union workers do not see in their worst nightmares.

I probably will never forget my son Ethan’s blurred face just beneath the surface of the water. We were wading at the edge of a lake with another family. There were a lot of kids to watch. Ethan, about five, took one step too far, too deep, and he was under. Had I not “just happened” to turn and notice at that moment, he might have sunk deeper than I could have seen. He couldn’t swim. God is gracious.

When my second son, Micah, was only a few hours old, my wife and I were resting on the bed at the birthing center with our apparently healthy new child. If we had already fallen asleep, or if we had been in a conventional hospital setting where the staff might have taken the baby to a nursery, we never would have noticed when he simply, quietly stopped breathing. Ten days of intensive care and a battery of tests indicated the



problem as nasopharyngeal reflux. He was on a monitor for his first three months at home, thankfully without any further incident. You'd never know it to watch him now. He caught his breath then and has hardly paused for another one since.

When she was about nine, Heidi (our oldest) once scraped her face on the street rather badly. (I know that sounds virtually impossible; chalk it up to JIS.) The injury turned out to look a whole lot worse than it actually was, though it was still pretty ugly. Her tooth went into her lip, a front tooth was chipped, and she scraped up her upper lip pretty badly. Blessed with her mother's hyper-sensitive conscience, she had recently been experiencing some doubts about her salvation and whether or not she really believed. A couple of days after her accident, Heidi mentioned to me a thought that had occurred to her (it was God, of course) and encouraged her. "I really could have hurt myself a lot worse," she acknowledged, a point that had come up in our previous discussions and prayers. In which case, she continued, "My guardian angel must have been watching me and protecting me. Well, if I have a guardian angel, then I must be saved!"

She drew such evident encouragement from this thought, I was loath to say anything to the contrary. In my concern for theological precision, I felt obligated to suggest ever so gently that the presence of guardian angels might not necessarily guarantee that one was a Christian. I hated taking any of the wind out of her sails, because she is so painstakingly conscientious and honest. Here she had discovered what she saw as a stepping stone for her faith, and I was gingerly moving it a little farther away or suggesting that it might be a little shaky. Suddenly, I recalled (again, it was God, of course) the wording of Hebrews 1:14, where the Scripture describes angels as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Few influences can restore a Biblical simplicity to one's theology like children.

Scripture neither teaches nor denies whether any of us have individual guardian angels "assigned" to us. Nevertheless, the Bible is clear that God often ministers to us invisibly through His angels (Ps. 91:11; Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1:14). The astonishing part of the verse in Hebrews 1 is the subtle implication that much of their protection may well be

while we are still in unbelief or rebellion against God and strangers to His grace. They are sent forth to minister to those who "shall be heirs of salvation." What wonders we would behold if we had eyes to see all God providentially does for us through His angels.

Elizabeth Browning perceptively penned,

Earth is crammed with heaven,  
And every bush is a burning  
bush;  
But only those who see take off  
their shoes—  
The rest just sit 'round and pick  
blackberries.

Too many of us "sit 'round" and thoughtlessly devour the sweet fruits of providential protection and provision, oblivious to the holy burning bush of God's presence from which we pluck them. May God use these thoughts to prompt you to "take off your shoes." Take some time to remember and write down some of God's protective and providential providences in your life.

Dr. Layton Talbert is a Bible instructor and freelance writer living in Travelers Rest, South Carolina.

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The word of GOD to all the world

## IMPORTANCE OF RECORDING OUR EXPERIENCES OF PROVIDENCE: WISE COUNSEL FROM A PURITAN

I cannot but judge it the concern of Christians that have time and ability for such a work, to keep written memorials or journals of Providence by them, for their own and others' use and benefit. For want of collecting and communicating such observations, not only ourselves, but the Church of God is greatly impoverished. . . .

If Christians in reading the Scriptures would judiciously collect and record the providences they shall meet with there, and but add those that have fallen out in their own time and experience, O what a precious treasure would these make! . . .

Providence carries our lives, liberties and concerns in its hand every moment. Your bread is in its cupboard, your money in its purse, your safety in its enfolding arms; and surely it is the least part of what you owe to record the favors you receive at its hands.

Do not trust your slippery memories with such a multitude of remarkable passages of Providence as you have, and shall meet with in your way to heaven. . . . Written memorials secure us against that hazard [of forgetting God's providences], and besides, make them useful to others when we are gone, so that you do not carry away all your treasure to heaven with you, but leave these choice legacies to your surviving friends. . . .

Take heed of clasping up those rich treasures in a book, and thinking it enough to have noted them there; but have frequent recourse to them, as oft as new needs, fears or difficulties arise and assault you.

—John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence*, pp. 219, 220





# Misfortune or Providence?

BORN IN 1931, MIKHAIL KHOREV WAS IMPRISONED for his faith and ministry in the former Soviet Union in the 1960s and again from 1980 to 1986. Plagued from birth with very poor eyesight, Khorev recounts in this prison letter to his children what his mother learned from this providentially ordained thorn in the flesh: that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:7-10) and that we bear the treasure of God in the frail clay vessels of our bodies so that "the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:6, 7).

## Nineteenth Letter

I send you greetings, my beloved children.

In each of my letters I lovingly seek to tell you about the wonderful deeds of God. Not everything that God does is immediately comprehensible to us, but at the end of our lives every Christian will certainly be able to cry out to the Lord, "How great you are, O God, your wisdom is in all your ways and all your works!"

Yes, one day we will look back and see everything clearly. But how about now? Do we thank the Lord for everything now? I ask this because if we have committed our lives to him, then he never makes a mistake and he never lays a cross upon us that is too hard to bear. Never!

... When a child comes into the world, it is a joyous occasion for the parents. And so the day I was born was no exception to this. (I am now telling you some memories that my mother shared with me.) You know that I had very poor eyesight from birth. The doctors told my mother, "Your son has bad eyes, but we won't be able to determine how bad or whether he can see at all until he is a bit older." I don't need to tell you how worried my mother was. Her two daughters were quite healthy, but now a son had been born who was physically "weak." As far as Mother was concerned, I was born blind.

She shared her fears with Father. She often spoke of that day saying, "As soon as we arrived home, Daddy took you in his arms and said, 'Let us give glory to God for this gift to our family.'"

Mother remonstrated, "It's not only a joyful event but it's also a deeply worrying event because the boy is not

healthy. They think he might even be totally blind. ..."

"Dearest, but surely you agree that God never makes a mistake?"

"Of course, God never makes a mistake, but ..."

Daddy then countered her objection and continued, "Yes, it's true our son is not as healthy as other children, but his complaint is quite exceptional, isn't it?"

"Yes, but ..."

Daddy continued, not allowing her to contradict him, "If God doesn't permit a hair to fall from our heads without his will, then today's events are firmly in his control, and I believe that our Lord has exceptional plans for our son. And now let us give God the glory for these special plans he has for him."

"I can't remember any longer," Mother continued, "what passage of Scripture your daddy read, but we knelt down, with you in our arms, and we thanked God for his wonderful ways in our life. I didn't share your father's joy and secretly scorned what he said. I didn't voice my feelings aloud, but secretly I thought that what he said was too simplistic."

"Now thirty years have passed, and your father has long since been gone. But only now do I agree with what he said. And I feel convicted that it has taken me so long to understand why you were born with such poor eyesight and such a weak constitution. I only wish I could tell your father, 'Yes, you were right with your simple faith in God. Forgive me for not understanding you, and even criticizing you in my heart. ...'"

The first time my mother told me this was on New Year's eve in 1969. Naturally I rejoiced together with my mother and praised God in prayer.

Beloved children, I am telling you this to comfort us both in the long separation we are enduring. What else can I tell you about the state of my health? I have always had strength enough for my work in the churches. No one who knows me would be able to guess how little I've been able to do in the home. My eyes have always been a great problem to me. I beg of you, beloved, take my place at home as far as you can. In a month's time I will be fifty years old. ...

The Lord be with you, beloved.

Excerpt from *Letters from a Soviet Prison Camp* by Mikhail Khorev (Grummersbach, West Germany: Missionswerk Friedenstimme, 1986). Reprinted 1989 by Baker Book House. Used by permission.



The letter addressed to Grace Bible Church waited for me on the table as I arrived one morning for work. It looked normal enough; after all, this is Grace Bible Church, and I am the pastor. The letter opened with, "Dear Pastor Winters." *I'm not Pastor Winters, but I am the pastor, I thought. They must just be a little mixed up.*

Dear Pastor Winters,  
I recently heard your radio broadcast in which you offered a Bible and tape, and I would like to please order them.

Our church is located on the Caribbean island of Barbados, on the eastern tip of the West Indies. Although I have a regular radio broadcast in our Caribbean area, I had never offered Bibles or tapes on the program. Realizing I had better take a closer look at the source of this letter, I glanced at the postmark to see "Zimbabwe, Africa." That was over 3,000 miles away from our church in Barbados! As I looked again, I noticed that the address only read "Grace Bible Church, Brookings." *Brookings? Where is Brookings? And in what country?* I started to wonder how the letter had found its way to us in the first place. Our radio program is only local, and our location is certainly not Brookings. Curious as to where Brookings might be in the world, I decided to try to find it in my atlas. There were no Brookings to be found in the cities of the world except for one in the United States. *Perhaps this was destined for the United States? But what zip code?*

I finally set aside the letter for the moment but mentioned it to my congregation out of curiosity. A distinct feeling arose among my people that we should send a Bible to this man. We soon discovered, however, that the cost of mailing a Bible to Africa exceeded the cost of the Bible itself. It seemed wiser to offer to send the letter writer, Mr. Wellington, the money to buy a Bible for himself. It was decided that we would write Mr. Wellington of our desire as a church to pay for a Bible for him and ask if there was a store where he could buy it locally. If not, we would send him a Bible.

A month or so passed, and I had forgotten to write the letter to Mr.

Wellington. Forgotten, that is, until a dear lady in our church asked me one day if I had written the letter yet. After her reminder, the letter was soon on its way.

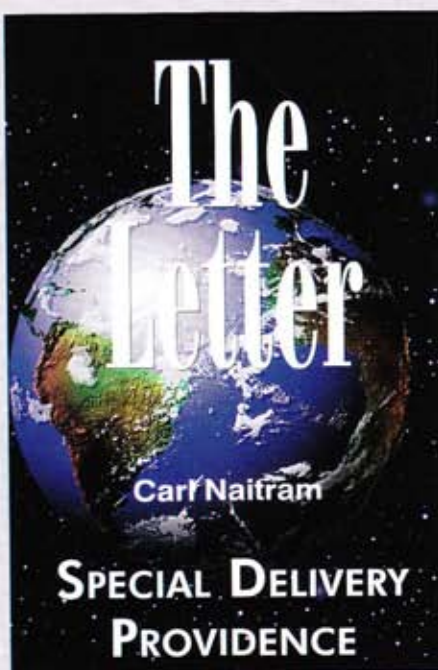
Our letter to Mr. Wellington floated about Zimbabwe until it settled into the hands of a postal worker in Kadoma, 190 miles away from its original address. The postal worker became frustrated over what to do with this letter and decided to give it to another local pastor since the return address on the letter said Grace Bible Church. This pastor, Gideon Njovu, was in the process of planting a new church in the area but was struggling with prob-

lem. His small church in Kadoma, they responded that this letter was possibly God's way of pointing them to a Bible-believing church that might be willing to help sponsor their church. They quickly wrote back to us in Barbados and detailed their pressing need and urgent prayer for a sponsoring church. They closed the letter with "come over to Macedonia and help us."

My heart as a preacher was greatly moved. We could not support financially a church we had never met and knew nothing about, but our entire church was burdened to assist this beginning work and to see a strong independent church grow from these tender roots. Reports from Africa taught us more of this growing ministry. People walked fifteen to sixteen miles each way to attend services and to hear the gospel taught. Many began their journeys on Saturday night to reach the village by church time. Money that we sent was used to purchase food and prepare meals for these folks to eat after the services, before their long walk home. We received pictures of the huge pot that sat outside the building where they would prepare food for everyone. From this one church, other local churches began in surrounding villages as God continued to bless. Eventually, we were sending \$250 monthly. This was a great sacrifice of love from our congregation to the work in Africa. Five national pastors were supported on that \$250—each pastor lived on \$50 a month.

A severe famine struck Zimbabwe two years ago, and the United Nations started to airdrop food shipments to the needy areas. Pastor Njovu and his church were one of a few organizations chosen by the United Nations to supervise this food distribution because of their reputation among the villages. This brought more and more people in contact with the church and under the sound of the gospel.

Shortly after the famine, we stopped receiving reports from the work in Zimbabwe. Finally, a letter came from Mrs. Njovu asking that we not send money in Gideon's name but to her instead. This request caused us concern, because we did not know what was taking place there. Feeling the need to be cautious, we held back our support until we knew more of



lems with the state, because all new churches in Zimbabwe must have a sponsoring church.

With no local gospel preaching church, Gideon Njovu was led to plant one, but had been hampered by the lack of a sponsoring church. It was at this time that the postal carrier left the letter, with the excuse that Mr. Wellington could not be found and that since Gideon Njovu was a pastor, he could take it. "But this is not for me," protested Pastor Njovu, but the postal carrier dropped the letter on his desk, turned and left. Not knowing what else to do, Pastor Njovu opened our letter to Mr. Wellington and read of our willingness to help him. After Pastor Njovu shared this story with the people of



what was going on. Some months later on a Sunday morning, I received an overseas call. I thought someone was playing a prank. The caller began, "This is the British Red Cross in Mozambique. Are you Rev. Carl Naitram?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Do you know a man by the name of Gideon?" he asked.

