

# THE WORD AND WORK

*"A monthly magazine set to declare the whole counsel of God."*

Wm. Robert Heid, Editor

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# God's Family

W. R. H.

## LANDMARK OR DANGERFLAG

The new year was only five days old when a great "Landmark Decision" was handed down by a Federal Court in the State of Arkansas. The Public school system of Arkansas cannot "foist" religion upon citizens of the State, by ordering equal time be given to the consideration of the Biblical account of creation, along with the theory of evolution. This decision was hailed as a great victory for the American Civil Liberties Union, who had viciously brought the case to court and furnished considerable grist to the mills of the news media. A great landmark, it was called, and one that will play a great part in other like cases pending in States such as Louisiana and Tennessee.

And a landmark it is! See it along with the decision to eliminate prayer and Bible reading from the public schools. See it alongside the Abortion decision. Line it up with the Equal Rights Amendment. With these in view, it is not difficult for us to get our bearings—to know where we are! These markers are very close to us—not on the distant horizon. They mark the channel in which we are already entered, the choice of the port is no longer in question. Soon we can drop anchor and make our individual ways to the shore of this "glorious" land that is waiting to coddle us, seduce the youth to godlessness, provide equal opportunity to all, encourage abortion, pose to debunk the Bible, and ridicule holiness. "Down with chart and compass! Land Ho!"

Webster's dictionary defines landmark as "an event considered as a high point or a turning point of a period." So, "landmark" may well prove to be a proper word for it. All landmarks are not bad, nor are all good. It is dependent upon their purpose. One lighthouse guides ships into the safety of a sheltered harbor, while another guards against wrecking upon a hidden reef. Some are diligently tended and kept lighted, while others are let go to crumble and fall. A good chart should include the various landmarks, and a wise navigator will know how to interpret each one.

## BELIEVERS HAVE A CHART AND COMPASS

The section of our chart that is called "Romans" has this notation: "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature, rather than the Creator." (1:25) Verse 28 follows with another landmark: "And even as they refused to have God in their

knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting.” Peter tells us: “mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts.” (2 Pet. 3:3). John makes this statement: “Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that anti-christ cometh, even now have there arisen many anti-Christ’s” (1 Jn. 2:18). We can be blessed by these various landmark decisions, if we are alert to what they portend.

There are some cases that (as this one) go to trial before a solitary judge, rather than a panel or any sort of jury. Some time back I came to understand that juries were to determine guilt of commission of a crime, whereas judges are to decide if laws have been violated and then to pronounce punishment. The trial under discussion dealt with whether or not the Arkansas Legislature’s recently-passed law that required consideration of the “Creation record” in the schoolroom—was a constitutional law at all. The judge deemed that it was not. I expect that only states that are in the Bible belt will even consider the creation account as being vital to education. And while the majority of the citizens in these states, (Ky., Tenn., Ark., Miss., Louisiana, and Texas) might honestly want this truth to be a part of their public school study, a vocal minority will overcome.

### *ALL IS NOT LOST FOR THE CHRISTIAN*

Many science students all across our country have not been exposed to the Bible or to the account of God’s creation at all. These are the ones who are really bearing the brunt of this court ruling. Some will graduate so blinded that the light of the Word will never be able to break through. However, to the thinking Christian, there should be nought but good to come. We must begin to study and teach the Word of God as we have never taught it before. No longer dare we let the public schools take the full say in education of our children. Christian schools and Sunday schools should really be appreciated as the God-given means to meet this responsibility. And the teachers should see how really important their task is, and to honestly prepare and pray and present, as if eternity itself depended upon it. Givers to Christian education should be spurred on to new heights, and enrollment in such schools ought to grow and flourish.

### *WHAT CAN BE DONE?*

Likewise, the homes within the church ought to benefit, if we but clearly see these landmark decisions for what they are. It is at home that we must enlighten our young people against abortion, immorality, dishonesty, and sin in general. Morality, the old kind, must be a part of the daily image. Questionable things must be gone. Truth must be on the throne always. We can pray. We can censor the school books that the State provides, and wherein they implant error, we must refute it. We can actively choose better schools for our children and grandchildren. We can live as in the light of the soon coming of our Lord. We can see to it that all that we do is done in love. Then each landmark, as it arises, will be to us a true danger flag, and we can warn and be warned, accordingly. May God help us.

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## Viewing the News

Jack Blaes

RICHARD ALLEN HAD TO GO! I don't know what is involved in the seemingly insignificant gifts of money and or watches he received from some Japanese, but those were not the reason he was manuevered from the administration. There are anti-communists, and there are anti-anti-communists. Mr. Allen is on record, and has been for a long time as an anti-communist. Holding a key post on the National Security staff under Henry Kissinger, he was outspoken in his criticism of Kissinger's detente diplomacy and those "Liberals"—loved by Henry—who were leaking national secrets to the press in order to sabotage official policy and expressing their opposition to it. As Richard Allen put it: "Henry thought he could manipulate these people; in fact, he succeeded in opening the bowels of the Administration to the New Left."

IN AN EFFORT TO INFORM AND CHANGE THE POSTURE of those in State and even lesser positions of responsibility, we recall this remark made more than ten years ago: "During the period of peaceful coexistence, the Communists... hope not only to gain through an American and Western slow down in armaments, but also to subvert and paralyze hostile governments in the hope that at the critical moment such governments will capitulate or will be incapable of offering effective resistance." His feeling regarding favoring Reds with high-technology trade is expressed in this: "By expanding trade with the Soviet Union and with Eastern Europe, the West helps to reinforce the enemy's strategic power."

FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH, my opinion is that had Mr. Reagan named him (a big problem would have been Senate confirmation) as his Secretary of State,

he would not have been nudged out as it happened. But he had to go—anti-anti-communists had decided that.

EARLY LAST YEAR BEFORE THE AMERICAN BANKERS Association convention, a very important banker made the following remarks as part of his speech.

"And there is one further price—or more accurately cost—that is the most onerous of all. The fastest rising cost in the American economy over the past 15 years is neither the cost of haircuts nor mortgages nor any of the other goods and services in the Price Index. It is the cost of government—federal, state, and local—paid for through our systematic taxation. Between 1975 and 1979, the Federal tax bill for all Americans increased more than eight times as much as their fuel bill. To put it bluntly, the root of our inflationary crisis is clearly the soaring price of government.

"We dont have to search far and wide for the instigator of the increase in the money supply. It rests in the huge rise in government spending. Over the past decade, Federal outlays for education, health, Social Security and other benefits increased by \$270 billion. And they now account for more than 60% of the total budget. Moreover, these outlays have gained the name "entitlements" and many have become indexed to inflation—so costs rise automatically.

"We must recognize that no effective control over expenses is possible without action on the so-called entitlements. Standards for some of these programs could be tightened without creating hardship for genuinely needy recipients.

Moreover, the practice and method of indexing many of these benefits to inflation should be scrutinized carefully."

**LEST YOU ARE THINKING THAT THE ABOVE** points were made by Robert Welch of the John Birch Society, I hasten to tell you they come from none other than Mr. David Rockefeller. Could anyone be farther to the left than he, yet where have you heard more sound economic thought? Do hope it wasn't a mere lapse.

**NOT A BAD FRINGE BENEFIT.** In 1979, according to U.S. Chamber of Commerce figures, the average fringe benefits going to American workers including such things as Social Security, life and health insurance, pensions, and paid vacations totaled \$5,560 per worker, roughly 30% of total compensation.

**THE MASSACHUSETTS NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS** heard the president of that state's Senate, president William Bulgar speak out on the effects of forced busing to The Boston school system. He said that U. S. District Judge W. Arthur Garrity, Jr. has actually presided over the destruction of the Boston School System—that effected schools are more racially imbalanced than they were at the outset... and the experience has polarized races. A fraction of the money lavished on the program of busing other people's children—only the children of the poor, at that—would have been sufficient to send every child involved to New England's most expensive prep school."

"IN 30 or 40 Years," **ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN SAYS**, "you will read the Chinese **Gulag Archipelago**, and you will be stunned, you will say, well we didn't know; but you must know today what's going on. By trusting China you will yield the other half of the earth, because the main threat is now of the present administration's trust in China. This is impossible. They are the same Communists; they use the same methods, and they use the annihilation policy."

**YALE PROFESSOR EMERITUS DAVID NELSON ROWE**, a specialist in Chinese affairs, issues a stern warning to the United States on the dangers of

arming Communists China. An alliance with Peiping would be as disastrous as was the arming of Soviet Russia during World War II. The Peiping regime is more unstable now than ever before, he said, and China's economic dilemma cannot be solved under Communism. The Republic of China on Taiwan points the way to recovery—abandonment of the Communistic system and the restoration of free enterprise and free market system.

