

THE WORD AND WORK

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

Wm. Robert Heid, Editor

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Robert Held is a minister in Louisville, Kentucky.



God's Family

W. R. H.

WHEN DOES LIFE BEGIN?

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.—Jesus

One of the greatest legal, biological, moral, and theological questions of many years has been thrust upon the people of this generation, as they try to convince themselves and one another as to the exact time that human life begins. Planned parenthood lecturers hold that life is not really to be considered until such time as it can be viable (able to live) outside of the mother's womb. Some in the medical profession would like to go even farther, and state that the first few days of infancy indicate whether a life is potentially "meaningful" and how it should be valued. A few good passages from God's Word, however, ring loud and clear. To Jeremiah, God said: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee." (Jer. 1:5) David spoke, in Psalm 139:13, "Thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb." And, again, "Lo, children are a heritage of Jehovah, and the first fruit of the womb is His reward." Ps. 127:3. Speaking of the restoration of Israel, God spoke figuratively, "shall I bring to the birth, and not bring forth? saith Jehovah: shall I that cause to bring forth shut the womb, saith thy God?" (Isa. 66:9).

The question as to when human life begins may be a social and political issue with the people of the world, but it is of moral, theological, and spiritual magnitude to the Christian. God is sovereign in this matter.

But let us consider the 'New Birth' about which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus. We have tended to set up an order of events, as we understand them to have occurred in the various cases of salvation recorded in the book of Acts. Some have found three main steps. Others list five or six, usually counting them upon the fingers of the hand. E.g., (1) Hearing the word, (2) Belief, (3) Repentance, (4) Confession of Jesus, (5) Baptism, (6) Receiving of the Holy Spirit. Putting the various accounts of conversions side by side, I think few will disagree with the components that are enumerated here. Further, we may quite well agree that this is the probable order of events in the normal conversion experience.

Now the question arises: At what specific point does the convert become a child of God? Where can we draw the fine line between being "dead in sin" and "alive in Christ Jesus"? Suppose that the

steps were not taken in the exact rotation as set out above, (assuming that we all agree that the order given above is correct)? Am I obliged to write down the order in which I developed in my birth, so that I can present it to some church council for approval? I might not know for sure that I had sufficient faith before I repented. Surely I hadn't heard nearly enough of the Word to meet my needs to fully repent. Was my growing faith in God sufficient to be called "saving faith" when I stepped forward to accept Jesus? Thanks to many good Christian teachers and a Christian home, I had advantages that many others did not receive.

As a case in point, there are many areas where teaching concerning the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is nil. Some even define the Holy Spirit as the printed Bible, saying that "it can be bought in any bookstore." Many in such congregations could say with the disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19:2) "We did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given (mgn. Whether there is a Holy Spirit)" Their ignorance of the Holy Spirit was a serious flaw, as there was also a flaw in their water baptism. Their teacher (evidently Apollos) had the same flaw until he was "taught the way of God more accurately." But we must notice that these were all called disciples before and afterward. Who am I to judge the servant of another? But to lead into the truth, that is another matter.

When John baptized Jesus in the Jordan river, then the Holy Spirit descended in the bodily form of a dove, and sat upon Him, and the voice of God acknowledged Him as His beloved Son. This should help us place the time of the normal "coming of the Holy Spirit" into us. Other scriptures seem to bear out this point in time. Being raised (from waters) to walk in newness of life implies that new life within has been granted. Yet we know that God can make exceptions to His own "rules", as He did in the household of Cornelius, when the Holy Spirit fell upon them in baptismal fulness, even before they were baptized in water.

Two of the "steps of salvation" that are often overlooked are given in Romans 10:9, "because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." These requirements for righteousness and salvation are not different from what has already been taught us, but they are more explicit, and indicate that we are making our calling and election sure. The confessing of Jesus as Lord means that my new life in Christ is showing submission to His lordship from day to day. Believing in my heart "that God raised Him from the dead" demands that my faith grow to include that greatest of all tenets, the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Continued hearing the word of Christ, and the illumination from the Holy Spirit are fundamental.