"Yes!"

"Is he from your church?" he continued.

"He certainly is," I replied.

The Red Cross representative explained that Gideon had traveled to Mozambique to preach the gospel, taking two men from his church with him. While he was there, a war broke out, and they were all held prisoner, accused of being spies. One of the only things Gideon had with him was a slip of paper with my name, address and telephone number—and that information saved him. When he was asked for identification, he told the Red Cross to call me in Barbados and I would verify who he was. After confirming his identity, Gideon was given the freedom to preach in the prison camp. The response was so great that a church was

started in the surrounding area. That church in Mozambique still thrives today.

Gideon was later called to London by the United Nations to give a firsthand report on the war conditions in Mozambique. We sent him money to travel to meet us in Barbados on his way home.

God used one improperly delivered letter and a series of other divine events to bring forth ten new churches to preach His Word in many African villages. Other local villages are calling and asking for someone to come and preach the gospel to their communities. It is a field white unto harvest.

Lord willing, I will be traveling to these African churches in November to visit the work firsthand and to preach the gospel. God worked in miraculous ways to match the burden of our little church in Barbados with the need of Pastor Njovu in Kadoma. I am grateful He has opened for us doors of opportunity to be a part of advancing His kingdom in Africa.

Pastor Carl Naitram is the pastor of Grace Bible Church in St. Michael, Barbados, West Indies.

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# One Woman's Heart for Missions

Andrea Boeshaar

It was raining that cold January day as Darcy Vergiels opened her apartment door and welcomed me inside. "Excuse the mess," she said. Boxes lined the hallway and cluttered the living room. "We're getting packed for Brazil," Darcy added as we sat on the sofa. "Do you need a bookshelf? We've got one in the bedroom we're trying to sell. I'll show it to you later."

Darcy, a soft-spoken woman with a warm, sunny personality, eagerly talked about her upcoming move to Brazil. She and her husband, Chris, had been on deputation for three years. Now that they had their financial support, they were ready to get to the mission field.

Chris entered the living room and reminisced about those deputation days. They were difficult and trying, he explained, but filled with blessings too. One of those blessings came in the form of a policeman named Eric. He was a tough, burly man who responded to one of Chris's messages during a worship service and then went on to serve the Lord. Chris knew of twenty-nine people who accepted Christ as a result of one of his meetings. "This," he said, "was evidence to me of God's calling." Another blessing occurred while the Vergiels were in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. A pastor's son got his life right with the Lord one night during a missions conference. "But one of the funnier things," Chris said, "was traveling with three children, two car seats and a potty chair!"

The telephone rang. As Chris left the room, my question for Darcy was why? Why Brazil?

"Well, I was born and raised in Sao Paulo," she said. "My parents were both missionaries, and my father is still in the ministry. My mother went home to be with the Lord, but while she was with us, she was a wonderful example of a missionary wife. Mom found joy in all things, and joy in serving the Lord."

In 1961 when they first went to Brazil, neither of Darcy's parents could speak Portuguese. When Darcy's mother was seven months pregnant with their oldest child, she was admitted to the hospital for bed rest. She took a dictionary and taught herself the language. Her husband learned quickly also. Darcy's parents went on to plant eight churches within the Sao Paulo area.

"I always enjoyed being a part of my parents' ministry," Darcy said. "Their burden became my burden as I was integrated into every aspect of church work. As I approached my senior year of high school, I had a desire to return to Brazil but struggled with whether it was really what God wanted me to do."

"Then, during my freshman year in college, I heard a missionary from Brazil preach on volunteering for missions. I went forward in the service that night. I was willing and eager to serve the Lord in the country of Brazil if that

was what the Lord wanted for me."

It was. And despite the hardships of deputation, such as long hours of traveling with road-weary young children, Darcy focused on keeping a positive attitude regarding missions and the work involved. "If I have a negative view or a complaining attitude in the home," she stated simply, "my kids won't go into the ministry." She added, "I am thankful that the Lord has given me a husband who is burdened for missions. God has clearly directed us back to the country where I grew up. I am thankful our children have the same privilege I did—that of being 'missionary kids' in the land of Brazil."

But life will be different there than it is here in the States. Conveniences that we Americans often take for granted are not available on the field. In Brazil, Darcy said she will shop at open-air markets for meats, vegetables and fresh flowers. The vegetables must be washed thoroughly by adding a small amount of bleach to the wash water. Darcy estimated that meals will take her about an hour to prepare. In addition, she is putting her education—a B.S. in home economics and M.Ed. in elementary education—to good use by homeschooling their three children.

Darcy and Chris are also busily engaged in language school to increase their knowledge and use of Portuguese. Certainly the Vergiels have their work cut out for them, but Darcy and Chris said they are a team, and they work well together.

Today the Vergiels are in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where approximately 22 million people live and the population is 90 percent Roman Catholic. In a recent newsletter from "steamy Brazil," Chris wrote:

Our sending church, Falls Baptist, was a tremendous help in getting us ready for our departure. . . . In Brazil, we soon discovered our 30 boxes had already arrived the day before. All the boxes were intact except for one, and it was ripped wide open. Thankfully nothing was lost or stolen. A customs official asked Darcy why our boxes arrived a day before we did. She explained that we missed our connecting flight out of Miami, but that our boxes made it. Then the official asked why we had so many boxes. Darcy said that we were moving to Brazil. The official was surprised and said, "Are you sure you want to move to Brazil?" Darcy told her we were very sure! We were able to give out some Portuguese gospel tracts to Brazilians we met in the Miami airport and on the flight, as well as to the customs officials. . . . We were in awe of how the Lord arranged everything just right. He was truly answering prayer as Christians were praying for us.

Continued on page 16





# The Death of a Fundagelical

Bud Talbert

I was saved out of a strong Roman Catholic background as a college student. My first church was an excellent Bible-teaching ministry, where I learned early the Biblical responsibility of separation from the world, from false teachers and from disobedient brethren. Knowing God had called me to the ministry, I was in that church only eight months before I began my training at Bob Jones University. For the next ten years, I regularly received repeated instruction on the importance of separation. This teaching was reinforced through the ministry of my local church as well.

I married a girl whose pastor was considered to be on the cutting edge of the separation issue. We joined a separatist mission and were seeking to plant a separatist church on the mission field. I freely confessed to being a separatist myself, but all the while my confession was haunted by four difficulties.

First, I do not remember my conviction resting on clear, comprehensive Biblical teaching from my student days. I am sure that I received much more expositional instruction than I can remember (since students are often too obtuse or distracted to appreciate all their training). I do remember certain passages being clearly expounded so that I never doubted the Biblical foundation of the issue. However, I lacked a comprehensive exposition of the subject Biblically and historically. This lack gave rise to some bothersome questions. Why did the Lord not counsel members of the Revelation churches (Rev. 2; 3) to separate from those assemblies that were corrupt? Why did Paul not counsel the godly Corinthians to separate from their compromising brethren in that church? If the apostle Paul were living today, would he be a Fundamentalist? These and similar questions bothered me during my student days. When I entered my first ministry and was confronted with the invitation to compromise, I immediately determined to settle the Biblical teaching on separation in my own mind and to answer those questions for myself. Was separatism, as I was taught it, Biblical or not? I confess that I was willing to abandon every Fundamental association I had if I discovered that the answer was negative.

Second, I thought a conflicting instruction arose where this issue was concerned. For instance, I construed contemporary compromisers as the enemies of truth who had no part of God's true Church. Yet gospel preachers of the past who were the forefathers of modern compromise

were represented as heroes of the faith. One example is Dwight Moody, who is frequently represented as a forerunner of contemporary Fundamentalism. In fact, his ministry was blemished with the same kind of compromise for which we separate from evangelicals today. Why is it wrong now, but not then? I was never thoroughly schooled on the issues of separation throughout history: the Modernist controversy of the twentieth century, the Downgrade Controversy of the nineteenth century, the

Whitefield/ Erskine conflict of the eighteenth century, English Puritanism of the seventeenth century or the Donatist controversy of the fourth century. I did not understand that the separation issue was not clearly seen by many great men of the past or why that was so. As a result, my conviction was uncertain and unstable.

Third, perhaps the most frequent charge made against Fundamentalists is that we are unloving—that our very position precludes a proper Biblical concept of Christian love. While this logic is itself patently unbiblical (since purity and love are not mutually exclusive either in God or in His people), I did discover examples of unloving behavior among my Fundamentalist peers. There were, on the one hand, those for whom

separation seemed the only reason for existing. An unhealthy, imbalanced overemphasis on this issue was apparent in some. My reaction to that imbalance was to overreact in the other direction—to de-emphasize the issue and ignore it. Others used their "strong stand" to justify hateful, bitter comments and actions. This spirit has given an excuse to other good men not to embrace Biblical separatism. George Campbell Morgan, for example, "deplored the bitterness evinced by many Fundamentalists," his daughter-in-law said. "I have long felt," he once wrote to his son, "that whereas I stand foursquare on the evangelical faith, I have no patience with these people who suppose that Fundamentalism consists in watching for heresy, and indulging in wicked self-satisfaction because they have an idea that they alone 'hold the truth'—hateful expression! Whereas in many ways I agree with their theological position, I abominate their spirit." (Jill Morgan, *Man of the Word*, p. 271). Whenever a doctrine seems to produce unhealthy behavior, the Christian is correct to question whether it is right doctrine—and I did.

Fourth, Fundamentalism was all that I had ever known. I knew nothing of compromising New

By the time the  
crusade was over,  
so was my naive  
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be a Fundamental-  
ist without being  
militant. My  
"Fundagelicalism"  
was dead.



Evangelicalism outside of what I had been taught, except what I heard on their radio programs and read in their books. This raised another conflict for me. Much of what I heard and read was quite edifying, and all I could see from my side of the fence was their greener grass. I grew weary of all the problems within Fundamentalism and imagined that New Evangelicalism did not suffer from these ills.

Therefore in 1988 I arrived on a North American mission field determined by God's grace to serve Him by establishing a church that had all of the supposed attraction of New Evangelicalism and all of the Biblical strength of Fundamentalism—a "Fundagelical" church. In other words, I hoped to be a backdoor Fundamentalist, one who stood for the truth quietly and inconspicuously. I would, so I thought, pioneer the path to irenic Fundamentalism. After arriving on the field, I received a booklet by Pastor John Ashbrook (my wife's former pastor), in which he maintained that you could

Bible was their sole authority for faith and practice. Since we have no common ground in evangelism with them, it would be wrong, by our participation therein, to give the audience the impression that we did. "The very participation preaches a false gospel," I explained. "The Bible is pretty clear that Bible-believing Christians should not participate in such a meeting." Well the reaction among crusade supporters neared Jihad. I, as a "Fundagelical," had just grown horns and a tail. I protested irenically but to no avail. My "Fundagelicalism" was now clutching its chest.

In the weeks that followed, I was approached numerous times by phone and through the mail to give my support to the crusade. Each time I patiently tried to explain why, in good conscience, I could not do that. And each time the reaction to me and my position was hostile. This sent my "Fundagelicalism" into cardiac arrest as I realized that proponents of the compromise would not countenance a position that exposed the error of theirs, no matter how kindly that exposure was presented. How do you tell professing Christians that ecumenical evangelism is the tobacco habit that is giving the Church cancer? You might be right, but they like the habit too much to quit.

By the time the crusade was over, so was my naive idea that you can be a Fundamentalist without being militant. My "Fundagelicalism" was dead. The truth is, when you are attacked, you have three choices: (1) You can lay down your arms and surrender to the enemy, renounce former loyalties and serve your new masters. I did not want to embrace the unscriptural philosophy of New Evangelicalism. I just wanted to be respected for my conviction that Fundamentalism was a valid alternative. I was not. No matter how much I wanted it, this was and is never to be. Many of God's prophets wanted to be respected for their convictions also; few enjoyed that luxury. (2) You can silently accept death, or turn and run. Ephesians 6:10ff. precludes the viability of either of these options. (3) You can fight—the one option I had secretly hoped I would never have to choose.

In this age of a worldly church, holy Christians are often assailed not

only by the world but also by compromising brethren. Because this is true, the true Fundamentalist must be a militant Fundamentalist. We must "*contend*" because we are subject to attack. We must "*resist*" because the Word, which we believe, demands our absolute obedience in every area—not only in our personal faith and practice but also in our associations.

We ought to be able to give credible and Biblical answers to all the bothersome questions concerning separatism. We ought to appreciate that throughout church history, believers have had to stand up for their faith, even against other believers and professing believers, regardless of the consequences. We ought to understand that many who have rejected separatism are genuine members of Christ's Body and that the whole suffers for their compromise. At the same time, shameful behavior by a Fundamentalist is just that—a shame to the Church and to Christ—and if we attempt to justify it, then *we* ought to be ashamed. Finally, we ought to understand that the greenest grass grows where the Bible is known, taught and obeyed. We are on earth to please God, not men. God help us to stand without compromise for His whole counsel—to be fighting Fundamentalists in the best and Biblical sense of the term.

Bud Talbert is a church planting missionary with Gospel Fellowship Association ministering in Alberta, Canada.