\* \* \* \* \*

**ONE BILLION DOLLARS ANNUALLY** in **SOCIAL SECURITY TRUST** funds are paid to around 313,000 people living in foreign countries. Seven out of ten are not American citizens. Social Security Commissioner John Svahn is fearful that many foreign recipients of Social Security payments are receiving monies due to fake or opportunistic marriages and adoptions. To support his fears this case is advanced: A man who had earned as little as \$1,531 at his job in the United States—Upon retirement he moved to another country, and in 1968, died at age 81 leaving a widow and a young son who have so far received nearly \$23,000. With this and other such stories to spur him on, Congressman Clarence Miller (R.-Ohio) is co-sponsoring a bill to, in a measure, correct such apparent abuses.

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**THREE PROBLEMS WITH COAL.** John McKetta, scientist and authority on electric power has observed the following: Today there are only three problems with coal: Federal leasing policy makes it illegal to get near the coal; the Mine Safety Administration makes it illegal to mine the coal; and the Environmental Protection Agency makes it illegal to burn the coal.

\* \* \* \* \*

**SCIENTISTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AT CALIFORNIA'S Lawrence Laboratory** planned and developed a unique mouse trap. It was a teeter-totter design in which a mouse seeking bait is dumped into a container of water and drowned. When demonstrating it to reporters, one mouse walked onto the teeter-totter to take the bait while another sat at the bottom balancing it.

Alex Wilson is a missionary in the Philippines.



## Fellowship and Our Heritage

Alex V. Wilson

Do you have any unwanted brothers or sisters in Christ? Last month we saw what the Bible teaches about unity and fellowship among believers. We referred to over ten passages. That study was basic, for our authority in any matter is the Word of God, not the opinions of uninspired men.

Yet we can learn a lot too from mature Christians of later ages who were diligent students of Scripture. And on the topic of Christian fellowship their insights are especially valuable. For in the days when the New Testament was being written, there were no full-fledged denominations such as exist today. So the apostles did not face a situation exactly like our own, and give specific instructions about it. Thus as we face the Christendom of today and wonder how to react, we must seek to *extract principles from Scripture* to guide us. This is not always easy, and we can profit from the teachings and practices of believers who preceded us.

Brother Boll put it superbly when he wrote:

The consideration that this or that great man taught thus and so, or even that "the brotherhood" believes thus and so—weighs absolutely nothing so far as the determining of the faith of the humblest Christian is concerned. The simple Christian knows absolutely no Rabbi save the Lord Jesus Christ alone. (Matt. 23:8-10)

By this is not meant that Christians are to show no deference and consideration to the able and worthy teachers among them. Far from it. There are men whose ability and long faithfulness command our fullest respect; whose positions on matters of faith deserve to be weighed and examined with more than common care and thought.

—The Church I Found and How I Found It

With this as our attitude, let's examine the views of various men who were prominent in the so-called Restoration Movement during the 1800s.

### *Stone and the Campbells*

*Barton Stone*: In 1831 Stone wrote these comments about differences between the churches associated with him and those associated with Alexander Campbell: "We have fellowship and communion with unimmersed persons. They contend that, according to the New Testament, none but the immersed have their sins remitted, and therefore they cannot commune with the unimmersed. On this point we cannot agree with them; and the reason is that this sentiment will exclude millions of the fairest characters (i.e. believers of outstanding holiness

and love for God—AVW), for many centuries back, from heaven . . . We believe and acknowledge that baptism is ordained by the King as a means for the remission of sins to penitent believers, but we cannot say that immersion is the *sine qua non*, (or absolute essential—AVW) without maintaining the awful consequences mentioned above and without contradicting our experience.”

Thomas Campbell wrote, “By our Christian brethren we mean, ‘All that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, throughout the churches.’” So when he spoke of “the brotherhood,” that was his meaning—all members everywhere of God’s family, or of the “invisible church” as it is sometimes called. This is obvious throughout all of Campbell’s great document, “Declaration and Address,” in which he appealed to *Christians* in all sectarian bodies to give up their bickerings and divisions and unite by following Christ alone.

Alexander Campbell: He referred to their movement as “a project for uniting the sects, or rather the *Christians* in all the sects, upon a clear and scriptural bond of union.” Again he said, “I labor to see sectarianism abolished, and *all Christians of every name* united upon the one foundation on which the apostolic church was founded.”

His view of “Who is my brother?” was broad indeed. Notice some more quotations from his writings. “I am greatly indebted to all the Reformers, from Martin Luther down to John Wesley. I could not enumerate the individuals, living and dead, who have assisted in forming my mind.” Again, “John Bunyan (a Baptist) and John Newton (an Episcopalian) were very different persons, and had very different views of baptism and of some other things; yet they were both disposed to obey, and to the extent of their knowledge did obey the Lord in every thing.” And again:

I was some fourteen years ago a great admirer of the works of John Newton. I read them with great delight, and I still love the author and admire many of his sentiments. He was not a staunch Episcopalian, though he died in that church. In an explanation to a friend for his departure from the tenets of that sect in some instances, he said, ‘whenever he found a pretty feather in any bird, he endeavored to attach it to his own plumage, and although he had become a very speckled bird, so much so that no one of any species would altogether own him as belonging to them, he flattered himself that he was the prettiest bird among them.’ From that day to the present I have been looking for pretty feathers, and I have become more speckled than Newton . . .

Another time he wrote, “There are many consecrated . . . Christians Presbyterians. And although our Savior has no Presbyterian church in heaven or on earth, yet I doubt not but that he has had many, very many that love and honored him in that worldly church, whom he will honor in the world to come.”

But Campbell’s actions matched his words. Many folks today who consider themselves his spiritual heirs would be shocked to know the following, as told by Homer Hailey’s book *Attitudes and Consequences*: “Although not (yet) advocating a missionary society among the Disciples, Campbell did not hesitate to commend the work of the Baptist Missionary Society, inserting in his paper their ‘Report on Foreign Missions.’ Not only did he commend the work they were doing, but also he encouraged congregations to make contribution to

it. In his commendation of the society, he said:

(We should) appreciate the labor and zeal which it has required on the part of our Baptist friends to get under way their society, and realize the obligations under which all true Christians are placed to lend them a helping hand . . . When the work is good, and well and scripturally done, we will not stop to dispute about (who does the work), unless indeed we forget the glory of God and aim only to build up sectarianism. (1845.)”

In the same year, some of the Disciples started a Bible society in Cincinnati. Campbell wrote an objection, “not on the ground of Scripture, but on the basis of ‘practicability.’” He reasoned that since the Baptists had a Bible Society doing the same work, in which all the disciples could cooperate, there was no need for another, inasmuch as the Baptists were doing no more through their society than issuing the Scriptures” (Hailey).

To be sure, Campbell often spoke out against the doctrines of Baptists or others which he considered erroneous, and practices which seemed unspiritual to him. Especially he denounced many of their preachers who considered themselves mini-popes and tried to dominate their members. He called upon them to forsake sectarianism and creedism. At the same time, it is clear that he not only believed that there were fine Christians to be found among the various denominations, but also urged his followers to cooperate with such Christians in activities like supporting missionaries and publishing Bibles.

#### *Later Leaders*

The preacher and editor *Benjamin Franklin*: “There are individuals among the sects who are not sectarians, or who are more than sectarians—they are *Christians*; or persons who have believed the gospel, submitted to it, and in spite of the leaders, been constituted Christians according to the Scriptures.” Again he wrote, “That there are Christians among the sects . . . we admitted many years ago, and we believe the same now. That these have a right to commune (in the Lord’s Supper) we presume is not doubted by any brother.” In other words, Franklin took it for granted that in 1862, when he wrote, all the Restoration churches recognized penitent believers from the denominations as born-again brethren or sisters in the Lord.

*Moses Lard*: “Against the individual members of these parties (denominations) we cannot have even one unkind feeling. Many of them we regard as true Christians, and love them sincerely.”

*David Lipscomb*: “There are some sectarian churches who will obey God and follow him in spite of the churches in which they find themselves. As examples, there are persons in the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches who are baptized to obey God rather than to please the sects. In this they rise above the sectarian spirit, despite the parties in which they find themselves. They ought to get out of the sectarian churches, but they see so much sectarianism in the nonsectarian churches that they think they are all alike.”

*Daniel Sommer*: “What shall we say of those preachers who denounce all persons who happen to hold membership in a sectarian denomination with a sentence of sweeping impeachment, as though they were all under the influence of sectism? We should say that



they are probably more sectarian than some whom they denounce. Their manner shows that they are unscripturally exclusive, and this is one of the elements of sectarianism.”

*Isaac Errett*: “Corruptions have crept into the church because of Popery and have scattered the people of God into various sects. Our plea is for a reunion of the people of God. While our plea does not recognize these sects as of divine origin, yet it recognizes a people of God among them.”