When does the new life in Christ pin-point its beginning? Are all cases alike? Is mine the norm that all others must measure up to? I do remember that it started with fear and trembling, then help from God, and finally much Joy in the Holy Spirit as I emerged from the baptistry. Do we have to pin-point it? God knows when to write the names in His book of life.

Jack Blaes preaches at the Antioch Church, Frankfort, Ky. and teaches at the Portland Christian School in Louisville.



Viewing the News

Jack Blaes

WHILE I HAD HEARD THE RUMOR concerning Procter and Gamble making sizeable contributions to the church of Satan, I did not report on it because I didn't have even the slightest bit of substantiation about it. I'm glad that I didn't report it, and I'm glad to be able to tell you that The National Federation for Decency reports that they have checked this out to the best of their ability and have not been able to find anyone who actually saw the program from which the rumor is said to have sprung. NFD has contacted P & G and assure their readers that it is nothing more than a rumor.

THE JURY IN THE HINCKLEY TRIAL FOUND HIM TO BE innocent by reason of insanity. Many people are appealing to the Congress to bring about an immediate reform of the laws regarding legal insanity. This may be something that readers of the **Word and Work** may engage in. Your congressman needs to hear from his constituents, and particularly those who stand for right and against wrong.

THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES has ruled that the state of Texas must provide free schooling for the children of illegal aliens within the borders of the state. I hope that no one will say that to be against that ruling makes one against children or education. I am bothered, though, that the people of a sovereign state are forced to spend money for which they have spent (I hope) a fair part of themselves to obtain in a way that they may not freely wish to. I have been brought up to believe that one of this country's most outstanding values is freedom. Basic to freedom is the right of the individual to enjoy the fruits of his labor.

A sure sign of the loss of freedom is when a man's labor is forced to an end he has no power to direct.

THE EMOTION OF FEAR MAY BE OUR DESTRUCTION. I speak out of concern about the widespread fright campaign being carried on ostensibly to save the world from nuclear suicide. The ramifications of the phenomenon merit more than in-passing mention in this column. Without doubt, today's nuclear weapons pack a far greater potential for death and destruction than those of W.W. II. A realization of this devastating power, the various estimates of the numbers of these weapons held by the two great world powers, and the manifold descriptions of their malignant possibilities are enough to strike fear into the heart of any normal human being. This natural fear is being compounded by an over abundance of demonstrations, speakers, pamphlets, film presentations (very effective to show the "mushroom") on the subject, supplemented by the considerable impact of the mass media. The conclusion to all this is to call for—demand—a "nuclear freeze." The idea is for an American-Soviet agreement to stop all production, deployment, and testing of nuclear weapons. Some take a further step: Let The United States do it even if the Soviet Union will not.

ONE THING THAT MAKES ONE APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE PROMOTERS of the nuclear freeze philosophy is their unwillingness to admit to an option of any kind to their solution of the problem. Almost to a Ms, there are no two ways about it, the only way to survival is the nuclear freeze route. It is not a fact that we are boxed into a situation that is either

this or destruction. If there is an enemy, any enemy would have an advantage if he could make his enemy think so. Like the bank robber who holds a little bottle up telling the teller that it contains a highly explosive chemical, and unless he is handed a large sum of money, he will set it off and blow them to "kingdom come." That's a bad situation, and, if I were the teller, I'd think it the "better part of valor" to comply. Since we are being told that we, in effect, must surrender, or we will be responsible for the disaster that will follow, I think of the U.S. as being the teller, and the Soviet Union as the robber. However, I do not believe that we should surrender. For one thing, I do not believe the promises of peace which is supposed to come upon the earth when we lay down our arms. It simply is not the communist way of doing things.

THE SOVIETS HAVE PROVED THAT THEY ARE TOTALLY UNTRUSTWORTHY. Since our first treaty with them in 1933 they have broken one promise after another as it became evident that it was to their advantage to do so. In 1933 they solemnly pledged to refrain from spreading Communist propaganda and from sponsoring anti-American activity within our borders. From the moment it was signed it was apparent that they had no intentions of living up to their word. They did the same thing regarding their agreement under the Lend-Lease agreement in 1942. And we could give documentation for many such instances in which they have shown themselves to be deceivers, agreeing to things which would make for peaceful relationships, only to disregard them to take advantage of us.