## We ought to be able to give credible and Biblical answers to all the bothersome questions concerning separatism.

not be a separatist without crusading for it. I remember strongly disagreeing with that statement and telling others so. However, that was before the *other* crusade came to town.

In 1990 Evangelist Ralph Bell, with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, was slated to hold an ecumenical crusade in our city. At the time, I was teaching a Bible study group for a local Christian fellowship separate from our church. Several of the faithful attendees of this study group aggressively promoted this upcoming crusade, while others felt that ecumenical evangelism was wrong. Alas! I was called upon to offer the Biblical view.

Immediately my "Fundagelicalism" began labored breathing. I explained as sweetly and kindly as possible that religious liberals and Roman Catholics did not believe that the

## One Woman's Heart for Missions (Cont'd from page 14)

In talking with Darcy Vergiels, I learned what it means to have a heart for missions. I admired her thoughtful planning and her commitment to hard work. I was deeply moved by her sacrifice of leaving friends and family behind in America, as well as her conveniences, in order to follow God's leading. Finally, I marveled at the blessings that ensued because of her obedience. Truly, taking up my cross and following Christ, wherever He leads, is a privilege as well as my duty.

Andrea Boeshaar is a freelance writer from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and incidentally, she did buy the bookshelf.



# SOUND WORDS

*The farmer that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits.*

*2 Timothy 2:6*

## First Partaker

### Reclaiming the Lord's Day for the Lord

Recently my wife and I stood in the rain on the cliffs overlooking the bottlenecked entrance to Dartmouth Harbor on the English Channel. Braced against the wind and trying to stay dry, we marveled at the conviction that compelled our Pilgrim forefathers to venture their lives on those wild waves and to sail so resolutely away toward that uninviting gray horizon. Believe it or not, one of their constraints was a desecrated Lord's Day.

The Pilgrims had been exiled for over ten years in Holland for the sake of their religious convictions. But even there, worshipping in comparative freedom, the pressures upon their families were immense. William Bradford, the second governor of Plymouth Plantation, wrote that "the great licentiousness of youth in that country, and the manifold temptation of the place" were drawing away their children into "extravagant and dangerous courses." One of these was the disregarding of the Lord's Day. To the Dutch, Sunday after church was a day of feasting and merrymaking, especially for children. This frivolity the English exiles found an intolerable example.

For this and other similar convictions, 101 devout husbands, wives and their little ones huddled together under the decks of a vessel not much longer than a tennis court and committed them-

selves to God for a safe passage over 4,000 miles of cold, black ocean.

Secular historians have largely succeeded in caricaturing the early Pilgrim Lord's Days as grim observances of strict severity. The Pilgrim intent, however, was that the first day of the week be joyfully set aside for the very best things—bodily rest, spiritual worship and acts of charity. So to prevent lesser things from encroaching upon their rest and worship, the Pilgrims established civil ordinances that protected their liberty to observe the Lord's Day without fear of being coerced to work and without the disturbance of worldly amusements. Even to this present day some counties in the United States (including the one in which I live) reflect these early Pilgrim convictions in "blue laws," which restrict or prohibit certain kinds of business on Sunday.

This tradition of setting aside the first day of the week for sacred things is a precious heritage. I'm discovering, however, that the Biblical teaching underlying this tradition needs to be recovered. We are in serious danger of losing this liberty entirely, and I fear that this loss is largely due to our own failing to maintain firm convictions about its Biblical basis. The clock is very quickly being turned back 350 years, and we are now the ones upon whose families and churches the world is imposing its seven-day-a-week disregard of God. This month's column is a plea for the recovery of the Lord's Day for the Lord.

### Four Theses about the First Day of the Week

Bible-believing people differ among themselves over the question of whether the first day of the week is to be observed as a Christian Sabbath. That controversy goes back as far as the early centuries of the Christian church and would divide us as well before we even got a good start at discovering the

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points on which we agree. In the interests of trying to establish some common Biblical ground, I'd like to set aside the Sabbath question and ask whether most of us might be able to concur with the following four theses.

**First, Christians must have at least one day in the week when they can assemble for instruction, prayer, the breaking of the bread, and fellowship (Acts 2:42).** This necessity was expressed quaintly by the old Puritan description of the Lord's Day as "the soul's market day." This day has traditionally been the first day of the week, our Sunday.

**Second, the New Testament sets the precedent for this traditional Christian use of the first day of the week by distinguishing it from the other six days in at least four ways:**

*By Event—the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1); Psalm 118:21–24 encourages believers' elevated joy on the first day of the week because of this miraculous event.*

I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Predicting that "the stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner," the psalm continues, "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Peter stated that this prophecy was fulfilled by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:10, 11). Therefore, the day "which the LORD hath made" and in which we "rejoice" and are "glad" is the day of the Lord's resurrection, specified by all four Gospels to have been the first day of the week.

*By Example—the practice of the early church:* "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them . . ." (Acts 20:7).

The preceding verse states that Paul spent seven days in Troas. He could, therefore, have assembled the believers on the Sabbath, the day before the first day of the week or on any of the other days. But it was on the first day of the week, the day after the Sabbath, that they met to break bread and hear Paul preach.

*By Exhortation—the command to give on this day:* "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him . . ." (1 Cor. 16:2).

The text assumes the gathering of the believers in the Corinthian church on the first day of the week. They needed instruction only to be deliberately systematic about their financial giving upon

this day when they customarily met.

*By Designation—the "Lord's day":* "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day . . ." (Rev. 1:10). The expression "Lord's day" should not be confused with the eschatological "day of the Lord" (used five times in the New Testament; see Acts 2:20 for the first use). The word "Lord's" is not *kurios*, the customary noun for referring to the Lord, but *kuriakos*, a possessive adjective referring to an object that "belongs to the Lord." A striking example of how *kuriakos* elevates its object is 1 Corinthians 11:20 in the expression "the Lord's supper" (i.e., the supper "belonging to the Lord"). Paul argued that the eating and drinking of this ordinance is not the same as ordinary eating and drinking; it is the eating and drinking of a supper that belongs uniquely to the Lord. Similarly, there are seven days to a week, but the Lord's Day belongs to the Lord in a unique way.

Although the Scripture nowhere states explicitly that the "Lord's day" refers to the first day of the week, it is affirmed by several early Christian writings (including the *Didache*) produced a short time after this in the same area of Asia Minor. A Greek lexicon or a good exegetical commentary will supply these sources. On the basis of this historical usage, the expression in Revelation 1:10 has been consistently understood for nearly 1,900 years to be a reference to the first day of the week. The burden of proof rests upon any who would argue to the contrary.

**Third, entertainment, sports and industry are relentlessly attacking the traditional Christian use of the Lord's Day.** The contemporary church movement is capitulating to this attack by substituting Saturday evening services for Sunday worship in order to appeal to people who are determined to use the Lord's Day as another day for work or recreation.

**Fourth, Christian people and Fundamental churches will be seriously damaged if we fail to restore the Lord's Day to its elevated New Testament status.** Observance of the Lord's Day is not peripheral; it is central to the spiritual life of our churches. An attack on the Lord's Day thrusts to the very heart of New Testament Christianity since all of our evangelism and edification throughout the week pulsates from our assembling on the first day of the week.

## Seven Common Objections Considered

Even though the New Testament elevates the first day of the week in the four ways explained above (by event, example, exhortation and designation), it stops short of actually regulating how we approach it. There is a liberty accorded to believers that contrasts sharply with the detailed instructions given to Israel about its observance of the Sabbath. This absence of New Testament legisla-



tion generates well-meaning objections to any preaching or teaching that suggests believers should abstain from secular employment or casual amusements on this day.

**Objection 1:** "Romans 14:5 and 6, Galatians 4:9 through 11 and Colossians 2:16 and 17 teach that God does not intend any difference between the days of the week for a New Testament believer."

**Response:** This objection fails to account adequately for the New Testament's four-fold elevation of the first day of the week (by event, example, exhortation and designation). Every day is to be dedicated to the Lord's service, but the New Testament teaches these additional things about this day's distinctive dedication to the Lord.

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In addition, any interpretation of Romans 14, Galatians 4 and Colossians 2 that neutralizes the first-day passages creates a serious contradiction. How can someone say, "I'm not going to regard the first day above the others, and I believe Romans 14:6 justifies my position 'as unto the Lord,'" when the New Testament itself underscores the unique distinction of the first day?

On the other hand, to interpret Romans, Galatians and Colossians as addressing the first-century debates between Jewish and Gentile believers—including the question of whether it was necessary to continue observing the Old Testament holy days and Sabbaths—is consistent with the context of those passages and creates harmony with the other New Testament statements about the first day. Acts 21:20–26 records Paul's personal response to the debate over Jewish holy days; First Corinthians 9:20 and 21 explain the principle behind his response; Romans 14, Galatians 4 and Colossians 2 provide further applications of the same principle to local churches.

**Objection 2:** "But the Lord taught that it is lawful to work and to do good on the Sabbath. Therefore I can work or even play on Sunday."

**Response:** Works of necessity may be done on the Lord's Day (Matt. 12:12; Luke 13:15; 14:5; [i.e., public protection, health care, the "ox in the ditch,"

etc.]). Yet even in such cases, a believer must carefully weigh the extent to which these necessary things encroach upon what is even more necessary (Job 23:12). In a similar case of being "cumbered about much serving" the Lord set the precedent by commending Mary for having "chosen that good part" (Luke 10:42).

As for playing on Sunday, Spurgeon remarked:

I believe that Sunday should be spent in recreation. You are dreadfully shocked, and well you may be. But what do I mean by "recreation"? It means creating us new. Oh, that everybody who talks about spending Sunday in recreation would come to be recreated, regenerated, renewed, refreshed, revived, and made to rejoice in God (*The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, XXVII, p. 474).

**Objection 3:** "But I have no choice; I have to work on Sunday."

**Response:** That statement needs to be examined very carefully. Why does a man "have" to work on the Lord's Day? If he replies that his company requires it, then a more correct statement would be, "I have to work on Sunday if I want to work for \_\_\_\_." No one is coercing him against his will to work on the Lord's Day; he has decided to do so because he values a certain place of employment. The question then becomes, which does he value more—his place of employment or his place with the Lord's people in the Lord's house?

**Objection 4:** "But my employer requires that I work only every other Sunday."

**Response:** Most believers would not agree to work three out of four Sundays. But many will work two out of four. Why? Because they presume that they can do so without spiritual injury. They have estimated how much preaching, fellowship and service they need to stay spiritually healthy and have decided that two out of four days a month is adequate.

But from the Creation God established a seven-day rhythm to life. By His design both the Old Testament's Sabbath and the New Testament's first day of the week occur every seven days. This cycle implies His estimation of the frequency of our need of rest and spiritual recuperation.

**Objection 5:** "But I won't be able to pay my bills if I don't work on Sunday."

**Response:** Millions of people, saved and unsaved alike, pay their bills without working on Sundays. The Lord has already promised to provide our every material need. He surely will not fail to do so because we want to be in His house on His day.

**Objection 6:** "This position is legalistic. It puts believers back under the Mosaic law. We're supposed to live by the principles of grace."

**Response:** This position is not based upon the Mosaic law. That's why there is no specific New



Testament mandate about strict Lord's Day observance as there is in the Old Testament regarding the Sabbath. We are admonished not to forsake "the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:25), but the New Testament does not list legal and illegal Lord's Day activities. Instead of the letter of the law, we are given just enough Biblical information to indicate what the spirit of our observance ought to be.

For instance, when you make your decisions about what you do on the Lord's Day, do you reflect the psalmist's spirit when he wrote, "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand" (Ps. 84:10)? What are the practical applications of a spirit like that toward the opportunities to be in the Lord's house? What decisions about the Lord's Day would someone with that spirit make? Or to use another example, what choices would you make about what you do with the Lord's Day if you applied the spirit of Romans 12:2, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"?

By this approach God tests, rather than coerces, our decision about this issue. Actually, to insist on possessing the letter of a New Testament law before being willing to adopt a personal conviction about an issue reflects a peculiar new form of legalism. A New Testament Christian who really understands grace is eager to discover the slightest Biblical hint of what pleases the Lord and is prepared to live sacrificially in order to give Him that pleasure. If Sunday is your best day for business or pleasure, then there is just that much more opportunity for you to make a greater sacrifice and to prove that your greatest love and loyalty is to the Lord.

**Objection 7:** "I still don't feel compelled to have a conviction about the Lord's Day."

**Response:** Have you ever considered the fact that the world does have a conviction about the Lord's Day? It holds the conviction that you ought to work on Sunday. In fact, lost people feel so strongly about this that they are prepared to take away your job—even though you are productive, faithful, honest and hardworking—for no other reason than your unwillingness to work on Sunday.

Can the intensity and universality of the world's feeling be accidental? Ephesians 2:2 states that the "course of this world" (literally, "the contemporary age of this cosmos") operates "according to the prince of the power of the air." Do you

think that your adversary has any conviction about where he wants you to be (and where he does not want you to be!) on the Lord's Day?

Who's going to win the battle for your spiritual welfare and that of your family and church, when as a Christian without a conviction, you encounter relentless pressure from a fiercely committed world system dominated by the Devil?

## Conclusion

This brief column cannot begin to answer the many questions that might be raised by someone who remains unconvinced of the importance of keeping the Lord's Day holy. I do trust, however, that it will provoke some serious reflection upon what we are doing on the first day of the week and whether it is truly strengthening the cause of Christ. Paul's prayer for the Philippians provides a pattern for all of us in this regard:

This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God (Phil. 1:9-11).