Brother E. L. Jorgenson gave other examples in his *Word and Work* editorial of October 1961:

All the great men of the nineteenth century unity movement understood there were some born-again ones in many of the American religious groups. It was the general understanding at least to the turn of the century when I was a boy. McGarvey, Larimore, the Srygleys, Kurfees, et al knew it, but hoped and labored to show many ‘the way of God more accurately.’ The nonsectarian concept of the church grew measurably dimmer with the spread of the ‘re-baptism’ theory—the view that a candidate for valid baptism **must know** (besides all other antecedents) that he is being baptized for remission of sins. This strange twist . . . tended directly to make a sect of the church.

It seems to me that the beliefs and practices of these nineteenth-century leaders provide us with much food for thought.

(Sources of the quotations, some of which have been slightly amended: *The Search for the Ancient Order*, Vol. I, by Earl West. *Attitudes and Consequences*, by Homer Hailey. Carl Ketcherside in *Mission Messenger*, Jan., 1960.)

(More next time)

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## Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

*Please comment on the order of the seals, trumpets, and bowls of Revelation.*

The above question is a summary of several questions and comments a reader sends. An article by another writer appearing earlier in this magazine connected the great army of Rev. 9:15-16 with the battle of Armageddon, and the reader expresses disagreement, saying the slaying of one third of men does not fit the battle of Armageddon. Moreover, he expresses the belief that the seals, trumpets and bowls are consecutive in order; hence, he believes (if I have understood) the judgment of the sixth trumpet comes too early to be the battle of Armageddon.

Before we come to more specific comments, we wish to offer some of what we hope will be pertinent thoughts. One of the criticisms of the study of prophecy offered by the foes of such study is the wide disagreement and the divergent viewpoints held by the students of prophecy. They use this to say that no one understands it, and that, therefore, it is best left alone. Generally speaking, these make no distinction between the basic outlines of prophecy and the various minor details within that outline. Now practically every doctrine in the Bible is denied, questioned, or in some way disputed by someone. This is true as well of prophecy, even in some things which seem to be quite clearly set forth. It is a serious mistake to allow this disagreement to keep us from some settled convictions and from the pursuit of all truth as free Christians. There are prophetic issues which can be as certainly established as any other truth of the Bible. There are, however, also areas of prophecy where we do well to examine, study in the light of other known truths, make tentative interpretations, meditate on the possibilities, but do so without being dogmatic or having closed minds. It is evident that the more diligent student of the scriptures, other things being equal, will understand things that the less diligent does not. He will see pieces of the prophecy "puzzle" fall into place where the less diligent has only questions. But there are matters about which even the most dedicated student of the scripture will have to say: "It looks *as if* this might be the case," or "My *opinion*, based on my present understanding of the passages, is that it is to be such and so." Students of prophecy need to avoid the error of the archaeologists who, finding part of a tooth, can proceed to construct a replica (?) of the whole animal. We need to be careful that we do not get our opinions and the scriptures mixed so that we do not know which is which. We have read after men who could take a word, a phrase, or a minor detail and create(?) a whole detailed account of what is to be. This, we believe, is to be avoided. In these matters it is not wrong to hold tentative views, to express what we believe to be the possibilities, to form some "maybe" conclusions, so long as we are aware of the nature of our "proof."

The question before us has little if any effect on the truth that Jesus is coming again, on the watchfulness of Christians, on the general conditions of the great tribulation or our escape from it, on the full establishment of the kingdom, etc. This writer disagrees that the seals trumpets and bowls are fully consecutive but I can probably no more establish that viewpoint for certain than the reader asking the questions can establish his. In my *opinion*, each group of judgments (seals, trumpets, bowls) occur in the same approximate period of time, that is, they are approximately concurrent, with the termination of each group being at or very near the Lord's return in glory with the saints. I have likened the portrayal to the kind of camera action we might see on our televisions. The seals are a more distant shot covering the tribulation period, the trumpets are a closer view showing more detail, and finally the bowls are a still closer, still more detailed account of certain facets of the period. One reason for believing this is the fact that the sixth seal, the seventh trumpet, and the seventh bowl all seem

to be events just preceding or simultaneous with the coming in glory. Now, of course, I can cite no verse which explains the order of these judgments. I have reached such a conclusion from my study of the book in relation to what I believe are basic truths of prophecy. I am sure that in that day when these judgments fall, the exact progression will be much more evident and certain but presently this time element does not much affect the message that the tribulation is a time of terrible judgments.

In the light of the above viewpoint, I do not have any difficulty with the suggestion that the sixth trumpet and the sixth bowl may be dealing with Armageddon. I do see a problem in that the armies from the East kill the third part of men under the sixth trumpet judgment while the Lord Himself does the slaying of all the armies of the beast and the kings of the earth in the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:19-21). The two things are not necessarily contradictory, however. This could be two sides of the same event.

*Is it scriptural to refer to the church building as the "house of God"?*

There are many phrases which are right or wrong, good or bad, wise or unwise more from what we mean by them than what is actually said. The Lord owns the cattle on the thousand hills. They are His. Likewise, He owns the house where we live. It is His. Moreover, most church buildings have been dedicated to the worship of the Lord. There is certainly a sense, then, in which we can say of a meeting place that it is "a house of God." There is even something about our meeting with God that makes any place—a stone in a field (Gen. 28:10-22) or a burning bush on the back side of the desert (Exod. 3)—a house of God, a place where God dwells.

The modern tendency to refer to a church building as a house of God needs to be examined more for what it does not say than for what it does say. At a church service one may thank the Lord for another opportunity to "come to the house of God." Too often this use obscures or forgets the fact that the church of the Lord is not a mere building but is the body of redeemed people. In the O.T., God had the tabernacle and later the temple which were known as the house of God. In the final sense God cannot be contained in any humanly-built house (cf. Acts 7:46-50), but He honored those O.T. structures as the appointed place of meeting between God and His people. With the establishment of the church, it is no longer a literal building which is designated as *the* house of God but a spiritual building—the church herself is the holy temple (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5). Into the church the Holy Spirit has come, dwelling in each Christian and in the body as a whole (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). Now note that we are not talking about a church building as such but the church, the people who make up the redeemed. God dwells in the church. *The* house of God then, is in the final sense the one church—the church He died for, the one He built. In this sense we do not come to the house of God; as Christians we are the house of God. There are those occasions when as the house of God we come together to worship, etc., but unless we cease to be Christian we are the house of God 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

It is important for Christians to realize this distinction. Some feel a sense of awe or reverence for a church building because it is thought of as "a house of God." They are not aware that the holiness belongs to the church, the people. Emphasis is mistakenly put on place rather than on the people. The church building is considered a place for holiness, but the Christian in the world may tend to forget the holiness which is expected of him. It is appropriate, of course that wherever we meet and worship God ought to be considered a holy place while we worship. This is true of a brush arbor or a cathedral. Moses was told that the desert near the burning bush was holy ground. It is appropriate that our conduct in such a place be worthy of the purposes for which we have met. But otherwise, a church building is no more holy than any other place where we may serve God as His church.

Whenever Christians meet for worship, it is (that particular portion or segment of) the house of God met for worship. Whenever they go home or to whatever points they may disperse, it is the house of God serving Him in the world. His house, at least a portion of it, is found wherever a Christian is. When there is this realization and proclamation, it does not bother me so much to hear a church building spoken of as a house of God. It is not so much that it is unscriptural as it is unwise or may mislead. Since the "earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof", even that building is His. But if we wish to speak of *the* house of God, then that is the church.

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## THOUGHTS FROM ROMANS

Ernest E. Lyon

### "Saved Without Ritual"

*Is this blessing then pronounced upon the circumcision, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say, To Abraham his faith was reckoned for righteousness. How then was it reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcisions and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be in uncircumcision, that righteousness might be reckoned unto them; and the father of circumcision to them who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham which he had in uncircumcision. (Romans 4:9-12)*

If you will turn to my last column (“Saved Without Work”) you will notice that I have omitted verses 6-8 from quoting the fourth chapter of Romans. I did this not because I think they are unimportant, but because they conclude last time’s subject and the new one is introduced in verse 9. Meditate on verses six through eight as a background for what we will notice this month. You will notice that righteousness by faith was known to certain ones in the days of the Law of Moses. David, in the opening of Psalm 32, spoke of the blessedness of those “whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.” He then adds this significant sentence: “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin.” David knew from his own experience with the Lord that iniquities are forgiven to those who live by faith in the Lord and that their sins are “covered.” Notice that word, for that shows his understanding does not go to the fulness of what Christ did for us on the Cross; for now are sins taken away, not just covered. And David also recognized that God’s keeping of accounts changes for the man who lives by faith so that He does not “reckon sin” to such a one. With that background in mind, let us look briefly now at verses 9-12.