ONE THING THE PROMOTERS OF FREEZE ADVANCE is that the Soviets are fearful of the United States. This is very difficult to swallow when we know that it has been through the generosity of America that the Communists have been able to build up its threatening arsenal of nuclear weapons. Realistic analysts are assured that it has only been because the United States has supplied and continues to furnish equipment, technology, and credit that significantly contributes to the mighty military power of the Soviets that they have been able to reach and maintain this unprecedented military height.

Why should they fear one who has been and still is their great benefactor? **THOSE WHO ARE AGITATING FOR THIS NUCLEAR FREEZE** imply, if they do not come right out and say so, that it is the military posture of America that is menacing the world. Are these who pose as peace loving people ignorant of the insatiable hunger which swallows up nation after nation, and is on record as existing to destroy all other existing governments, and make the entire world communist? Maybe they just don't believe it. But we can't deny what our eyes see, unless we have the death wish.

WE MUST BE AWARE THAT THE PRIME MOVER OF THIS so-called peace offensive is the World Peace Council. The WPC is controlled in every respect by the Soviet Union, and is doing what it is doing for the advantage of the Marxists. President Reagan expressed it this way—the WPC was "bought and paid for by the Soviet Union." There are a number of other Communist and radical groups leading out in this movement. Not all the people involved are Communists, but it is clearly a Communist movement.

RATHER THAN ACCEPT THE COMMUNIST SOLUTION OF THIS problem, America should cut off immediately all aid to every Communist country of any size or condition. By all aid I mean financial, agricultural, military, and technical. We should extend aid as needed to any country which is under harassment of any Communist oppressor. Let us give up as futile the making of agreements of any kind with men who boast and demonstrate that they promise only to betray.

LET US BE EVER MINDFUL THAT BEFORE ALL IS SAID AND done, our problem is essentially spiritual. And so, "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils." "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." It seems that America has turned to Humanism with all the ungodliness of the pagan civilizations of the ancients. If God should spare us from the judgments to come unless we will have repented, He would have to be embarrassed to face Sodom and Gomorrah. These days call for increased activities in the fulfillment of the Great Commission with very much prayer.

Ernest Lyon is a professor of music at the University of Louisville, and an elder and minister of the Highland Church of Christ in Louisville.



THOUGHTS FROM ROMANS

Ernest E. Lyon

“Declared Righteous — For Eternity”

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1, 2; NASB)

The two verses quoted above from the New American Standard Bible introduce so much that is important that we could not possibly cover all of the thoughts in them. Add to that the fact that chapter 5 introduces a four-chapter-long division of the book and you see that we can only begin to touch on the material in this one article.

Through 3:20 Paul, after his introduction, had shown the impossibility of any saving himself. Beginning with 3:21 he had shown how God had made provision that any guilty sinner could come to Him and be declared righteous—through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary. He had shown how this was entirely by faith, not by works, not by rituals, and not in any way from keeping the Law. The next concern of the believer would naturally be—“How can I keep such a great salvation?” In these chapters (five through eight) Paul goes to great detail to show that we now have a hope that will not end in disappointment (5:5), that is as sure as Jesus Christ is the Son of God, for we are identified with Him (5:12-21) (the great subject of these chapters), that we have been identified with Him in death and in resurrection to new life (6:5), that sin shall not have dominion over us (6:14), that the free gift of God is *eternal* life in Christ Jesus (6:23), that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus (8:1), that nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (8:39), and so on throughout the chapters. Jesus Himself had stated it simply in John 27-29—“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.” I realize that many have taken these simple assuring statements and drawn from them by human reasoning a lot of “therefores” that have given the subject a bad name, but we can not lose

the wonderful assurance of these chapters simply because someone else thinks they say things they don't. We do not have to wait until the end of this life to know that we have eternal life. We have it now by faith because God by His grace has given it to us.