Here are some questions for any questioner. What alternative would anyone propose who disagrees with reclaiming the Lord's Day? If not on the Lord's Day, when should we gather for instruction, service and worship? What other day's observance does the New Testament encourage as it does of the first day of the week? If Christians become careless about this day—about whether they are available for divine service, about what they do in the afternoon between their times in the Lord's house, about whether they work or play or worship on the first day of the week—what will be the ramifications for the Body of Christ?

Even if we did not have the Scriptural considerations set forth in the New Testament, would we not still do best, even from a purely practical standpoint, to admonish and encourage our people to set this day apart for the things of the Lord? What could possibly be gained—and what will be lost—for the cause of Christ if we fail to reclaim the Lord's Day? What might be the Lord's response if we adopted the spirit of Isaiah 58:13 and 14:

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth. . . .



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# Straight Cuts

## What You "Know" and How It Affects You: A Hebrew Word Study of *Yada'*

Isaiah 11 prophesies the idyllic conditions that will prevail on earth during the Millennium:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them (v. 6).

Clearly, things will be much different than they are today! Today when the wolf and the lamb get together, the resulting scene is no pretty picture.

How can such a transformation of the predatory nature of these beasts take place? The key, of course, is the presence of Christ (Isa. 11:1-5). Verse 9 gives another reason: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." The word "for" in the middle of this verse signals that what follows is the reason, or the cause, of what has just been said. The lion is no longer carnivorous and the reason for the change is the universality of the knowledge of the Lord.

Now, how can it be that simply knowing something brings about a transformation of character? There is a big difference between knowing something and knowing someone, and our passage speaks of the latter. It is a fascinating study to follow the common Hebrew verb "to know" (*yada'*) through its 947 occurrences, observing whether what one knows (or does not know) is a person or a fact. The occurrences that refer to knowing a person, when studied carefully, can open our understanding of how knowing God transforms character, whether animal or human.

In the first place, "knowing someone" is used often as an expression for intimacy. In expressing his intention to rule righteously, David declared, "A forward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person" (Ps. 101:4). He did not mean that he had no acquaintance with any evil men, as though he did not even know the names of any such people. Rather, as the first half of the synonymous parallelism explains, his commitment is to have no ongoing, heart-to-heart converse with the ungodly.

In another passage, God declared to Israel that she is the only nation He has known (Amos 3:2). Of course, God knows the identity of all the nations, but only with Israel has He entered into an intimate relationship.

The intimacy represented by this word can even

be sexual in nature, whether licit (e.g., Gen. 4:1), illicit (Gen. 38:26) or even homosexual (Gen. 19:5). The marital intimacy referred to in some passages (e.g., Gen. 4:1) is especially significant theologically, because God spoke to Israel through Hosea: "I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD" (2:20).

On the other side of this coin, to say that I do not know someone can communicate the idea of his being a foreigner to me, the opposite of an intimate. Thus in Deuteronomy Moses described foreign nations and foreign gods as those whom Israel has not known (e.g., 11:28; 28:33).

If an important sense of this word is to "be intimate with someone," it is not surprising to find the word frequently connected with the issue of behavior, since intimates influence one another so deeply. In Jeremiah 9:3 God links bad behavior with a failure to know Him:

And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD.

David connects good behavior with knowing God, charging his son: "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind" (1 Chron. 28:9).

Perhaps the most important point that can be made about the knowledge of God is that it is fundamentally an inclination of the heart. In another prophecy foretelling millennial days, Jeremiah recorded this word from God: "And I will give them an heart to know me . . ." (24:7).

Pulling these ideas together, we can formulate at least a partial description of the knowledge of God. It is an inclination of my heart toward God that opens up an intimate relationship with Him and leads me to adopt His thoughts and His ways as my own. The promise we found in Jeremiah 24:7 indicates that this inclination of the heart toward God is itself a gift from Him; a fallen creature does not so incline his heart on his own initiative. But conversion represents a new birth, God's creation of a new man with a new heart. The Old Testament promises of this new birth are given to Israel, but New Testament saints enjoy in advance this particular provision of God's New Covenant with Israel.

What is true of wolves and lions is no less true of people. While you cannot change the nature of the wolves around you, you can allow God to tame the wolf within you. The transformation that will one day be universal because all will know the Lord can take place in you individually today as you increasingly know Christ through Bible study, prayer and service to others.

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# Bring . . . the Books

Possessing a steely courage and resolute determination, John G. Paton, a giant of the faith, planted the gospel among the unevangelized of the New Hebrides. His work, blessed by the breath of God, grew and bore eternal fruit where no seed before had taken root.

Although somewhat less familiar to us than other well-known missionary heroes of the past, the autobiography *John G. Paton: Missionary to the New Hebrides*, remains a missionary classic that every Christian ought to absorb.

Paton ministered among cannibals who had never heard the gospel during the Great Century (1815–1914). The New Hebrides Islands, situated 1,200 miles northeast of Sydney, Australia, provide the backdrop for dozens of miraculous deliverances attesting to the power of God. Paton's motivation for writing his autobiography is "to show that the Finger of God is as visible still, to those who have eyes to see, as when the fire-cloud Pillar led His people through the wilderness."

Paton was blessed with godly parents and a father who practiced the prayer closet. Shortly after Paton's conversion, he became involved with a city mission work serving one of the impoverished districts of Glasgow. Having responded to the call of the unevangelized in the South Seas, Paton endured the same resistance that many modern missionary candidates experience. Even his friends and mentors opposed his "throwing his life away amongst Cannibals." Paton's parents, however, responded with a tenderness and assurance that removed all further doubts.

Paton served his first term on Tanna, the island most hostile to the gospel, and repeatedly saw God's hand of protection. Paton's work kept me riveted for hours. To see one miraculous deliverance after another, his resistance of the native chiefs, how God providentially spared his life (pp. 138, 139) and preserved him safely in his travels through the bush at night (pp. 144–148) provided as much suspense as any popular novel. Paton's early years were fraught with difficulty, but God was molding a man to pioneer His work.

The cannibals, in one final frenzy, forced Paton to flee for his life off the island. Once again, God miraculously delivered him. He subsequently traveled throughout Australia and New Zealand to inform the churches of his work and to raise funds for a reliable means of supplies and for the purchase of a boat he called the *Dayspring*. But Paton's heart was always on

those islands.

Returning to the Aniwa (on a neighboring island), Paton and his new bride (he buried his first wife and a child on Tanna) ministered to the natives. Though defiantly resistant at times, the Aniwans were generally much more receptive to the gospel and to spiritual truth. Sensing a need for a reliable source of water, Paton was burdened to dig a well. The incredible account of God's providing water is another demonstration of Paton's faith and God's power. The well served as God's tool to open the door of the gospel to those dear people. Digging thirty-four feet by himself, Paton announced to the chief that the next day there would be "rain" coming up from the ground. The nationals thought Paton was mad—to have water spring from the ground was impossible. The next day Paton struck water and after much ceremony and fear, the nationals finally believed in Paton. The next Sunday the chief called everyone in the village together so he could share this testimony.

My people, the people of Aniwa, the world is turned upside down since the word of Jehovah came to this land! Who ever expected to see rain coming up through the earth? It has always come from the clouds! Wonderful is the work of this Jehovah God. No god of Aniwa ever answered prayers as the Missi's God has done. . . . Something here in my heart tells me that the Jehovah God does exist, the Invisible One, whom we never heard of nor saw till the Missi brought Him to our knowledge. . . . From this day, my people, I must worship the God who has opened for us the well, and who fills us with rain from below. The gods of Aniwa cannot hear, cannot help us, like the God of Missi. Henceforth I am a follower of Jehovah God. Let every man that thinks with me go now and fetch the idols of Aniwa the gods which our fathers feared, and cast them down at Missi's feet. Let us burn and bury and destroy these things of wood and stone, and let us be taught by the Missi how to serve the God who can hear! (pp. 354, 355).

Certainly those are words of inspiration to every missionary and preacher of the gospel, and a reminder that every dollar spent on the mission field for the spread of the gospel has the potential of bringing multitudes to Christ.

Paton's pen will speak to your heart. Your faith will be encouraged. Your courage will be revived. Your confidence in God will be fortified. And your commitment to the worldwide spread of the gospel will be renewed. I am looking forward to meeting some of my Christian brothers from the New Hebrides in Glory some day!



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## Endurance in the New Testament

As is true of all the graces of the heart, spiritual endurance is not a quality easy to come by in life. But the Bible is beautifully profuse in its use of metaphors to stress the importance of this trait. Second Timothy 2:1-7 gives a few: the athlete who endures in training and under the rules of the contest; the soldier who remains focused and faithful in the rigors and dangers of warfare; and the farmer who consistently struggles against the elements and in his task to enjoy the fruits of his labors.

The primary words in Greek for the idea of endurance (*hupomenō* and *hupomone*) appear 49 times in the New Testament (W. F. Moulton and A. S. Geden, *A Concordance of the Greek New Testament*, 4th ed. [London: T. and T. Clark, 1963]). The two parts of the verb, *hupo* and *meno*, translate rigidly, "I remain under." Though etymology is never the final word for definitions, the root anticipates the full definition of this word, which means to bear up under all the varying circumstances of life (in contrast to *makrothumia*, which means to be patient with the provocations of people). (Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, 9th ed. Reprint. [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983].)

### Endurance in Work

Few figures in the annals of American history can match the remarkable endurance and consequent productivity of the legendary inventor Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931), the seventh and last child of Samuel Edison, Jr., and Nancy Elliot Edison. Though afflicted from early age with deafness and dubbed a misfit at school, he became known during his lifetime as a genius of technology and played the lead role in introducing the modern age to electricity. By his middle 30s, he was the best known American in the world. He held patents for 1,093 inventions, including a revolutionary electric generator, the carbon-button transmitter (still used in telephone speakers and microphones today), the phonograph, motion pictures and the incandescent lamp.

Through dogged persistence and countless attempts, he finally determined what filament would last and be economically feasible in his incandescent lamp, eventually bringing electric light to the homes of millions of Americans and the world. (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropedia*,

15th ed., Vol. 17. [London: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1997.] This encyclopedia is an indispensable source of reliable, detailed, fact-intensive information for illustrative purposes.)

Endurance is an indispensable character trait for the accomplishment of any task. It is a quality of heart given by the Spirit of God in abundant measure to those who by faith seek it. Martin Luther (1483-1546), towering figure of the Protestant Reformation in Europe, apparently sought and found this quality for work.

Because of his teaching of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone and his vehement opposition to the many unbiblical teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, this German monk and university professor at Wittenberg was excommunicated by Pope Leo X in June 1520. He was called officially by the church to answer for his teachings in the German city of Worms in the spring of 1521. There he refused to recant his stand on Scripture alone and stated his determination to trust God for help.

On his way back to Wittenburg, he was kidnapped by friends and held at Wartburg Castle for his protection for over a year. Under the threat of death and being held in seclusion, this man of God set about on a great and history-changing task. In less than one year, from May 1521 to March 1522, he completed the translation of the Greek New Testament into German. By 1534, he had translated the entire Bible, giving the German people the Scriptures in their own tongue and setting the standard form of the German language. (Earle E. Cairnes, *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*. Revised and enlarged ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981].)

### Endurance in Adversity

The mature Christian knows that no believer is immune to adversity. Trouble is part of human existence, sometimes brought on by mortal frailty, other times by sin, and at yet other times by Satan and his minions. God uses this adversity to refine us and glorify His name.

Perhaps no figure in the history of the church has so beautifully exemplified endurance in adversity as the "father of modern missions," William Carey (1761-1834). Born into poverty near Northampton, England, and a shoemaker by trade, he became a Baptist pastor and later a great pioneer missionary to the Danish district of southern India called Serampore. Through forty years of continuous missionary service, he endured the insanity and death of his first wife, unprovoked difficulty



with the home mission society, endless work and a tragic warehouse fire in 1812.

In this fire, years of translation work—including a polyglot dictionary, two grammar books and whole versions of the Bible in various Indian dialects—were destroyed. But he endured in ministry. Through his faithfulness hundreds were converted from heathenism to Christ, a college for the training of national pastors and evangelists was established and all or parts of the Bible were translated into forty-four Indian dialects. He once commented to his niece in a letter that he credited his accomplishments to the grace God had given him to endure in his ministry. (Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Mission*. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983.] This is a rich find for illustrative purposes, which includes an index for illustrations arranged according to Biblical topics. See also, F. Deaville Walker, *William Carey: Missionary Statesman and Pioneer*. [Chicago: Moody Press, 1951.]

## Endurance in Evangelism

Adoniram Judson (1788–1850) was raised in a pastor's home by godly parents. As a young man, he forsook his parents' teaching and deserted his home in rebellion. God providentially placed him in a countryside inn where, in the room next to his, a man was dying. All night Judson heard the murmuring of voices next door, the footsteps of the attending doctor and the moans of the dying man. Inquiring at the desk the next morning, Judson discovered that the man had died. To his horror, Judson also learned the man's name—Jacob Eames, his best friend from college, who had influenced Judson's own rebellion against the Bible.