If I were to try to summarize verses 9-12 in one statement, I would say “Saved Without Ritual.” That might be a little extreme to some, but Paul is here emphasizing that God accounts us as His by faith. That faith, as we will see over and over, is not the thing that saves us; Christ saved us by dying for us; He came into the world “to save sinners” and He didn’t leave part of the work to us. It is by faith that we simply put ourselves in the position of being blessed by God in the forgiving of our sins and the placing of us as ones who are guiltless before Him. Paul is here speaking, of course, of our being justified, declared righteous, by faith. This by no means implies that by nature we are any better than any others. It simply shows that God, Who is Love, has found a way that He can remain righteous and yet account the unrighteous as righteous—as rather fully stated in Romans 3:21-28.

It is a little difficult for us to understand the place of circumcision in mind of the Jew unless we will read carefully all that is said about it in the Old Testament. The male child who was not circumcised was not counted one of the people of God. Circumcision was exceedingly important to the Jew, for it set him off from the rest of the world. If he was a man of faith, then he realized the importance of circumcision was entirely due to it being given to him as a “seal of the righteousness of the faith” which God had given him. Even though the Samaritans practiced circumcision, they were not counted as of Israel; God had not promised anything to them for the ritual nor given it as a sign between Him and the Samaritans. It was a sign between God and Israel.

Even though circumcision was only for the Jew, the faith that God had reckoned for righteousness in Abraham was for all people. That is why Paul is so insistent here on our noticing that circumcision was given as a “seal of the righteousness of the faith which he (Abraham) had while he was in uncircumcision.” Abraham set the pattern for us by believing God when God said something that looked impossible.

He believed that he would have so many descendants that one could not number them even though he was too old to have his first child (Genesis 15). Years later he started to offer up his son Isaac as a burnt offering even though he knew God was to make His promises good through Isaac—in other words, he believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead and make him a father (Genesis 22). Today we are to believe that Christ took our sins upon Himself and we are made children of God through having that same kind of faith.

No discussion of circumcision by Christians seems complete without some comparison to baptism, and many are ready to proclaim that this means that baptism has nothing whatsoever to do with salvation. The Word of God gives no such statements, of course. Circumcision was a cutting off of part of the flesh and in Philippians 3 Paul shows our relationship to that—we are to have no confidence in the flesh at all but are to worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus. Circumcision was done to a male Jewish child in his eighth day; baptism is to be done to a person old enough to believe on Christ and ask to be baptized. Circumcision placed such a Jewish child as a true part of the community—but to be a true child of God he had to exercise faith later. And in many ways it is obvious that circumcision and baptism are not meant for the same thing even in different dispensations.

There is one comparison between circumcision and baptism that I would like to make. If a gentile wanted to become a member of the Jewish community he had by choice to go through circumcision, thus expressing his faith. If you were to ask me if I had to be baptized to be saved I could answer for myself, "Yes." When I first believed on Jesus Christ I knew that He had said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," and He told His disciples to make disciples of all the nations and to baptize them. Can any reasonable person say that I would have had saving faith if I had said, "Lord, I believe on you and I know you want me to be baptized but I am not going to be"? Put on that basis all the arguments that have torn the members of different churches apart are foolish. Believe on the Lord and be buried with Him through baptism into His death, that like as He was raised from the dead to the glory of the Father, so you also might rise to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

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## What is a "Church of Christ Member"?

Tom C. Brown

A statement that we very often hear is, "I am a member of the church of Christ." Preachers talk about church "members," and we hear them encourage people to "become members of the church." Where do we get our authority for saying, "I am a member of the church of Christ"?

Our response goes something like this. The Bible teaches there is one body (Eph. 4:4). The body is the church (Eph. 1:21-23). We are members of the body (1 Cor. 12:12, 13). Therefore, we

are members of the church. The reasoning sounds pretty good, but for two important points. First, we have mixed metaphors. Secondly, we do not mean what the apostle Paul meant when he used the expression "members of the body."

It can hardly be denied that when we use the above expressions we do so in an institutional sense. We are members of the institution known to the world as the church of Christ. We use it in the same way that we would tell someone, "I am a member of the Rotary," or "I am a member of the P.T.A." We do not use it in the way meant by Paul when he taught we are members of the body of Christ. We have taken a non-institutional idea and have forced it into institutional dress.

We face the task of rethinking our understanding of the church as the body of Christ. We must come to grips with the question, "What does it mean to be the church?" The very meaning of the phrase "the body of Christ" is that the church exists in an inseparable relationship to Christ. We now have the same relationship to the Lord which the physical body of Christ once bore to the Lord during his earthly ministry.

The phrase "the body of Christ" should not set us to thinking of an organization, or institution, but of a single human body. We should not think in terms of organization, but in terms of anatomy. We are Christ's eyes and mouth and hands and feet. Just as He once lived in an inseparable relationship to His physical body, so He now exists in this world "in" us. The ministry he once carried on in His physical body, He now carries on in and through us.

What is the church? The church is the people of God, the saved of earth, those who participate in the ministry of Christ in the world. This participation in the ministry of Christ is what makes us who we are, His church, His people, His body. It is here, in what Christ has done and is doing for us, and in us, that we find our self-identity. Apart from our sharing in his mission as His body, we have no existence as the church.

Too much of our thinking about the church has been institutionally oriented. Our conception is not that of a people who are being used by Christ in His mission to the world, but it is that of a religious organization—the two primary and related functions of this organization being to fulfill the religious needs of its "members" and to satisfy the legal demands of an arbitrary God relative to worship. Thus, while commitment and dedication and sacrifice are of essential importance of the man who would share in Christ's mission in the world, commitment is minimized in the institutional church. The only loyalty required there is loyalty to the organization itself.

We have, in the past, objected very strongly to the expression "join the church," but isn't that what we have done in so many instances? We have not really responded to the sacrifice of Christ by giving ourselves in total commitment to Him to be used by Him as He would.

I do not object so much to the use of the statement, "I am a member of the church of Christ," but I do object very strongly to the

prevailing institutional concept. We cannot deny that our approach has been institutionalized, and faithfulness to God and His word demands that we have courage enough to face this, expose this, and change it. The kingdom concept preached by our Lord and his apostles was not that of an earthly institution or organization, but rather the rule of God in the hearts of men, and the true commitment of their lives in His service to the world. —In *Firm Foundation*

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## STUDIES ON PRAYER

Jesse Z. Wood

The Word of God abounds in teachings, illustrations, and admonitions on the subject of Prayer! Both Old and New Testaments tell of many who humbled themselves before the Lord, confessing their sins, and asking His help, His guidance, and His protection. His eyes and ears were open to every one of His people who so humbled themselves.

Sin, which someone has called “The great separator” had to be dealt with first, and always. This was the case in the Old Testament times, (2 Chron. 7:14); and also in our day (1 John 1:9).

The most touching case in the Old Testament regarding the “Sin-Matter”, is that of David. David had sinned dreadfully as recorded in 2 Sam. 11. When he was made to realize the terribleness of his sin, it nearly broke his heart. Read, first, Psalm 51. Then read the 32<sup>rd</sup> chapter. Later, in Psalm 38:18 David wrote: “I will declare my iniquity; I will be SORRY for my sin” (And indeed he WAS sorry!) This is EXACTLY what the Lord wants of all of us: In Psalm 34:18, the Lord inspired David to say, “Jehovah is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit.” Now, note what the Lord said in Acts 13:22, “—I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who shall do all my will.” Some might say, “Oh, but what about David’s great Sin? Did the Lord overlook THAT?!” The answer is a resounding “YES”; but not until David humbled himself, and repented, sincerely. In Jer. 31:34, the Lord states that He can “willfully” forget sins that are repented of. Here, He says, I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.”

In a certain city where I preached during several years, I “preached my heart out”, as we sometimes say, seeking to awaken a certain man to recognize his sins and to turn himself over to the Lord for cleansing of his sins. He didn’t “budge” —He did not respond. His wife came to me one day and said, “My husband refuses to come to Christ, because of a sin he once committed, for which he does not believe the



Lord would ever forgive him". In John 6:37, a comforting statement is: "He that cometh to Me, I will in NO WISE case out" (and this is from the lips of Him who died for our sins—not just SOME of our sins! Another case: "Neither do I condemn thee; Go and sin no more" (said to a wicked woman who had "made her living" by a sinful occupation—when she humbled herself before the Lord, likely expecting Him to condemn her.

What a Wonderful Lord we have! He died to save us from our past and "present" sins. And He will forgive us of sins we may commit in the future, because of our weaknesses. (This thought ought to cause us to avoid every sin—every temptation—every desire to sin! Read I John 2:1, 2 and Rejoice for such a Lord and Savior! It will enrich your "prayer-life" and enable you to be a blessing to others.

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## **All the way my Savior leads me...**

Madeleine Hickman

(Madeleine Hickman is no stranger to Louisville, having lived here most of her life. A few years ago, she and Brent moved to Rome, Georgia. A bout with cancer took Brent away, and many of Madeleine's friends expressed concern for her future. However, the word that has filtered back from Georgia is that Madeleine has risen above her circumstances. By request, she give us a brief account of how the Lord has been unfolding her life, a page at a time.)