In the remaining space this month let us then confine ourselves to looking at one great thought from Romans 5:1—we have peace with God. This is the result of having been justified (declared righteous) by faith. The faith in God's working for us in Christ that had us declared righteous also took us out of our natural enmity with God, so that we come not into judgment but have passed out of death into life (John 5:24).

Now please do not confuse, as many commentators seem to do, peace *with* God and the peace *of* God. Philippians 4:6, 7 set forth that wonderful peace that God sends from Himself to our hearts to guard us when we quit trying to handle our problems ourselves and bring them to Him, but here in Romans 5:1 we are speaking of a peace between us and God, an entering into a status of entree to Him that precludes any fear. We are at peace with Him and we now have access to Him at any and all times. We don't have to have others pray and fast for us as Queen Esther did when she went uninvited before the King; we are part of the inner circle that is welcome at any time and we ought always to keep before us the wonderful fact that we are in Him and He is in us. Again may I remind you that we did nothing to deserve this. It is by grace through faith just as our being justified was and an immediate direct result of that justification. It is the one outside of Christ who has to find (in Christ) the means (by faith) of being justified and then of being placed into the great peace of which we are speaking. How could anything bother us now when we are on the side of the One Who has all power and all authority, the One Who created and Who sustains all things!

But before stopping our thoughts about this subject for the moment, could I ask you if you have truly been "declared righteous without a cause on your part by God's unmeritable favor through the buying back from the power of sin that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God set forth to be our sin sacrifice through faith in His blood"? (Free translation to show the full meaning of Romans 3:24-25a). If you have not, then come to Him. If you have done this already, realize you are at peace with God and live in His presence with joy.

Tension and Ambiguity in Early Disciple Thought and Practice

Part II

Dale A. Jorgenson

The first part of this article was an attempt to highlight the tension indigenous to the two cardinal principles of the early reformers of the Restoration Movement. Those two principles included a strong state-

ment that the Church of Jesus Christ on earth should be and actually *was* one. The second principle included an emphasis on restoration of the New Testament Church with an implied set of principles on which that restoration could be achieved. It was suggested earlier that when individuals with differing theological backgrounds attempted to “restore” the New Testament Church based on the scriptures, disagreement and inevitably division resulted. Thus the first and the second principles were, in the final analysis, opposed to each other in human practice, even though Thomas Campbell in his *Declaration and Address* had believed that the second principle would ultimately help bring about the first one.

This part of the article will suggest that, in addition to the *tension* between what turned out to be opposing principles, the reformers invited a great deal of *ambiguity* in the principles they proposed for scriptural exegesis: the often-quoted proposal of Thomas Campbell, “Where the scriptures speak, we speak; where the scriptures are silent, we are silent.”

The problem which the Campbells and others encountered almost immediately with this brave proposal was the eternal need to define terms: “what does the silence of the scriptures mean?”

One answer, and one which I believe the Campbells favored in many questions, was based upon the old Scottish Common-Sense philosophy and perhaps some of the rationalistic emphasis of the English philosopher, John Locke. In opinions, certainly God gave human intelligence in sufficient measure for people to pursue Christian answers. Alexander Campbell and other editors of his generation placed a heavy emphasis upon the scriptural knowledgability of people in the churches, and in the early years of the movement it would seem evident that this apparently sensible policy prevailed in their thinking.

The other answer was one which seems to me to have grown in acceptance by Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott, and the conservative wing of the movement throughout the nineteenth century. This solution was, *in the silence of the scriptures, do nothing.*

A parallel attitude which seems to have grown up with the Restoration Movement includes a low toleration level for ambiguity. What some psychological systems call *homeostasis*, the drive to closure or resolution of uncertainty, seems to be strongly entrenched in the assumptions of the conservative half of the movement. I remember clearly that as an undergraduate in a Church of Christ college I imbibed the hope from my peers and at least implicitly from some of my teachers that some day, when I had grown and studied the Word long enough, I could come up with instant answers to any religious question which I might encounter. The fact that there were gray areas in my understanding I attributed to my lack of sufficient Bible study and not just to the fact that there might be areas of human life which would remain ambiguous even after disciplined study of the Word!