Shaken by this "chance" experience, Judson repented of his sins and trusted Christ, immediately entering training for the ministry. Rather than accepting a prestigious pastorate offered to him in New England, he chose with a few others to be the first to leave American shores for the mission field. Judson and his wife encountered many delays in the long ocean journey. Finally, two years after leaving America, they arrived to begin their work in Burma. In Rangoon, they faced a curious, hostile people governed by a barbaric, autocratic monarch. During Judson's early years, the response to the gospel was meager. On May 5, 1819, six years after their arrival in Burma, Judson recorded the conversion of Maung Nau, the first native to profess Christ.

In time, through endurance, thousands were converted to Christ, but only with much tribulation.



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Judson was imprisoned for a year and a half in a filthy, dangerous prison simply because he was a foreigner. He completed his single-handed translation of the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Burmese in 1840, fourteen years after the death of his wife and twenty-seven years after his arrival in Burma. His translation still stands as the standard Burmese translation of the Scriptures. (Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore*. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972.] This biography of 530 pages is an example of the endless illustrative material available through works that focus in detail on one person or dimension of church history.)

David Livingstone (1813–1873) echoed in Africa the evangelistic endurance of Judson in Burma. Through twenty-five years of travel, crisscrossing southern and equatorial Africa on foot, ox or donkey, Livingstone opened the dark continent to a flood of missionaries. He endured in the face of savage, angry slavers. He persevered without modern medical knowledge and often even without the medicines of his day. His persistent labors brought the gospel to countless multitudes who had never heard the name of Christ. He wrote this journal entry on his fifty-ninth birthday, not long before his death:

My Jesus, my King, my LIFE, my ALL; I again dedicate my whole self to thee. Accept me and grant, O Gracious Father, that ere this year is gone I may finish my task. In Jesus name I ask it. Amen, so let it be. David Livingstone.

He died on May 1, 1873, at the age of sixty, having endured and finished his course. (Elspeth Huxley, *Livingstone and His African Journeys*. [New York: Saturday Review Press, 1974.]

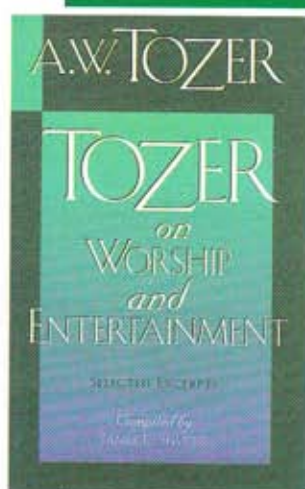
## Conclusion

These examples of endurance bring to mind the words of Hebrews 12:1–3:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience [endurance, *hupomone*] the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured [hupomenō] the cross. . . . For consider him that endured [hupomenō] such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

History in general, and of the church in particular, teaches us that beginning well is important; but enduring by faith will alone bring the coveted commendation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21).





### **Tozer on Worship and Entertainment**

*edited by James L. Snyder*

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**I**t remains only to be said that worship . . . is almost a forgotten art in our day. For whatever we can say of modern Bible-believing Christians, it can hardly be denied that we are not remarkable for our spirit of worship" (A. W. Tozer). Even a generation after Tozer first uttered it, this indictment is still painfully on-target. Tozer offers strong medicine, but medicine it is for any church or Christian who will take it to heart.

"Worship and entertainment" seems an incongruous juxtaposition of ideas. That is precisely the point of this collection. Christianity has spiraled even further downward since Tozer's day in its substitution of entertainment for worship. His observations and warnings are as pertinent today as they were in the 1950s and early 1960s.

The quotations of Tozer are drawn from a wide variety of sources. Nevertheless, the book is not merely a loose assortment of simplistic sayings. It is a rewarding tour through a rich treasury of well-organized observations about various issues of worship. A review of this work cannot do better than to whet the appetite with a few samples and allow Tozer to speak for himself.

### **Worship and Service**

"I am going to say something to you which will sound strange . . . because we are not used to hearing it within our Christian fellowships. We are saved to worship God. . . . God wants worshipers first. Jesus did not redeem us to make us workers; He redeemed us to make us worshipers. And then, out of the blazing worship of our hearts springs our work. . . . The Christian church exists to worship God first of all. Everything else must come second or third or fourth or fifth. . . . God is infinitely more concerned that He have worshipers than that He have workers" because it is worship that produces workers. "Nobody has ever worshiped God and done nothing else. . . . No one can long worship God in spirit and in truth before the obligation to holy service becomes too strong to resist. Fellowship with God leads straight to obedience and good works. That is the divine order and it can never be reversed."

### **Worship in Fundamentalism**

"Worship is the moral imperative of the Christian and yet it is the missing jewel" in the modern church. "Perhaps the most serious charge that can be brought against mod-

ern Christians is that we are not sufficiently in love with Christ. The Christ of fundamentalism is strong but hardly beautiful. It is rarely that we find anyone aglow with personal love for Christ. I trust it is not uncharitable to say that in my opinion a great deal of praise in conservative circles is perfunctory and forced where it is not downright insincere. . . . True worship is to be so personally and hopelessly in love with God that the idea of a transfer of affection never even remotely exists. . . . We must never rest until everything inside us worships God."

### **Unacceptable Worship**

"Not all worship is acceptable with God. And there is a lot of worship in our cultured society that God will never receive in this world or in the next. . . . You cannot worship just as you please."

Tozer emphasizes the need for correcting false notions of worship with the illustration of a young boy running around the house believing he is Hopalong Cassidy: "He may do that up to the age of ten. But if he's eighteen and is still running around with a Hopalong Cassidy hat on, somebody needs to disillusion that boy. He doesn't need consolation—he needs to be disillusioned." Likewise, "instead of consoling men who believe they are worshipping God when they are not, we ought to disillusion them and show them they are not worshipping God acceptably."

### **Worship and Our View of God**

"We can't worship these days because we do not have a high enough opinion of God. . . . Worship rises and falls in the church altogether depending on whether the idea of God is low or high. . . . In my opinion, the great single need of the moment is that lighthearted superficial religionists be struck down with a vision of God high and lifted up, with His train filling the temple. The holy art of worship seems to have passed away like the Shekinah glory from the tabernacle. As a result, we are left to our own devices and forced to make up the lack of spontaneous worship by bringing in countless cheap and tawdry activities to hold the attention of the church people."

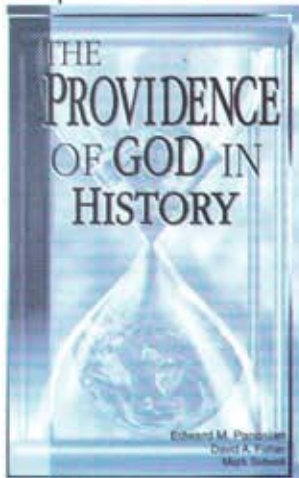
### **Worship and Heaven**

"I can safely say on the authority of all that is revealed in the Word of God, that any man or woman on this earth who is bored and turned off by worship is not ready for heaven," for "every glimpse that we have of heaven [in the Scriptures] shows the creatures there worshipping."

### **Conclusion**

The path to which Tozer calls us is the very goal of God in creating us: "The primary purpose of God in creation was to prepare moral beings spiritually and intellectually capable of worshipping Him." The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. Tozer, however, offers no novel schemes, no magic formulas: "It is well that we accept the hard truth now: The man who would know God must give time to Him." Psalm 16:11 is the alluring light that shines from under the door of worship awaiting the hungry soul.





### **The Providence of God in History**

by Edward M. Panosian,  
David A. Fisher and Mark Sidwell

Bob Jones University Press  
(44 pp.) \$3.25  
1-800-845-5731

God clearly intends history to have a ministry to us (Ps. 77; 1 Cor. 10:11) and to successive generations through us (Joel 1:3). Any source, therefore, that contributes to our understanding of God's role in the affairs of men is of great value. *The Providence of God in History* makes such a contribution. The deliberate choice to obtain and digest the contents of these brief but pithy chapters will yield satisfying and spiritually profitable rewards.

Chapter 1, "A Case for History in the Christian School," articulates the vital role that teaching history must play in the education of the next generation of Christians. To those who may regard history as dull and useless, Dr. Panosian convincingly argues that history is personally significant and intensely relevant—because history records God's doings, not merely man's. Our present and future faith in God hinges on our grasp of His words and deeds in the past. "The Christian . . . who is to be conformed to the image of God's Son must know of His doings to be equipped for His service" (p. 2). Moreover, history grows our appreciation of those who have followed Him throughout history. History uncovers the difficulties and limitations under which previous generations labored, increasing our awareness of the contributions that earlier generations have made to the days in which we live. Our "own day is but part of a larger panorama of God[']s working out His will on earth as it is in heaven" (p. 5).

Appropriately, the second chapter gives inspiration for "Cultivating a Love for History." Using the analogy of a train, Panosian illustrates an important key in both teaching and understanding history: the events of history, like the cars of a train, are not disconnected or random, but linked. And the whole train is going somewhere, under the providential direction of God.

The third essay demonstrates the active presence and providence of God throughout key events and periods of history. (An adaptation of this chapter titled

"The Providence of God in History" appears in this issue of *Frontline*.)

Building on the foundation of these first three essays, Dr. David Fisher offers "A Biblical Pattern for Teaching God's Providence in History"—an outline of certain fundamental principles that will enable a parent or teacher to help students see the guiding hand of God's providence in history. God has a definite plan for history, and the focal point of His plan is Jesus Christ. History, in sum, "is the arena in which the conflict between righteousness and unrighteousness rages" (p. 23).

History should be a teacher from the past that guides our present behavior. In the fifth chapter, Panosian explores how the church historically has viewed its responsibility to government. God's people in every age have been called upon to make personal application of Biblical truth. An awareness of the struggles of previous generations helps us to emulate their strengths and to be wary of past pitfalls. Though God's people have differed in their application of Biblical truth in the delicate area of respect and obedience to civil government, we can be encouraged by the Lord's faithfulness to those who obey Him.

Ironically, the study of history can itself be fraught with pitfalls for the unwary student. In the final chapter, Dr. Mark Sidwell reminds the reader that "a large portion of believers in the past who were savingly united to Jesus Christ nonetheless held some theological views that orthodox Christians today reject." Though God has given His final revelation in Christ and the Scriptures, "the church's understanding of that revelation has grown and deepened" over the centuries through "a progressive illumination of truth by the Holy Spirit through history" (p. 38). The testing of men and doctrines over two millennia has left the church with a rich heritage of faithful men and women and a broader, deeper understanding of the truth revealed in the Scriptures. Sidwell's closing exhortation is equally pertinent: "Insistence on correctness in doctrinal essentials must always be matched by charity in matters of interpretation among those who agree on the essentials" (p. 43).

Each chapter is independently valuable, but the combined effect is profoundly instructive. This work teaches us how to connect God's working in the past with His present activity. Christian school teachers, parents, pastors and students should digest *The Providence of God in History* until the thoughts outlined in it become part of their thinking.

Reviewed by Robert D. Vincent, an assistant to Pastor Volker Stoeckmann at Airport Road Baptist Church in Allentown, Pennsylvania.



**A** NEW BREED OF CONTEMPORARY ministry comprises only 12 percent of Christian churches in America but accounts for over 50 percent of those who attend church. These new "designer churches" average more than one thousand attendees. While such ministries are not all alike in every detail, they hold in common a certain core of philosophy.

What would it be like to attend one of those churches? Imagine driving onto a "campus" where you would be directed toward a building called a "family life center." One of the first things you would notice is that there is nothing particularly churchy or distinctive about the building's

the perimeter with literature about dozens of different fellowships and support groups and self-help ministries in which you could enroll if you wished.

Once you found your way into the auditorium, there would be nothing especially distinctive about that either. Instead of pews, you would probably find theater seats. Instead of a platform, you would notice a stage in an amphitheater-type setting; instead of a pulpit, a small, transparent, Lucite lectern. When the singing started, you would notice no hymnbooks. Instead, people would be reading words off a large screen at the front. The music would be upbeat and be led by an orchestra of saxophones, synthesizers, guitars and drums. Few of the songs would be pre-1990 in their composition.

Following the singing would be a drama designed to present a contemporary issue that perhaps you tend to struggle with or a problem that your family may face. The drama is designed to lead up to a short message, less than half an hour, sprinkled with stand-up humor, presented by an articulate, gracious individual who would provide a very soft-sell of the Bible or salvation. At the end, you might be invited, but without pressure, to put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior.

Afterwards, someone may invite you out into the food court where you could enjoy a hamburger and watch the NFL on televisions placed in various locations. You could relax, chat, stroll about, or sit on the lawn by the lake and feed the geese, while your kids played on the playground.

What is wrong with all of this? Many of the details are not inherently wrong. But if you strip back the exterior and Biblically examine the underlying philosophy that is driving all of it, you will find a great deal that is wrong. That underlying philosophy of ministry is, itself, driven by a fear (often expressed as a rationalization) of the consequences of a right and distinctively Biblical course of action. The fear is rooted in an unbelief in the sufficiency of God's Word. The

# DEVIANT WORSHIP

## Part Three: The Causes and Effects of Deviant Worship

architecture. In fact, it might look something like a convention center. No spire or cross, no stained glass, no vaulted ceiling, not even a sign anywhere with the word "church" on it.