For years I have been concerned about the younger women in the church. When we came here, I was given a class of pre-teens—an ideal age. However, before long I was relieved and wound up with a nursery class. The preacher—with more problems than any of us—was teaching the young marrieds!!!

So after Brent's death I prayed that God would put me where He wanted me, and that's what He did. As much as I didn't want to go back to hospital nursing, that's where He put me. It was the only door open. The way from supervision to bedside nurse was traumatic and I wanted to run—anywhere that was away—but He didn't put me there to run!

Second shift—the Lord's doing, I thought, because I'll have more time with the patients. (They tried for a full year to put me on first shift, and somehow the replacements never worked out!) But that couldn't be; RN's don't see much of the patients. We see to the paperwork and care of the crises.

Then some structural changes were made. A new story was added; the function of my floor changed from surgical to cardiac. Most of my co-workers were transferred; I was left behind to "smooth the transition." Eventually, I too was transferred, with the comment,

“Maybe you can straighten it out.” Nobody ever said what needed straightening. Anyhow, now, nearly two years later, I was asked to return to that floor to fill a vacancy. Again the comment, “Maybe you can straighten it out.” Again, no details.

But a picture is emerging. I’m there for the patients’ benefit—but also for my fellow workers, *young women!* I’m teaching them as the opportunities arise—and they do! (Better than in church!)

An aide on another floor was talking about her problems to a co-worker. The co-worker advised to “talk to Mrs. Hickman,” and she has since September. I keep asking the Lord why He couldn’t give me some easy ones, but like Gideon’s army, He wants the results to be clearly His work. Today she was asking if she should report the marijuana her husband has planted in the yard.

I’ve learned a lot in the last five or six years, but the more I learn, the more certain I am that God keeps His promises—and what we get out of our Christian experience is in direct proportion to the extent of our commitment. I had become confused over the passage that says, “Wives be in subjection to your own husbands.” How can you be committed to the Lord and obedient to a husband who does not see things the same way you do? I’ve never been happier in my life or more excited with the business of just living to see what God is going to “work in me” today!

Once I asked for confirmation that I was in the right place. The going was a little rough. Out of a clear blue sky the director of nurses walked up on the floor, approached me as I answered a patient’s call, and said, “Mrs. Hickman, we’re *glad* to have you on our staff!” At that I was taken aback, but I was really bowled over when the administrator said the same thing less than ten minutes later. I still don’t know what prompted it, but I take it as from the Lord—with all the confirmation I could desire. Only Monday one of the day crew greeted me warmly as I came on duty. “Madeleine, it’s so good to see somebody come in smiling!” (We’re understaffed and the work has been unusually demanding.)

I really don’t know what one person can do in such a large place, but I’m doing “with my might what my hands find to do”—“heartily, as unto the Lord”—and He takes it from there!

Now please don’t (as one dear friend did) write back and berate me for “not loving Brent.” I prayed that God would help me love him God’s way—and He must have! The 28 years I spent with him probably laid the groundwork for the relationship I have with God now. Because I’ve never doubted Brent’s salvation, *grace* has taken on a very personal and much larger dimension.

I have a Jewish friend who says I’m “the only happy person” she knows! She doesn’t realize how hard I’m trying to convert her! She likes to spend time with me because I’m “not!”

I also think there’s a better answer to why people who love the Lord and know He heals are chronically ill. I’m getting bits and pieces.

You didn’t ask for all this but thanks—again—for listening and understanding.

Antoine Valdetero is Minister of the Ave. E. Church of Christ, Crowley, LA.



## **"For Such A Time As This . . ."**

Antoine Valdetero

It is Christmas Eve afternoon, 1981. It is a cold, rainy afternoon in Louisiana. The world celebrates the birth of our Lord. The Prince of Peace was rejected when He came and the world still feels the effect of that rejection. The newscasts today are bleak and foreboding. There is the crisis in Poland; unrest in the Middle East; terrorism plagues the world; in America unemployment is on the rise and inflation erodes one's pay check or savings. To say the least the picture is not bright. Paul wrote to Timothy (II Tim. 3:1, RSV) "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress." What a description of our day!

Added to the uncertain conditions of our day is the fact that many people carry a burden of guilt that literally drains their very strength. Nothing in the world offers peace and hope from without and they have neither peace nor hope within.

An article in a Sunday paper sometime back carried an interesting statement. Professionals who deal with people who have mental problems said that 50% of their patients did not need them but needed a "priest, minister or rabbi." The point is well put that men trained in dealing with mental problems have no solution for those who carry a burden of guilt on their conscience.

Does a guilt-burdened conscience affect one's health? In Psalm 32:3-4 David states that "when I kept silence, my bones wasted away . . . moisture was changed as the drought of the summer." David's mental anguish affected his physical well-being. The conditions of our day well reveal that "the world has nothing left to give" but peace can be found, even in a strife torn world, at the foot of the cross. No doctor, however well trained, has anything to offer that person who is not right with God. The solution to David's problem is found in Psalm 32:5: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity did I not hide." David's physical ailments began to heal when his sin was confessed and his conscience cleared. There is sweet release for the person who comes clean with God. Many try to hide their problems in a bottle of pills but the guilt problem remains. The only remedy for sin and guilt is the blood of Christ.

In contrast to the fearful uncertainty of the world is the sweet, loving call of Jesus: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Not on a doctor's couch nor in a bottle of pills but at the feet of Jesus can the burden be lifted. This

kind of release can only come when there is surrender. We must quit trusting our doctors, our pills and whatever else we think can cure a guilty conscience and turn it all over to Jesus and let Him have His way in our lives. How many might read this article who have no peace within but have been unwilling to turn your case over to the Great Physician. How right is the old song already quoted when it says "The world has nothing left to give; it has no new, no pure delight, O, try the life which Christians live . . ." Behind the blood of Jesus one can find peace that the world cannot offer and hope that cannot be purchased in a bottle of pills. David could exclaim, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." A worsening world situation has nothing like that on its agenda but its all available in Jesus!

The world outlook is indeed bleak. But for every person who has found shelter behind the blood of Jesus that person can say, "The darker the outlook, the brighter the uplook." Can you say that?

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Larry Miles, a member of the Portland Avenue congregation, is working in Cincinnati and has taken classes at Cincinnati Bible Seminary.

## GLEANINGS

Compiled by Larry Miles



### A MIGHTY FORTRESS

A mighty Fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;  
For still our ancient foe, Doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great, And armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our strength confide, Our striving would be losing,  
Were not the right man on our side, The man of God's own choosing;  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus it is He!  
Lord Sabaoth His name, From age to age the same,  
And He must win his Battle.

And tho this world, with demons filled, Should threaten to undo us:  
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:  
The prince of darkness grim—We tremble not for him:  
His rage we can endure, For lo, his doom is sure:  
One little word shall fell him

—Martin Luther

## BELIEVE WHAT GOD SAYS

“I have never known my Lord to say anything He did not mean. I am sure that He may sometimes mean more than we understand Him to say, but He never means less.”

—Charles Haddon Spurgeon

## HOW MAJESTIC IS THE BIBLE!

How majestic is the Bible! how awe-inspiring! how sublime! The Word of God breaks upon you as a voice from heaven. Five hundred times in the Pentateuch it prefaces or concludes its declaration with the sublime assertion, “The Lord said,” or “the Lord spake.” Three hundred times again in the following books does it do the same, and in the books of prophecy twelve hundred times again are our minds impressed with such expressions as “Hear the Word of the Lord,” or “Thus saith the Lord,” or “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Who can resist the stupendous claim and challenge that is presented to every soul that ever lived: “God spake these words and said . . .”

—Twentieth Century Christian

## HOPE'S RAINBOW

Hope's rainbow of glory, resting firm on the Lord,  
Impels us to labor for the fadeless reward:  
Hope's rainbow celestial spans our shores with the land  
Of verdure and blossom (over Jordan) so grand.

Hope's rainbow of promises wafts and anchors the soul  
Within the blest harbor of the Christian's bright goal:  
Hope's rainbow of promise consolation imparts  
When farewells are spoken and we're bowed with sad hearts.

Hope's rainbow of promise cheers and brightens our way  
Through all the dark shadows to the saints' perfect day:  
Hope's rainbow of promise cheers when trials appear,  
And lightens the burdens of our pilgrimage here.

Hope's rainbow of promise sees by faith the glad day  
When praise to Jehovah we'll be singing for aye;  
Hope's rainbow of promises sees by faith the fair dome,  
Where we shall forever be with Jesus at home.