The Introduction to a book by a fine preacher who was among my teachers illustrates this confidence:

In presenting this volume to the public the author makes no apology, for he holds the strong conviction that he has taught the truth upon the questions

discussed and he has never yet apologized for any truth... as truth is eternal these lessons will not go out of date. This is the author's conviction.

Further underlining his confidence in his own understanding, but with a strong Christian spirit of friendly controversy, this author continues:

The author is still ready to defend any position taken. He does not, however, expect to have a controversy with everyone who may criticize him or differ from him on minor or nonessential points. He rather invites such criticisms. He does not claim perfection in anything, but he sincerely believes he is right in any position he takes; otherwise he would not take it.

The difficulty in accepting uncertainty in doctrine or biblical teaching on a given subject, and certainly the discomfort sometimes involved in a Christian's not knowing exactly what choice to take about an issue or an opportunity, are not easy lessons, but may be part of growing spiritual maturity. Jesus apparently had learned to accept some ambiguity Himself when He told the disciples, "But of that day and hour no one knows not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." The latter-day demand that one must "take a stand" on almost any conceivable issue relating to the Bible or the church underlines the low tolerance level for ambiguity endemic to historic Disciples of Christ. The opposite ways of understanding the silence of the scriptures may well constitute one of the principle reasons for the fracturing of the Restoration Movement into so many movements and counter-movements. Yet, the original intent was to avoid creedalism and an air of authority for a position which actually had no solid scriptural authority. In this sense, the position represented a further development of the sixteenth-century Reformation by Luther and Calvin.

One problem with the Common-Sense approach to the silence of scripture is that human rationalism can easily overcome scriptural discipline. This is the method of humanistic religion, and churches and individuals are tempted to go beyond revelation in their own intellectual strength. Some of the late-nineteenth-century "splits" in the Disciple movement came through what the Conservatives called "innovations" by the liberal party in carrying out common-sense answers to problems: how to maintain communication in the movement through delegate conventions (favored by Campbell himself as the first president of the association), how to send missionaries (societies versus direct sponsorship), or how to best worship the Lord (choirs, organs, and a musical "ministry") versus the more pure and literal New Testament authorization for singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. It would seem to me that the Christian Churches, and particularly the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) have primarily leaned toward the Common-Sense answer to the problem of the silence of scripture.

The second approach also spawns unspiritual seed and anti-Christian attitudes: If the scriptures do not detail the answer, don't move at all. This rigid approach essentially implies that the Spirit does not work with contemporary Christians in developing responses to current needs, and leads to an unspiritual and humanistic approach to Christian living. This attitude is what I call the "cookie-cutter

approach” to restoration: the package of the first-century church should be literally imposed on all generations without adjustment for a change in time or condition. No wonder that the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit has not only been neglected but is almost feared by some of the practitioners of this policy!

The list of problems which have resulted from our “ambiguities” in the silence of the scripture is long and growing; church organization (or lack of it), support for missions (or lack of it), approach to administering the Lord’s Supper (number of cups and other problems), use (or lack of use) of supplemental literature in Bible study, located preachers (or “ministers” or “evangelists”) with congregations, ordination by single congregations or groups of churches together, support of orphaned children and elderly people, the church’s relationship to politics in a free society or one not free, use of responsive readings in worship, dedication of children and their parents (or lack of it), use of music, place of weddings in church, and so on ad. inf.

The acceptance of ambiguity in these matters and the loving understanding of differing Christians might make it possible to realize the Restoration fathers’ original ideal of unity; the rigid insistence upon either principle or the other in regard to the silence of scripture has already contributed to the insulation of three or four major groups which hardly recognize each others’ family relationship.

The long-standing nature of Disciples’ low tolerance for the unresolved nature of some questions is underlined by a note in Dr. Robert Richardson’s *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*. Speaking of Barton Warren Stone, a respected brother in Kentucky but one who was still regarded with some caution by the Virginia Disciples, Richardson says of Brother Stone:

Mr. Stone possessed a mind disposed to inquiry, but one which could not long endure a state of indecision or perplexity, and must therefore soon settle down upon whatever view seemed to him simplest and the most satisfactory. But the wonderful problem, how an infinitely just and holy God could forgive sin in harmony with His character, was not one to be resolved into a form so simple as to be fully comprehended by man’s finite understanding; neither was it to be disposed of by omitting to consider it at all.