Stepping into the building, you would enter an atrium, perhaps filled with trees or beautiful shrubbery. A number of friendly people, dressed casually, would be standing about talking. One or two of them would probably greet you, but you would be left comfortably anonymous. The sound of soft rock or jazz, intended to create a certain ambiance, would emanate all around you. Over to your right, you might notice a cappuccino cart underneath a parasol. And you would notice tables scattered all around

Mark Minnick



unbelief springs out of a defective theology of God Himself. These subjects were addressed in parts one and two of this series on Deviant Worship (see *Frontline*, March/April and May/June 1997).

But what makes the propagation of deviant worship possible when you are dealing with the people of God? God's chosen people called upon Jehovah God, were the only people in all the world that had God's Word, had a whole history of redemption, had experienced the miraculous works of God and had a whole succession of true prophets that ministered to them. Yet seemingly overnight, they were hoodwinked into a deviant worship! How did Jeroboam (1 Kings 12) get away with leading astray ten tribes of God's chosen people? How could that happen? And how does it happen in America today? Why don't more people recognize the deviant worship that saturates contemporary Christianity? What makes this worship even possible in the first place?

#### **Possibility of Deviant Worship**

How was Jeroboam able to institute such drastic changes in the worship of so many people—changes in the place, the time, the form, the officials and the very nature of their worship? *Deviant worship is possible because of the people's ignorance of and indifference to what God's Word teaches.* Solomon's apostasy conditioned God's people to develop

**NOT ONLY ARE THE CULTURAL ELEMENTS  
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such attitudes.

Solomon's own example had taught the people to be indifferent to certain things—to excuse them on the basis of personal preference or political expediency. For decades Solomon set the tone: "Yes, we worship God, but we have to be practical about this! After all, we do live in a real world! And in this

world, to ensure the security of our borders, we must establish alliances with other countries and marry their kings' daughters. And of course, they're different from us, and we can't expect them to worship as we do and bow down to our God. That would be hypocrisy. We don't want hypocrisy, do we? So it makes sense for them to have their own place of worship. We need to adapt things for their convenience and comfort; after all, there are overriding, pragmatic, utilitarian considerations that we have to acknowledge when we live in a real world."

Solomon taught the people by his own example to dismiss Scripture as a necessary governing rule of life and worship. When Solomon died, he was remembered by the people for his demanding, heavy-handed, oppressive measures to build his dreams. That is why they requested of Rehoboam a lightening of the load—a request he unwisely rejected. Consequently, when Jeroboam offered to them the reprieve and ease they desired and handed to them the possibility of a worship that would not be demanding

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but would still be "in the name of God," the people were primed for it. They were both ignorant of what the Scripture said and indifferent to what they did know.

Are these conditions prevalent today? George Barna, the foremost church-growth consultant in America today, holds seminars and writes books to teach pastors how to people their pews. What is the "fundamental principle of Christian communication" that every pastor should know and employ? According to Barna, it is this: "the audience, not the message, is sovereign" (*Marketing the Church*, p. 145).

Let's return for a moment to the designer-church scene with which this article opened. Many of the details are not "sinful" in themselves. But what is wrong with the whole picture? First, almost everything about it is not derived from the Bible but from the surrounding culture. That does not necessarily make it wrong. The point is, in designing the whole experience, nobody started by reading the Bible but by reading the culture—and adapting everything comfortably to the culture. Second, those elements of the culture that characterize that ministry are not merely secondary; they are the primary features of that ministry. Third, those elements of the culture that characterize that ministry are not accidental or incidental, but designed and purposeful.

The changes that characterize much evangelical Christianity today are by design and reflect a decisive change in philosophy and theology. The elements that have traditionally marked a distinctively Christian atmosphere are deemed offensive and uncomfortable and are "designed out." The

Continued on page 24

### From Part One: Characteristics of Deviant Worship (1 Kings 12:25–33)

1. Deviant worship transgresses Biblical absolutes regarding our worship of God (v. 28a).
2. Deviant worship appeals to people's convenience and appetites (vv. 28b, 29).
3. Deviant worship justifies itself by misapplying Scripture (v. 28b).
4. Deviant worship disregards Scriptural qualifications for ministers (v. 31; cf. 13:33, 34).
5. Deviant worship devises innovations on Biblical patterns (vv. 32, 33).

### From Part Two: Motivations of Deviant Worship

1. Deviant worship is motivated by a fear of the consequences of a right course of action.
2. Deviant worship is motivated by unbelief.
3. Deviant worship is motivated by a defective theology.

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# AT A GLANCE

Written and Compiled by Dr. Layton Talbert

*And indeed, it were not worth  
while to live in a world devoid  
of God and providence.*

—John Flavel, Puritan preacher, 1678

## The Word "Providence"

"Providence" comes from two Latin words, *pro* ("before," "in front of," "for," "on behalf of") and *video* ("to see," "see to," "look out for"). The corresponding Greek word refers to forethought (Acts 24:1; cf. Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 8:21; 1 Tim. 5:8). The Old Testament concept is expressed in certain uses of such verbs as "to see" (Gen. 22:8, 14; 1 Sam. 16:1) and "to prepare" (Job 38:41; Ps. 65:9).

Providence is commonly defined as divine guidance or care (*Webster*); care or preparation in advance, foresight, the care and guardianship and control exercised by [Deity] (*American Heritage*). The term, when capitalized, is often used with direct reference to God Himself.

## The Definition of "Providence"

Both the theological treatment and the Scriptural presentation of the truth of providence is divided into two major facets. God, in His providence, both *preserves* all aspects of His creation and *governs* all its affairs.

**Preserving Providence:** God continuously preserves and maintains the existence of every part of His creation, from the smallest to the greatest, according to His sovereign pleasure.

**Governing Providence:** God guides and governs all events, including the free acts of men and their external circumstances, and directs everything to an appointed end for His glory.

Providence, then, is the Biblical truth that *God continuously preserves and maintains the existence of every part of His creation according to His sovereign pleasure, governs all events (including the free acts of men and their external circumstances) and guides everything to an appointed end for His glory.*

## God's Preserving Providence over All Things

Providence is not only government and guidance but, first and foremost, maintenance and preservation (or else there would be nothing to govern and guide). Consequently, the Bible teaches that

- the *sustaining* of every angelic being is the direct effect of the preserving providence of God (Ps. 104:4; Col. 1:16, 17; Rev. 4:11).

## WHAT IS

- the *continuance* of the cosmos, the planets and stars in their appointed courses, is the direct effect of the preserving providence of God (Neh. 9:6; Ps. 104:2; Isa. 40:26).

- the *conservation* of all processes within the natural world is the direct effect of the preserving providence of God (Ps. 65:9–13; 104:5–13; 147:8, 16–18).

- the *maintenance* of all animal and plant life is the direct effect of the preserving providence of God (Neh. 9:6; Ps. 36:6; 104:14–30; 147:9; Matt. 10:29; Luke 12:6).

- the *preservation* of the life and health of every person is the direct effect of the preserving providence of God (Ps. 36:6; Matt. 10:30; Luke 12:7; and see below).

- *all of creation* continually exists (Rev. 4:11), coheres (Col. 1:16, 17) and is carried on toward its appointed goal (Heb. 1:3) by the ongoing, active, preserving providence of God exercised through the word of His power.

## God's Preserving Providence over Man

Man is the breath of God wrapped in clay (Gen. 1:27). It is the stubborn insistence of Scripture that God is the vital life-support system of every living thing and that each breath of every person is due to the direct preserving providence of God.

Job 12:10 refers to the Lord, "in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind."

In Job 27:3, Job proclaimed that throughout God's dealing with him, "All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils."

Job 33:4 records, "The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life."

Job 34:14–15 reminds us, "If [God] set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust."

In Daniel 5:23, Daniel rebuked Belshazzar, "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."

Acts 17:24, 25 and 28 sum it all up: "... [God] giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; ... For in him we live, and move, and have our being."

## Our Response to God's Preserving Providence

Psalm 66:8 and 9: "O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard: which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved."

Psalm 104:33: "I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being."



# PROVIDENCE?

## Practical Lessons of God's Governing Providence

Though the word rarely appears, the truth of God's governing providence saturates the Scriptures. Certain passages (Esther) and events (1 Kings 22:34) stand out in our minds. But go hunting for providence, and you will be amazed where and how often you find it. The attentive reader will be doubly amazed at how personally pertinent and applicable is the Bible's record of God's providence. Here is a brief sampling of what we can glean about God's providence just from the patriarchal period in Genesis. Please take the time to investigate these Scriptures for yourself; the effort will repay itself in blessing and instruction:

God, in His providence

- intervenes in society's affairs to redirect the course of human history and to steer it in His predetermined direction; He is able to confound the united rebellion of man through the simplest, least predictable and most effective of means (Gen. 11:1-9).
- intervenes in different ways to protect and guard the sanctity of His chosen vessels (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-18; 26:1-11).
- is working in people and through circumstances that we know nothing about (Gen. 14:14-23).
- lives and sees me in my need (Gen. 16:7-14; "Beer-lahai-roi").
- intervenes and provides for us when we determine and seek to obey Him and when we are willing to sacrifice to obey His Word (Gen. 22; "Jehovah-jireh").
- directs and intervenes when we need a life-mate (for ourselves or for our children) and when we request guidance in order to carry out our duties before Him (Gen. 24).
- may permit us to pursue and attain His will through conniving (Gen. 25:29-34) or chicanery (Gen. 27:1-29) but at great personal expense and spiritual loss (Gen. 27:41-28:9).
- is constantly employing angels as His invisible agents to accomplish His purposes in the world—protecting, providing, directing, revealing (Gen. 28:10-15).
- may bless and prosper people in the midst of less than ideal situations and in spite of inappropriate or even sinful behavior (Gen. 29, 30); God's providential blessing is not necessarily an indication of His approval (cf. Ps. 50:21; Rom. 2:4; 1 Tim. 6:5).
- may allow us to resort to superstitious remedies (Gen. 30:14-21) or folklore schemes that appear to succeed

(30:37-43); but in either case, it is God Himself who "works" according to His sovereign pleasure (Gen. 30:22-24; 31:10-13).

- may allow us to be the victim of the sins of others, even to be betrayed and sinned against, sometimes viciously (Gen. 37:12-28).

- restrains the hatred and evil intentions of others that would not further His will (Gen. 37:4, 5, 8, 11, 18-27; cf. Ps. 76:10).

- may choose to relocate us to the place of His appointment through the evil and betrayal of others (Gen. 37:28, 36; cf. 39:1-23).

- promotes and prospers the godly according to His will and gives us favor with those of His choosing (Gen. 39:1-6, 20-23; 41:37-46).

- may allow us to be falsely accused and unjustly maligned to accomplish a greater purpose through us (Gen. 39:7-20).

- gifts us to minister to others in need (Gen. 40).

- may allow our suffering to be prolonged, our gifts to be forgotten, our good deeds to go unnoticed, sometimes for a long time (Gen. 40:12-15; 40:23-41:1).

- causes us to be remembered and recognized in His timing (Gen. 41:1, 8-14).

- may allow us to suffer need in order to relocate us (Gen. 43-46).

- may cause us to face the consequences of our sins and actions before He provides our needs or fulfills our wishes (Gen. 42:21, 22; 44:16).

- can effect a total transformation of character in those who have wronged us, though it be years later (Gen. 44:16-34).

- has a greater design for us than we can foresee; He orchestrates circumstances and events, which may involve giving rein to men's sinful designs and allowing our suffering "unjustly," in order to use us for the blessing and welfare of others and for the furtherance of His greater design (Gen. 45:4-8; 50:15-21; cf. Ps. 105:16-23).

Whether we are able to perceive, like Joseph, that God is accomplishing His purpose even through our darkest circumstances depends on our learning, like Joseph, to do all the good we can wherever we are and to trust implicitly in His sovereign control and providence.



## DEVIANT WORSHIP: PART 3

Continued from page 21

mall atmosphere, athletic events, big-screen televisions and rock groups are deemed more attractive and comfortable and are "designed in." The modern "worship center" deliberately dresses down everyone and everything and is designed to make sinful people feel "at home." Not only are the cultural elements that are designed into the modern church not incidental—they are nonnegotiable. Culture has become the only absolute. Audience has become the only "sovereign." Everything else is negotiable.

The thinking goes something like this: if we don't have coffee, people won't come. If we don't take that carved Bible off the front of the pulpit, people won't come. The Bible on the front of the pulpit is negotiable; the coffee pot is nonnegotiable. The pews are negotiable; the cappuccino cart is nonnegotiable. The sermon's content and length are negotiable, but not the ball teams and the jazzercise. The nineteenth-century hymns filled with sound doctrine and godly sentiments of worship are negotiable; the rock beat is nonnegotiable. In fact, those who espouse the new philosophy candidly admit that the music is the most defining element of the atmosphere they hope to create.

This is not to say that we should not be reasonable and flexible and accommodating of people and their needs. But that is a far cry from a whole philosophy that has come to dominate the modern church, whose only nonnegotiable is the intentional removal of everything that reminds people of the presence, the distinctiveness, the holiness, the claims, the requirements of God. Any deliberate design to make the church "feel" like the world is wrong.

### Results of Deviant Worship

*Deviant worship results in the irremediable pollution of the people.* Deliberately abandoning the Scriptures as the rule and guide for all we do can plunge a nation into an abyss of spiritual darkness that may last for centuries. It did so in the case of Israel, as the nation plummeted from Jeroboam's folly to Ahab's Baal worship to sacrificing their own children to pagan gods, until God finally had no choice but to scour the land of them and their abominations.