—Flavil Hall

## THE THRONE OF JUDGMENT

The book of Revelation is the great judgment book of the Bible. When John is summoned up into heaven he sees there a throne; and out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. (Rev. 4.) It is not the throne of grace: it is a judgment throne. “He hath prepared His throne for judgment” (Psalm 9:7). A heavy doom is in store for the guilty world below, for the great final clean-up time has come. But there is “One sitting upon the throne; and he that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius; and there was a rainbow round

about the throne like an emerald to look upon.” (Rev. 4:1-3.) There is always that rainbow with its guarantee of mercy and hope. The angel also that lifts up his hand to heaven and reveals that there shall be delay no longer is described as “arrayed with a cloud,” and upon his head “the rainbow”—not a rainbow, but the rainbow of all the ages, the token of God’s ancient covenant and His righteous and merciful dealings with mankind for evermore: “the rainbow was upon his head and his face was as the sun . . .” (Rev. 10:1.)

—R. H. Boll in *Words in Season*

Until next time, MARANATHA!



Joy Garrett

Salisbury, Zimbabwe

December 23rd

We are back in Zimbabwe after a wonderful year spent among the brethren in U.S.A. We thank you all for your hospitality and support.

Last Sunday we were welcomed home by an all day service held at Mufakose Church of Christ by all the Salisbury churches in our fellowship. Robert spoke at the morning service and Brother Patrick Machaya and Agrippa Chivengwa during the afternoon. A different choral group sang at each service from Harare Highfields, and Glen Norah. The singing was excellent. The Mufakose brethren have painted the inside of their building and everything looked so nice. It has been good to see some new faces among the older faithful servants of God that we have known many years.

We have a Shortage of gasohol in the country at present. One must get into long lines to get a small amount of gasohol which sells for the equivalent of \$3:68 (U. S. money) for a U. S. gallon. Diesel is half that price and not so scarce at present.

Please continue to remember the Lord’s Work here in Zimbabwe in your prayers.

## REPRINTS:

### Words in Season

by R. H. Boll

#### THE VALUE OF HOPE

“Rejoicing in hope.” Inseparably connected with the gospel and the true religion of Christ is a hope, firm, and well secured, and grand beyond measure; a hope so sure and steadfast that in view of it

a man can afford to wait and work in patience; so bright and glorious that its light fills the heart with a strange joy, and in foretaste of possession its reflection shines from the countenance. It was God's will so. The joy and peace of that hope reflected in the faces of His chosen ones is God's advertisement. It was His intent to make it so marked and striking that men would stop a Christian and ask him for an explanation of the radiance that illuminated his face; and he exhorts the Christian always to be ready to "give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you." (1 Peter 3:15) And why should it not be so? If any man should some fateful evening fall heir to a million of dollars would it be unreasonable to suppose that his friends next day could read from his expression that a piece of great good fortune had befallen him? But you have inherited more and greater things, ye children of God. And with the inheritance went a writ of assurance, signed by the Almighty God. Yours is "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you"—kept secure and safe; and the meanwhile you who are heirs of it "by the power of God are guarded through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." No wonder, then, that the next line adds: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice." Let a man take true hold of this promise and let it be settled in his heart that God meant it even so, and that it is for him, and the joy will come: a joy indomitable which all the billows of the world's tribulation cannot quench; "though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials." The man learns to "rejoice in tribulations also;" and by working steadfastness and approvedness, his tribulation actually results in increase of hope and happiness. (Rom. 5:3-11; 1 Pet. 1:4-7).

### *THE CAUSE OF LUKEWARMNESS*

Now for one reason or another there are many Christians who have very much more doubt and dread and anxious misgivings than they have hope. Their lives, too, bear testimony to the deficiency, for the lack of hope results in indifference and weariness, in nerveless, half-hearted work, and possibly quite a little worldiness. But although they are wont to attribute their lack of hope to their very great failure in living the Christian life, the fact is the opposite: their failure arises from the lack of hope. For the hope must come first. They either have never whole-heartedly seized upon the hope God has set before them, or have in unbelief or ignorance abandoned it. But it is not written that they who purify themselves as Christ is pure shall have hope, but: "He that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:3.) Hope does assuredly grow, just as naturally as a man's anticipation is heightened as he pursues his way to a certain goal; but a Christian life from the first springs out of this hope, and it is a case of "to him that hath shall be given." Go back, then, and cleanse your heart and your hands, and begin again: let God, through faith in Christ's blood and intercession, make you a free present of that priceless hope again, and then hold it fast, that you may be an advertisement unto him.

## MISREPRESENTATION OF GOD'S GLAD NEWS

The joyless, hopeless, gloomy Christian is a misrepresentation of the gospel (the glad news) of Jesus Christ. He utterly fails in showing forth the praises of God and of making his Lord desirable unto men. For as he "thinketh in his heart, so is he." All over his face and being the legend is written that Christianity is a trouble, a self-torture, a system of making oneself and all around him miserable. Instead of a hope, a severer demand; instead of relief, a heavier burben, an exacting obligation, anxieties, pangs of conscience, naggings of heart, reproach and bitterness! And who would fall in love with such a thing? When Jesus in his wonderful teaching on fruit bearing (John 15) reveals to his disciples the secret of the neverfailing source of all the strength and power they need, the Vine, out of whom all their good fruit must be drawn, it is to these as if he had austere demanded that they of their own barren souls should bear the fruit of heaven, and had wound up by saying, not, "These things I have spoken unto you that your joy may be made full," but, "These things I have spoken to you to make you utterly miserable." They seem to say that Christ's gracious invitation to sinners reads thus: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you toil. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; and ye shall find weariness to your souls. For my yoke is galling and my burden is sore." Is it not so in your case? But if it be, delay not to learn and follow a better gospel. Trust in the Lord and take courage. "O taste and see that Jehovah is good: blessed is the man that taketh refuge in him." Begin by taking refuge in him, by trusting in his salvation. And the same faith by which as a sinner you at first fled to him for refuge will enable you always to obtain mercy, stand in God's grace, rest in his power, and find joy and peace in the hope God has given unto us.

## HOPE VERSUS DELUSION

"Speaking of hope," said a brother, "I knew a man who was leading an ungodly life, and not in the least concerned to do better; but, nevertheless, always maintaining that he would 'go to heaven when he died.' Do you think there was any virtue in that kind of hope?" That was not hope at all; it was merely delusion. And there is a world of that. Not so much of it, perhaps, in the blunt form described above as a various, more plausible, guise. It is Satan's chief object to lead men away from the true hope and give them the false, unfounded one, a hope that putteth to shame. Universalism holds out its lying mirage to the dying souls of men. The "New Thought" and similar cults feed the starving hearts with hollow self-deceived optimism, inducing them to believe that "thoughts are things," and that thinking a thing makes it so, and that to shut one's eyes to evil and ignore the fearful possibilities and expect nothing but good here and beyond is the true way of life. There be many prophets nowadays that heal the hurt of human souls slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace, and who strengthen the hands of the wicked with their lying dreams. But the hope of the Christian is not simply a make-believe, a creation of man's fancy. It is a reality. It is secured by God's word and God's oath, "that by two immutable things, in



which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." (Heb. 6:18.) It rests upon fact, and that whether a man accepts it or not. It is not indiscriminately for any and every man. It is based on righteousness (apart from which there can be no hope)—a righteousness which is freely given to us by God through our faith in Jesus Christ. "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:1, 2.) This, then, is its foundation: First, faith in Christ; then justification (or righteousness) through his blood; thus comes peace with God, and access into God's grace; and then rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. This is, therefore, no flimsy spider web of imagination, but a reality resting on a rock sure and tried, and fit to abide the test of eternity. And finally the true hope is unmistakable in its manifestation. Although it is for the lowest sinner who puts his trust in Jesus, it will not suffer him to live on in sin, but will begin to work a great change. It makes for self-denial and purity of life, it exerts a constant pull; it draws him to God. "Every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:3.) By these marks we may know the true hope of the children of God.

### *LET THEM ALONE*

Once a mayor of New York had come to the conclusion that the Jews should be left alone in their religion, and would not grant permission to the street preachers to preach and proselytize among the Jews. "Do you not think the Jews have a good religion?" he asks. "Have not the Christians appropriated the entire Jewish sacred Scriptures? Was not the New Testament also written entirely by Jews? Was not Jesus also born of the Jewish race?" And so forth. The upshot amounts to this: Why trouble them in their beautiful, pure worship of the one and only true God? Yes, Mayor, if you had lived in the apostles' day, you would, no doubt, have joined the Sadducean court in charging Peter and John not to speak at all any more in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, lest they proselytize the Jews from their beautiful religion. If those brave men had not disobeyed such orders as yours, Mayor, you yourself would never have heard of the name of Jesus Christ. But they preached, at the risk of prison and death, and filled the country with the gospel of Christ, and "proselytized" many, thank God. But the enemies of the gospel went down and perished in darkness, just as you will except you repent.

### *THE DIFFERENCE*

"You are not a whit better than you were ten years ago," said the accusing conscience when the man had had a striking revelation of his evil and his evil possibilities. The soul was downcast and sighed; but turning to Christ, it replied: "I am probably no better; yet I have more hope, for I know God better. I have had dealings with him and he with me. I know how great his resources and how tender his mercies, and how surely he does respond from his throne of grace when we come boldly for help in the time of need. Therefore, 'Re-

joyce not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, Jehovah will be a light unto me.” And this is the only sure, true, and good ground of confidence. “Thus saith Jehovah. Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah who exerciseth lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth.” (Jer. 9:23, 24.)

## **Genesis:**

Edited by Dr. Horace E. Wood

# **The Voice of God's First Prophet to our Dying World**

S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.

The Lord Jesus said that Abel was a prophet (cf. Luke 11:49-51). And the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews said that, though dead, he was still speaking to the generations of men (cf. Heb. 11:4). We can hardly doubt that a speaking prophet would be eminently useful to our age. That is just what we need, a contemporary voice from God. What, then, is it that Abel is saying to us?

To answer the question we have to turn to the story of Abel, found in the fourth chapter of the Book of Genesis, the book of beginnings. Its context is set in the midst of a very naturally unfolding account of the early history of the race. In the first chapter the record of the creation of the universe is found. In the second chapter the emphasis moves to the probation of newly created man. And, then, in the fateful chapter three the fall of man is described, with the resulting judgments upon the serpent, the woman, and the man. So, in the fourth chapter we are introduced to the career of the world as it abides under the curse of God. In chapter three the figure behind the serpent is the devil, but in chapter four, while his influence is discernible, the emphasis rests upon the other members of the triumvirate of evils, the world and the flesh. The depth of the fall appears in the fratricide of Cain. The sin of unbelief has now gone through its cycle of rebellion to immorality.

Several points need attention. In the first place, it is clear that man does not want to walk with God under the guidance of His Word. In the second place, the race is unable to unite around the Protevangelium of Genesis 3:15 and find its destiny established by the divine promise of the coming Seed. And, finally, it is clear that the prophecy of the warfare between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman has already begun to be fulfilled. Cain's act is the visible evidence of the declaration of war. He becomes the first soldier in the army of the enemy, for he "was of the evil one" (cf. 1 John 3:13).

The fourth chapter of Genesis has great significance for the history of mankind, and the ignoring of it has led to a false and inaccurate

understanding of our past. The common man's view of human history as a long development from the cave-man stage to modern enlightened humanity is a very distorted view of things. Leupold comments, "For man not only did not start on the low anthropoid or simian state that is usually assumed, but as a human being he at once stood on the high intellectual and physical level that the preceding chapters described. But, unfortunately, the actual degradation that sin brought is not reckoned with. Whereas man was not an inferior being on a lower level, such writing of history degrades him without warrant. Whereas he was brought low by the Fall, this pseudo-science ignores his true degradation." The men of the days of Adam were not rude savages, but men of considerable technological and intellectual achievement, as the latter part of the chapter will indicate.

But now we turn to the story of Cain and Abel to learn what God's first prophet is saying to modern man. It is an important, in fact, a supremely important message.

### THE CONCEPTION OF CAIN AND ABEL

*The conception of Cain and Eve's comment* (Gen. 4:1). After the mention of the cherubim and their barring of the way to the tree of life, the account returns to Adam and his story, "Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a man-child with the help of the Lord.' "

The words, "had relations with," are the rendering of a Hebrew word that means literally, *to know*. Adam *knew* his wife Eve. The word is a common euphemism for sexual union, and it effectively conveys the deeply personal level of a true sexual union between a man and a woman. Its true lofty content, however, can be lost in descriptions of distorted unions (cf. 19:5).

Eve's comment is, "I have gotten a man-child with Yahweh." The verb, "I have gotten," means *I have acquired*, or perhaps *I have made*, or *created*, if its derivation is from an old Canaanite root, as many modern scholars believe. Cf. Deut. 32:6; Gen. 14:19, 22; Psa. 115:15; 139:13; Prov. 8:22. Its is unlikely, however, that Eve was making a boast of her generative power.

The name *Cain* is from the verb translated by "gotten," but only from an archaic root. It means *acquisition*. She named him Qayin from the root *qanah* in its archaic form. It was a play on words, of course.

The expression, "with the help of the Lord," is literally, *with the Lord*, her statement then being, *I have gotten a man-child, the Lord*, as if she thought that the birth of Cain was the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, Cain being the promised divine Seed. The translation is not possible grammatically. Eve is simply referring to God's role in the birth. It was by His power that she was enabled to conceive and deliver, and in this respect it was a true cry of faith, just as in verse twenty-five. The attitude of the woman lifts the purely natural to its true spiritual level. Cf. 1 Tim. 4:4-5. Stigers refers to her words as expressing "her community in creativity."

*The conception of Abel and Moses' comment* (Gen. 4:2). Abel's name means *breath, vapor* or *vanity*. Those who see the reference

to Messiah in Eve's words regarding Cain point to the naming of Abel as proof of disillusionment in the meantime. It is more likely that Eve has now become more acquainted with the fact that human life now stands under the divine curse. She sees, with her husband, that the creation has been subjected to vanity, and this calls forth the name of Abel (cf. Rom. 8:20).

The Mosaic comment regarding the occupations of the two sons does not in any way imply the inferiority of the one to the other (cf. 2:15; 3:17-18, 21, 23).

#### THE OBLATIONS OF CAIN AND ABEL

*The offering of Cain* (Gen. 4:3). Evidently there was a regular time for the men to approach the Lord in worship, and probably there was a regular place, perhaps at the entrance into the Garden of Eden. It is my opinion also that they had been instructed in the way of approach to the Lord, by example (cf. 3:21) and by Word (Cf. 11:4). It is even possible, although the Bible does not say this, that a kind of mercy seat had been set up at the gateway into the Garden, for the cherubim, who overshadowed the mercy seat in the tabernacle later, were there.

The "offering" is the rendering of a Hebrew word that in Leviticus refers to a meal offering (cf. Lev. 2:1, 4, 14, 15), but in other places may refer to an offering of an animal (cf. 1 Sam. 2:17). In this case it is clear that it refers to an offering of an animal, for it is used of Abel's oblation, too. While it may be the part of wisdom to stress only lightly the fact that Cain's offering was not a bloody one and Abel's was, we must still note the fact. The remainder of the Bible, it seems to me, does permit mention of it and the attachment of a measure of meaning to it. We, of course, admit that the type of offering is not the only standard by which an offering is to be judged (cf. Mal. 1:8, 13).

*The offering of Abel* (Gen. 4:4a). The offering of Abel from the flock was most likely a lamb, but some stress also rests upon the excellency of it. It included the best of the flock, the firstlings, and the best parts, the fat parts. One sees in this an indication of the desire of Abel to glorify his Creator by an acknowledgment of His worth. He deserves the best of everything. It was an offering made in faith, it is clear.

#### THE RECEPTION OF THE OFFERING BY THE LORD

*The reception of Abel's offering* (Gen. 4:4b). "And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering." The words refer to the reception of Abel's sacrifice. The verb rendered, "had regard," means *to look upon with favor*. And it is to be noted that the Lord looked with favor upon Abel and upon his offering. The approval is directed to the person first, and then to the sacrifice. We must be careful here. That does not mean that God is totally uninterested in the kind of sacrifice that is brought. What is meant is that a true sacrifice is made when the offerer offers in faith the prescribed sacrifice. The prescribed sacrifice is of no value, if not offered in faith, and the wrong sacrifice, when instruction have been given regarding the right one, is one not made in faith. Cf. Psa. 40:6-8; Lev. 10:1-3.

Motivated by faith (cf. Rom. 10:17), then, Abel offered a lamb (cf. Gen. 3:21). If faith comes by hearing, and Paul says that, and if Abel offered in faith, and the writer of Hebrews says that, we must conclude that Abel had been instructed in the proper way to approach God. It is reasonable to assume that God had done this when He sent the first family out of the Garden of Eden. Abel's offering was an offering by faith that worked, that is, by a true faith (cf. Jas. 2:14-26). His offering revealed several things.

(1) First, it revealed a knowledge of the state of man, for the approach to God was only through an animal sacrifice. Man was worthy of death, and Abel's offering was an acknowledgment of that (cf. Isa. 59:12). There is a story about Henry Ward Beecher and a clock, the key words of which are, "Don't blame my hands; the trouble lies deeper." A clock that will not run illustrates the nature of man's needs.

(2) Second, as we have said, his offering revealed his faith (cf. Heb. 10:38; 11:4-6), and without that there is no pleasing of God.

(3) Third, in his offering there was an assent to the concept of a blood sacrifice. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," the Bible says (cf. Heb. 9:22). As difficult to understand as that may be for some, the proper response is to believe, not reject the idea, and then to ask God for an explanation. It will no doubt come. He who holds the seas in the hollow of His hands and grasps the winds in His fists must always be incomprehensible in part to dust!