We dare not fall prey to the mentality that it could not happen to us simply because we believe Jesus may return soon. Consider all that has befallen the nations and the Church in all the centuries she has waited for His return. It is our place to maintain a Biblical position and not to justify or to be indifferent to the pollution of God's people because of a date-setting mentality.

*Deviant worship results in inevitable destruction.* Jeroboam's family was completely cut off in shameful judgment (1 Kings 13:34; 14:7-14). The nation of Israel met the same fate (Hos. 8:5, 6; 13:2, 3).

### Conclusion

A century ago, during the Downgrade Controversy, C. H. Spurgeon warned the Baptist Union that if it permitted men to join who did not believe in the virgin birth of Christ, the whole institution would eventually be polluted. The

Baptist Union voted Spurgeon out for being divisive. Spurgeon died, but his warnings came true.

A generation ago, Martyn Lloyd-Jones stood in a national gathering of thousands of British evangelicals and called for a separation from liberal Anglicanism and other liberal denominations. He proposed starting a nondenominational movement built around core fundamental doctrines. Lloyd-Jones predicted that if they continued on their present course of accommodation, they could not avoid being affected by that pollution. Afterwards, the chairperson came to the pulpit to express his disagreement with Lloyd-Jones and advised those present against doing anything too hastily. His name was John Stott. Lloyd-Jones is dead. But recently John Stott has openly questioned whether the heathen unbelievers are eternally damned and has espoused annihilationism. Another young man who was also present in that meeting, J. I. Packer, has signed onto the accord between evangelicals and Catholics, calling for evangelistic cooperation into the next century.

In a context outlining the practical impact of tolerating doctrinal error and theological aberration, Paul warns us not to be deceived; the company we keep will influence our thinking and behavior (1 Cor. 15:33). That is as true of our worship as it is of any other facet of our lives. Psalm 40:7 and 8 express the heart of genuine worship that is acceptable to God: "Lo, I come: . . . I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

Dr. Mark Minnick is the pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina. This article concludes a three-part series on deviant worship.

BE SOBER. BE VIGILANT.  
because as a roaring lion, walketh  
about seeking whom he may devour:  
the devil. 1 Peter 5:8

Whom resist: (v 9) — also James 4:7 —  
Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

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## Gender-Neutral NIV Update

*World* magazine reported in March and April that Zondervan Publishers, the International Bible Society (IBS) and the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT) had been planning the production of a new gender-neutral New International Version (NIV) of the Bible. A gender-neutral NIV was already marketed in Britain and, more clandestinely, in America via the New International Reader's Version (NIRV) *World* reported.

A maelstrom of controversy ensued as a large segment of the evangelical community voiced its protest to such a translation. Zondervan, IBS and CBT defended the appropriateness and accuracy of such a version, which would substitute explicitly male terminology ("he," "him," "his," "man," "mankind," "brethren") with "less offensive" inclusive terms ("they," "them," "their," "mortals," "human beings," "brothers and sisters"). While the proposed changes would not affect references to God, the CBT argued in its own translation policy guidelines that Biblical authors often "unconsciously reflected" their ancient, patriarchal (i.e., male-dominated) cultures so that "the manner in which they articulate[d] the Word of God" may "sometimes offend modern sensibilities," by using "forms of expression that appear, in the modern context, to deny the com-

mon human dignity of all hearers and readers."

In a joint press release on May 14, Zondervan and IBS insisted that the current NIV would not be replaced but that plans for an updated NIV, presumably including gender-neutral language, would continue. Damage control efforts unraveled quickly, however, as leaders within the Southern Baptist Convention, Presbyterian Church in America, Baptist Sunday School Board and other church organizations and curriculum publishers expressed grave concern and promised imminent action in response to the proposed changes (*World*, May 31 and June 7, 1997).

Two weeks later, on May 27, IBS announced that it "has abandoned all plans for gender-related changes in future editions of the NIV," has dropped any plans "for a further revised edition" of the current NIV, "will begin immediately to revise the NIRV" to make its gender references consistent with the current NIV and will take steps to cease the publication of its inclusive language edition NIV in Britain.

Zondervan expressed "regret" that the NIRV failed to inform buyers of its inclusive terminology and has even promised refunds to those who have purchased its NIRV. Zondervan's and IBS's mea culpa appears to have some major caveats, however. Since signing an ad-

mission of "unwise translation decisions" and "regrettable" references to the patriarchal culture of the Biblical writers, however, some "Zondervan and IBS officials have continued to defend [these translations'] accuracy." In addition, Zondervan issued a 10-page ethics complaint to the Evangelical Press Association regarding *World's* coverage of the issue.

One remaining question revolves around what effect the IBS statement will have on the CBT, since the CBT, not IBS, actually holds legal control over the NIV text (*World*, June 14 and 21, 1997).

## Lottery Spending

Americans spend more on lotteries than they give to churches. According to the 1995 *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, total contributions to congregations was \$19.6 billion. Giving to benevolences, which include

missions, accounted for \$3.8 billion of the total. In comparison, Americans spent \$26.6 billion on state-run lotteries in 1994, according to a Census Bureau report. (*The Unreported News*, Vol. 3, No. 2)

## Highest Rate of Teen Pregnancy

A recent report by the Guttmacher Institute, the research arm of Planned Parenthood, revealed that the United States has the highest rate of teen pregnancy among industrialized nations, double that of the second-highest country, Great Britain. Fourteen percent of teen girls in the United States gave birth in 1996. (*Celebrate Life*, March/April 1997)

## Opposition to Disney Grows

Opposition to Disney is spreading throughout Christendom. The quarter-million-member National Association of Free Will Baptists has joined the

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Disney boycott, and the Catholic Archdiocese of Oklahoma City has disinvested in the Walt Disney Company. Disney has come under conservative fire for its strong support of the homosexual lifestyle, including offering spousal benefits to employees' homosexual partners, publishing of the teen-targeted book *Growing Up Gay* and hosting Gay and Lesbian Day at Walt Disney World—with no advance warning to the families who visited the park that day with their children. The National Association of Free Will Baptists and the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City join the American Family Association, the 2.5-million member Assemblies of God, and the Southern Baptists in the growing Disney boycott. (*Celebrate Life*, March/April 1997)

### **Bible Translation Continues**

At least part of the Bible is now translated into 2,167 of the world's 6,000-plus languages. That's the latest from the "Scripture Language Report 1996" from the United Bible Societies in Reading, England. Last year, at least part of the Bible was translated into 39 languages for the first time. (*Pulse*, April 18, 1997)

### **U.S. Church Attendance Declines**

Church attendance is at its lowest level in two decades, with just 37 percent of adults attending on a given weekend, reported pollster George Barna. Data also indicates that only 28 percent of men attend Sunday services versus 46 percent of women.

## **NOTABLE QUOTES**

Christ taught truth. Truth is absolute. Absolutes are intolerant. Tolerance is no virtue if it means hailing error or those who espouse it as friends and partners. Indulging error is not only contrary to the example of Christ, it contradicts the biblical doctrine of separation. . . . My love for God and His Word demand that I keep the lines between truth and error clearly marked.

—Gary Anderson, president of Baptist Mid-Missions

Given the bigotry of leading academics and their journals, a fundamentalist (unless he stays in the closet) will be frozen out. . . . Discerning alumni and taxpayers should ask whether the universities they support have a policy, "No fundamentalists allowed."

—Marvin Olasky, writing in *World*

The rising generation of young believers, ignorant of the historic antecedents of fundamentalism, is led to believe that fundamentalism is a bigoted and unnecessarily controversial approach to Christian faith. The result is the current trend to avoid the label for reasons foreign to the real issues.

—John Walvoord, writing in 1958

The evangelicalism of today is a decadent form of fundamentalism, not changed by the so-called "lunatic fringe" of fundamentalism, but by those influences which belong to the spirit of the times and have largely gone unnoticed. All forms of belief and disbelief in the inspiration of the Scriptures are now found among evangelicals.

—Chester E. Tulga, writing in 1956

The government shouldn't be beating people down who want to exercise control over their lives based on values, whether it's faith-based education or faith-based public shelters, or this extremist position that you can't have a cross on a hill in San Francisco. As far as I'm concerned, they ought to have four or five up there.

—John Kasich, U.S. Congressman from Ohio

Fifty-three percent of all public school teachers in Cleveland send their children to private schools. The same goes for 49 percent in Boston and 39 percent in Los Angeles. . . . They do it because they know that virtue is an absolute necessity for a safe and productive learning environment. They have seen what has happened to the public school system as teachers have been stripped of their moral authority, including the authority to teacher certain moral absolutes.

—Jeb Bush, chairman, Foundation for Florida's Future

Authors of biblical books, even while writing Scripture inspired by the Holy Spirit, unconsciously reflected in many ways the particular cultures in which they wrote. Hence in the manner in which they articulate the Word of God, they sometimes offend modern sensibilities. At such times, translators can and may use non-offending renderings so as not to hinder the message of the Spirit.

—"Policy of Committee on Bible Translation Concerning Use of Inclusive Language in the NIV"

(*The Evangelical Methodist*, Vol. 76, No. 1)

### **Vietnam Pressures Christians**

Since last June, the Vietnamese government has turned up the pressure on the country's illegal house churches. Thirteen known house church leaders are in jail, serving a minimum of 20 months each. In addition, authorities have begun raiding churches, arresting entire congregations for short periods. (*World Pulse*, March 21, 1997)

### **States Ban Same-Sex Marriages**

Arkansas recently joined the growing list of states, 18 or more, that have banned homosexual marriage. Only Gov. Gary Locke of Washington has vetoed a same-sex marriage ban passed by a state legislature. (*Intercessors for America*, April 1997)

### **Paganism in America**

Every Labor Day since the mid-1980s, the Burning Man Festival has attracted thousands of people to Black Rock Desert in northwest Nevada. Last year more than 10,000 people went—more than twice the number who attended in 1995. Participants go to shed clothes, trance-dance, exchange idols and watch mock pagan rituals. On the final night, a 40-foot-high timber figure, symbolizing an ancient Indian spirit, is torched. (*What in the World!* Vol. 21, No. 6)

### **Support for Homosexuality**

Domestic-partner benefits are on the rise in American businesses. The



following is a partial list of Fortune 500 companies identified as having domestic-partner benefits: Adolph Coors, Advanced Micro Devices, Apple Computer, BankAmerica Corporation, Borland International, Capital Cities/ABC, Eastman Kodak, Hewlett Packard, IBM, Levi Strauss & Co., Microsoft, New York Times, Northern States Power, NYNEX Corporation, Pacific Enterprises, Pacific Gas & Electric Co., Paramount Communications, Principal Mutual Life, St. Paul Companies, Silicon Graphics, Sprint, Sun Microsystems, Time Warner, Viacom, Walt Disney, Wells Fargo & Co. and Xerox Co. (*World*, April 26, 1997)

### Falwell's View of Graham

Calling Dr. Billy Graham "God's prophet for this age," Dr. Jerry Falwell suggested on May 3 at the commencement ceremony of Liberty University that Graham may turn out greater than St. Augustine and Martin Luther when church history finally is written. (*Christian News*, May 12, 1997)

### Missions Threatened in Venezuela

A proposed law before the congress in Venezuela that would create the Indigenous Institute that would govern all Indian affairs has already been passed in one of the Houses. Anyone wanting to work with Indians would have to get a permit from the institute. According to the New Tribes Mission (NTM) field chairman, this law on Indian communities is a docu-

ment prepared by enemies of the mission, with the express purpose of having its missionaries removed from native communities. "If this law is passed," he explained, "we have been told that NTM will have three months to get out of Venezuela." (*Brown Gold*, May 1997)

### Bible Stories Unconstitutional?

"Do not wear a crucifix around your neck or any religious jewelry. And whatever you do, don't read a story about a king named David." That is what school teachers have been told in Florida's Nassau County, where a federal judge ruled that Bible stories are unconstitutional. But the school board voted to disregard the prohibition, and concerned citizens are seeking to raise one quarter of a million dollars to finance an appeal to the Supreme Court. (*Pulpit Helps*, June 1997)

### President Welcomes Ellen

At the White House Correspondents Dinner held April 26 at the Washington Hilton, President Bill Clinton warmly greeted actress and lesbian Anne Heche and her fellow actress and real-life lesbian partner Ellen DeGeneres, star of the TV sitcom *Ellen*, in which her character came "out of the closet" April 30. (*Christian News*, 5/12/97)

### Methodist-Orthodox Dialogue Advances

In a communiqué issued May 10 following a three-day meeting, Methodist and Orthodox offi-

cials stated the discussions going on for 20 years have moved from a "preparatory" to an official phase. "On the threshold of the third millennium, Orthodox and Methodists seek not only to enjoy sisterly relations between themselves but also to bear joint witness to the Gospel before the world." (United Methodist News Service, 5/16/97)

### Interfaith Service Highlights Summit

An overflow congregation of 750 adults and youth gathered recently in the Mother Bethel AME Church in Philadelphia for an ecumenical interfaith service of worship, thanksgiving and hope organized by the National Council of Churches (NCC) in connection with the President's Summit on Volunteerism. Four young people witnessed to their commitments and hopes for the future of this country to a group that included former President George Bush and Barbara Bush, retired Army General Colin Powell, Elizabeth Dole and a host of other national dignitaries and church leaders. (Epi-

scopal News Service, 5/13/97)

### Back on the Streets

The State of Florida set free 300 murderers, rapists and others convicted of violent crimes in March—but this was merely the first installment of a court-ordered release of more than 2,500 serious offenders. (*Pulpit Helps*, June 1997)

### Going Once, Going Twice?

Twenty-three percent of the 350,000 pastors in the U.S. have been forced to leave a church at least once. Pastoral tenures are at a record low, and a third of all churches have forced their last pastor to leave. Most alarming, the majority of ousted pastors (62 percent) were forced out by a church that had already forced one or more pastors to leave in the past. (*The Calling*, April 1997)

We are grateful to *Current Trends and Updates* for portions of this news. CNT is a Fundamental e-mail news service. Contact CT\_N\_U@dmci.net for more information.

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# WIT & WISDOM

## Perspectives on Providence

No thought can enter into the mind of man better adapted to promote its piety and peace than this—that the world is under the government of God, and all the events of our lives under the direction of His providence.

—Orton, quoted by William S. Plummer

If we understand the providence of God and love the God of providence, we are able to worship Him with the sacrifice He inherently deserves when things occur that bring pain, sorrow and affliction into our lives. This understanding of providence is vital to all who would worship God. It is a worship of Faith that is rooted in trust.

—R. C. Sproul

I adore and kiss the providence of my Lord, who knoweth well what is most expedient for me, and for you, and your children.

—Samuel Rutherford

A God without dominion, without providence and final causes, is nothing but fate and nature.

—Sir Isaac Newton

"God reigns" is a logical sequence from "God is." To deny God's providence is as atheistical as to deny His existence.

—William S. Plummer

As there are tools of all sorts and sizes in the shop of Providence, so there is a most skilful hand that uses them, and . . . they could no more produce such effects of themselves than the axe, saw, or chisel can carve a rough log into a beautiful figure without the hand of a skilful artificer.

—John Flavel

The providence of God is His almighty and everywhere present power, whereby as it were by hand, He upholds and governs heaven, earth and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, not by chance, but by His fatherly hand.

—Heidelberg Catechism

We can all see God in exceptional things, but it requires the growth of spiritual discipline to see God in every detail. Never believe that the so-called random events of life are anything less than God's appointed order. Be ready to discover His divine designs anywhere and everywhere. —Oswald Chambers A leading authority is one who has guessed right two times in a row.

—Unknown

## I wish I had said that . . .

Hasten slowly.

—Augustus Caesar

I have made this letter longer than usual because I lack the time to make it shorter.

—Blaise Pascal

Laws too gentle are seldom obeyed; too severe, seldom executed.

—Benjamin Franklin

One person with a belief is equal to a force of ninety-nine who have only interests.

—John Stuart Mill

Great spirits have always encountered opposition from mediocre minds.

—Albert Einstein

Envy is thin because it bites but never eats.

—Spanish proverb

Back of every wasted life is a bad philosophy, an erroneous conception of life's worth and purpose.

—A. W. Tozer

Idolatry is worshipping anything that ought to be used, or using anything that is meant to be worshipped.

—Augustine

The eagle that soars in the upper air does not worry itself how it is to cross rivers.

—Gladys Aylward

A woman with a woman's viewpoint is of more value than when she forgets she's a woman and begins to act like a man.

—Nelly Ptaschkina

We need not "sin that grace may abound." We are sinners and need only to confess that grace may abound.

—C. FitzSimons Allison

Those who aim at great deeds must also suffer greatly.

—Plutarch

Television is an invention that permits you to be entertained in your living room by people you wouldn't have in your home.

—David Frost

The most dangerous of all falsehoods is a slightly distorted truth.

—G. C. Lichtenberg

Burnout is inevitable, unless the sustaining presence of God is a reality in our lives.

—William Mills

A declaration of wanting to do good, without doing good, is but pretended.

—John Owen

Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.



# Safe in His Hands

Charles J. Mellring

I thought I'd die!" You've heard this expression many times, I'm sure, perhaps after a particularly prolonged bout of laughter or maybe when genuinely frightened or anticipating something.

Back around 1922, I thought I'd die. Along with several other adventurous boys, I was fishing from a bridge over Cherrytree Run. To my great satisfaction, I had just landed a nice keeper. I must have been a bit careless as I leaned over the bridge railing, for I suddenly found myself plunging 10 feet or more into the icy water. The swirling waters had formed a deep pool beneath the bridge.

I remember well the helpless, hopeless sensation, as I tumbled and rolled along the rocky bottom. Probably my heavy clothing, and certainly my inexperience, kept me from surfacing. The water felt so cold. It seemed like a long time to be pummeled by the rushing stream. My fishing buddies had time to run screaming for help toward the nearest dwelling and time for the lone resident to run to the bridge before I found myself in water shallow enough to stand. The "rescuer," an elderly gentleman, was sitting on the bank unlacing his shoes, preparing to wade in after me, which by then

was unnecessary (thankfully for him—he couldn't swim!). I didn't die but survived an eventful childhood and adolescence.

Several years later, around 1930, my best friend and I headed to the woods to do some rabbit hunting after school. His sister drove by on her way home from school, and she and I stopped to chat a moment. As we talked, I rested the butt of my shotgun on my toe and perched my love-smitten chin atop the muzzle. Providentially, I moved my head a bit just before the sixteen-gauge Ithica went off into the air without warning! I could have died for my stupidity, but God had a better plan. I later married that girl, and in addition to four beautiful, dutiful children, He gave me many, many happy years with her.

Another close call came in 1940, while I was driving from my parsonage in Erie County, Pennsylvania, to a summer camp at Findlay Lake, New York. At dusk I flipped on the headlights of my 1936 Ford. I came up behind a slow-moving truck on a two-lane road. We crested a long hill, and I knew the road was straight for some distance ahead. Seeing no approaching lights, I began to pass the truck.

Just as I drew even with the truck, my headlights revealed a large team of horses pulling an empty hayrack that filled the oncoming lane! I remember that scene still: the farmer trying to pull his horses to the right; the truck filling the other lane of the road; no possibility for the ineffective brakes on my Ford to stop my forward motion.

There seemed to be perhaps four feet of opening between the wagon and the truck. I steered for that narrow gap and—by what miraculous intervention I still can't understand—God passed me through! When I got into Union City, a cup of coffee seemed in order, and when I brought my car to a stop, my braking foot wouldn't stop trembling. I didn't die. In fact several years later, I was privileged to meet and fellowship with a lady whom



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I had won to Christ later that year.

I could have died in 1956, when I worked nights at a food cannery. I operated a machine that applied the labels to cans of beets, which I then packed into cartons.

As I stood at the controls of my machine, I felt something brush the backs of my legs, and then I heard a thunderous crash. A forklift operator, with a pallet stacked with 96 cases of canned beets, stopped too abruptly, and the heavy load toppled forward from a considerable height, crashing to the floor just behind me. One case of cans could have killed me, let alone 96!

Not yet finished with me on earth, God led me back into the pastorate. The year 1958 found me at Corsica, Pennsylvania. When our daughter was accepted at a Bible college in Buffalo, a private pilot in my congregation offered to fly us up.

Our flight to Buffalo was uneventful, but on our return trip, a threatening sky forced us to make a hasty takeoff for Pennsylvania. We landed at Bradford, Pennsylvania, to refuel hurriedly since the storm had intensified considerably. Shortly after we took off, the wind and rain became quite severe.

If you've ever flown over—or driven through—those rugged, densely forested Allegheny foothills, you can imagine my feelings when the pilot asked me to help watch for an open area large enough to put down the Cessna 172! I thought I'd die.

With no place to land, we proceeded toward home. The farther we went, the worse the flying conditions became. I was strapped into one of the rear seats and can truthfully report that my head banged against *both* side windows as the little aircraft was rudely buffeted. We later learned that a tornado lay directly in our flight path.

God led us safely through the storm. We arrived home in time for me to conduct my evening service by candlelight since the storm had cut off electric power. Our seven-year pastorate at that church was unusually blessed by God. I can remember scores (sometimes whole families) following the Lord in baptism. Many of these believers already look upon Christ's face in Glory.

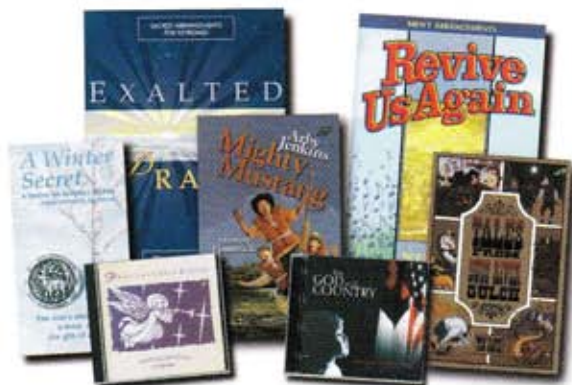
On another occasion, with my family with me, I drove our car across the tracks of a high-speed train in Iowa. Feeling the tremor and hearing too late the whistle of that train, we watched as a one-hundred-mile-per-hour rail giant missed us by only inches. To God's glory, He has since allowed me to lead more souls to Christ.

Just one year ago, it pleased the Lord to promote my beloved wife to Glory. Along with my efforts to care for her, she was attended by a home-nursing group. The day Mrs. Mellring went to sleep to awake in Heaven, I called the nurse who had cared for her. When the nurse tried to console me in her compassionate manner, I was able to urge *her* and see *her* receive Christ.

What remains for me, I watchfully anticipate. I desire to meet again my wife and daughters already with the Lord. But I know I won't die until God has completed His perfect will for my life. Until He calls me Home, I am giving myself to a ministry of intercessory prayer, preaching where I'm invited, seeking to live for Him who died for me.

Pastor Charles J. Mellring retired from his pastorate in 1987 and lives in Guys Mills, Pennsylvania. He has an active ministry in special speaking engagements and pulpit supply.

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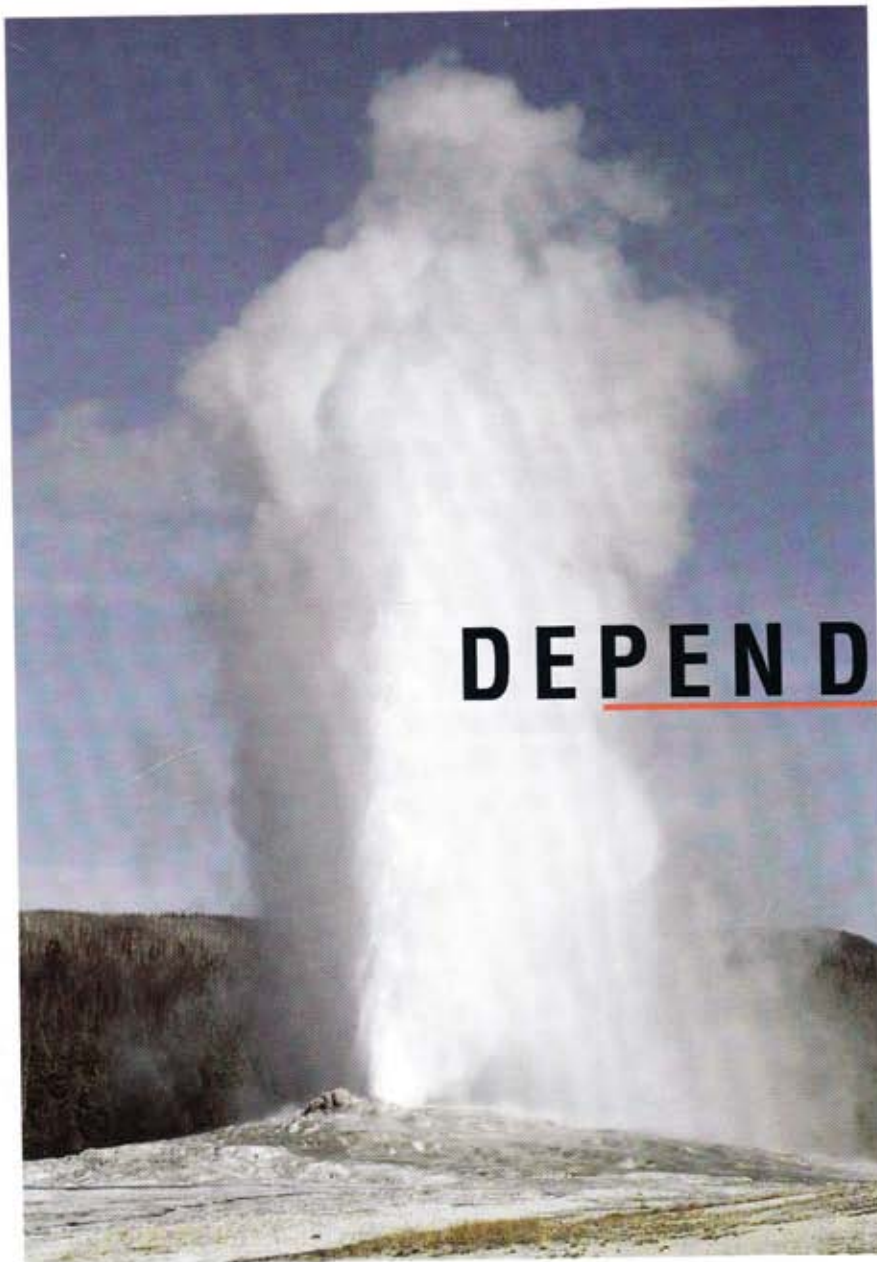
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