*The reception of Cain's offering* (Gen. 4:5). The look of Jehovah upon Cain's offering was one of disfavor. How this was manifested we do not know. Tradition has it that the favor of God was manifested upon Abel's offering in that fire consumed it. The account seems more personal, and I am inclined to believe that a theophany had taken place, and the look of disfavor came from the face of the divine being. Why the disfavor? Let me suggest some of the following things:

(1) First, Cain's offering suggests that he had religion without righteousness. He came in "the way of Cain" (cf. Jude 11), that is, not without an offering at all, but with the wrong offering in the wrong spirit. He came in his own way. He had religion—he did bring an offering to the Lord—but that was all the reality that he had. It is a startling thing to contemplate, but the first murder was the outcome of a "church meeting." One always knows a man best outside of church, not inside it. Someone has said, "A minister sees the best side of a man, the lawyer the worst, and the physician the real man." Thus, Cain slew his brother when the meeting was over, and that is the true measure of his piety.

(2) Second, Cain's offering is a revelation of the disobedience of faith (cf. Gen. 4:5, 7; 3:17; 1 John 3:12). His works were evil, for he was of the evil one and brought of the products of the cursed ground contrary to instructions. There was something wrong in his heart, but it manifested itself in his offering.

(3) Third, he evidently was guilty of trust in human works. He offered the "fruit of the ground" (cf. 3:17). He had the same nature,

the same environment, the same knowledge, and the same opportunities that Abel had, so far as we know, but oh! how different the response to his privileges.

It is striking that the writer to the Hebrews traces Abel's acceptance to the offering that he brought, contrary to the opinion of a number of Old Testament commentators. In Hebrews 11:4 we read, "By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying ABOUT HIS GIFTS, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks." True, it was the faith that led to the sacrifice, but God desired both the faith and the proper sacrifice, for the latter is the evidence of the genuineness of the former. The ultimate difference was not in the fact that Abel was not a sinner, and Cain was. Both were sinners. But Cain refused to acknowledge his need as represented by the bleeding sacrifice, while Abel did. Thus, the former's deeds were evil, while the latter's were righteous (cf. I John 3:12).

That was the difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians on the night that the destroying angel came through. The avenging angel was prevented from destroying the firstborn in the homes of those who had put the blood upon the door. It was the blood that marked out the faithful from the unfaithful. Their faith saved them, but it was manifested by the act of putting the blood upon the door posts and the lintel.

#### THE ADMONITION OF CAIN BY THE LORD

*The interrogation* (Gen. 4:6-7a). The following section is a record of the Lord's appeal to reason and an evidence of His concern for His creatures. Cain is asked, Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? These are words intended to cause Cain to examine his condition and to repent and believe, for he had become hot over his rejection (cf. v. 5b). The Hebrew puts it, *it burned Cain exceedingly!*

And "if you do well" of verse seven is clearly a reference to the bringing of the right offering in the right spirit. The lifting up of the fallen countenance signifies an acceptance before the Lord.

*The instruction* (Gen. 4:7b-c). On the other hand, unbelief shall lead to ultimate destruction. Sin is pictured as a crouching beast ready to devour its prey, and it is eager to be at Cain, for its desire is toward him.

There are two ways of rendering the last part of verse seven, due to the fact that the word translated by "sin" here is a noun that also may mean *sin-offering*. In some translations the following rendering is found, "If you do well, will you not be acceptable? And if you do not well, it is because sin is lying at the door like a crouching beast, ready to spring on you; and to you is sin's desire, but you should rule over it" (cf. RSV; ASV).

Others render, "If you do not well, even then there is a sin-offering ready to hand for use as a propitiation. And not only so, but Abel, your brother, will submit himself to you as the first-born, and you shall exercise your right of authority over him." This is obviously a free paraphrase, but the sense is that intended by the rendering that con-

strues the word as meaning *sin-offering*. The former rendering is to be preferred.

The verse closes, then, with an appeal to Cain to respond in faith and receive acceptance, or to risk ultimate domination by the beast of sin (cf. Rom. 6:16).

### THE FRATRICIDE OF CAIN

*The arrangement of the meeting* (Gen. 4:8a). The opening words of verse eight are quite abrupt and hard to grasp if the usual meaning of the verb translated by "told" is understood. For example, the NASB has, "And Cain told Abel his brother," and one wants to ask, "What?" Many attempts have been made in the versions and commentaries to supply the missing information. The text says simply, if the common meaning of the verb is taken, *And Cain said to his brother Abel*. There is, however, Arabic usage of the same root that throws light upon the passage. The root may refer to an appointed place. Thus it is possible that the verb here in Hebrew may mean, *And Cain appointed a place to meet Abel his brother*.

*The assault upon Abel* (Gen. 4:8b). Cain, part of the serpent's seed (cf. 1 John 3:12), commits the first premeditated murder, and it became the first attempt to prevent the accomplishment of the incarnation-atonement work of God in man. Instead of accepting God's admonition, he defies it and plunges further into sin. The cycle of sin is complete. It has begun in unbelief, moved on to rebellion, and reached its conclusion in immorality.

What, then, does Abel the prophet say to our dying world? In the first place, there is no union among men around the promise of the coming Seed (cf. Gen. 3:15). But, in the second place, he does preach by his actions the necessity of sacrifice for the satisfaction of sins, the necessity of faith as the means of acceptance through the divine way of approach to God. Abel's status is confirmed by the Lord, the Apostle John, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, all of whom affirm that he was righteous (cf. Matt. 23:35; 1 John 3:12; Heb. 11:4).

A well-known teacher once said, "Death is never the last word in the life of a righteous man." That saying has been fulfilled in the life of Abel.

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## Answers to the Prophecy Knowledge Quiz

by Dr. David R. Reagan

- 1) The first prophecy in the Bible is recorded in Genesis 3:15 where God says He will defeat Satan through the "seed of woman."
- 2) The last prophecy in the Bible is the one spoken by Jesus in Revelation 22:20 – "Surely I am coming soon."
- 3) The oldest Man-given prophecy in the Bible is recorded in Jude 14-15. It is a prophecy by Enoch regarding the second coming of the Lord.
- 4) The prophecy that gives the timing of the Lord's first coming is Daniel's prophecy of the 70 Weeks of Years, recorded in Daniel 9:24-27.

- 5) The prophecy that gives the timing of the Lord's second coming is found in Hosea 5:15-6:2. It says that the Lord will return to "raise us up" after "two days." Note that in Psalm 90:4 and in II Peter 3:8 we are told that to the Lord, a thousand years is as a day.
- 6) The test of a true prophet is found in Deut. 18:22. The test is 100% accuracy.
- 7) We are exhorted to treat prophecy with respect in I Thess. 5:20.
- 8) Peter tells us that angels long to know the meaning of the prophecies. See I Peter 1:10-12.
- 9) God identifies His knowledge of the future as one of His unique attributes in Isaiah 46:9-11.
- 10) In II Peter 1:19 we are told that prophecy is like a "lamp shining in a dark place."
- 11) Revelation 19:10 identifies Jesus as the focal point of prophecy.
- 12) In Revelation 5 Jesus is referred to as both a Lion and a Lamb.
- 13) Paul says in Romans 8:18-23 that all of creation is "groaning in travail" in anticipation of the resurrection and the return of Jesus for at that time the creation will "be set free from its bondage to decay."
- 14) Isaiah 66:7-8 presents the dramatic portrayal of the rebirth of the nation of Israel in one day.
- 15) Ezekiel 44:1-3 tells us that the Eastern Gate of Jerusalem will someday be closed and will remain closed until the Prince returns. (It was closed 500 years ago and is still closed today.)
- 16) Ezekiel 47 contains the exciting story of the rebirth of the Dead Sea that will take place during the Millennium.
- 17) The modern scientific principle of "uniformitarianism" is prophesied in II Peter 3:3-4. This concept is contrary to the scriptural teaching of special creation and cataclysm.
- 18) Daniel prophesies that there will be a great explosion of knowledge in the end times (Dan. 12:4).
- 19) The principle of "progressive illumination" is taught in several places in scripture. See Dan. 12:4 & 9 and also Jer. 30:24, Hosea 14:9, Matt. 10:26-27, and John 16:13. This principle means that prophecy will be more fully understood the closer we get to the time of its fulfillment.
- 20) In Isaiah 50:6 it is prophesied that the Messiah's beard will be plucked out. There is no specific mention in the New Testament of the fulfillment of this prophecy, but it was undoubtedly one of the tortures that our Lord had to endure at the hands of the Roman soldiers.

## NEWS AND NOTES

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

The Gallatin Church of Christ, 150 East Main Street, Gallatin, Tennessee is seeking a full time youth minister. Any one interested in the position should

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