Whether Richardson made a fair assessment of Stone’s mental state or not, the implication seems clear that what is advocated here is the ability to accept some of God’s apparent paradoxes in faith and not to feel that human beings have to provide neat intellectual filing cabinets for the resolution of all the questions occasioned by His Word and world.

Carl Kitzmiller is minister of the Oakdale, Louisiana Church of Christ and writes the Sunday school lessons for Word and Work Lesson Quarterly.



Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

What responsibilities do church elders have in dealing with wrong marriages?

This is a sort of summary question covering a more extended inquiry.

By wrong marriages we mean those that involve some direct disobedience to God's word rather than just ill-advised marriages or those which reflect little wisdom or seeking after God's will. Specifically, we speak of such things as marriage after a divorce which was not for the Bible reason, or marriage to one who is not free *before God* to be married. In other articles we have expressed the view that God may allow some wrong marriages to stand once they have been made, but always when there is sin there must be repentance even when no restitution can be made. There are many cases of wrong marriage which have never been corrected by repentance.

We might point out that responsibility in cases of sin—any sin—is not limited to elders, or preachers, or others in an “official” capacity in the church. Any Christian who sees another Christian sinning or moving dangerously in such a direction has a responsibility to do what he can toward preventing or correcting such a situation (Gal. 6:1; Heb. 10:24; 1 John 5:16; consider the word “admonish” as it appears in scripture; Rom. 15:14; 1 Thess. 5:14; etc.) This is not even limited to Christians in the congregation where one worships. We may excuse ourselves too readily from a need, pleading that it is none of our business. To be sure, those who are more mature spiritually have a greater responsibility; and elders, because of their overseeing and pastoring responsibilities, are necessarily involved in those cases under their care. Generally speaking, elders (when a congregation is so organized) are going to have to be involved if correction reaches the point of requiring an act of church discipline. There are situations, however, when a Christian without office in the church may be in a position to head off problems, speak a word in season, rebuke in love, etc. It is his responsibility to do so.

The first responsibility of elders in dealing with wrong marriages is the same as it is with a multitude of other issues. They are to teach personally or to oversee the teaching done so that there is a positive message as to what is and is not acceptable to God in marriages. They are first of all responsible for *feeding* the flock. Many a mar-

riage problem is best dealt with before it ever happens. We can be certain about some things as being absolutely right, and these positive truths need to be taught. Elders are not first of all policemen or detectives, required to look into every marriage to see if it is as it ought to be. They do not have license to examine every member's tax return to see if there has been cheating. They can hardly be expected to tap every member's phone line to see who is gossiping. It is their first duty to have a teaching program which will show all this (and much more) to be sin to be repented of.

There are marriage problems which will come to their attention because a community is small, the partners may ask concerning proper conduct, reports will be circulated, etc. But in urban settings, if only one mate is a member and is not inclined to be talkative or share confidences, there may be problems just as severe or wrong which will never come to their attention. This does not make the sin any less sin nor the need of repentance any less urgent. The first need therefore is that the teaching of God's word be plain enough that the parties involved will know when there is sin and if there is any inclination to do right will repent.

Elders are also responsible for tending the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:2), which may involve correcting as well as feeding. The shepherd looking for the lost or strayed sheep is a familiar figure in scripture. Even preachers have a responsibility for "correcting them that oppose themselves" (2 Tim. 2:24-26). Moreover, sin may become so flagrant and corrupting that an exercise of discipline is necessary. Discipline is a scriptural function of the church (cf. 1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:6-15), and the situation may well arise when the drastic action of disfellowship should occur. The problem of 1 Cor. 5 was a marriage problem, or at least a matter of illicit sex. We wish to point out, however, that this is a last resort, not merely a quick and decisive way of getting even with someone who has publicly embarrassed us or who has dared to disobey our decree.

There have been cases of churches (or more to the point, certain men in leadership) who have decided: "We have been too lenient with divorce and remarriage and the attendant problems." They then proceed to exercise a sort of wholesale disfellowshipping of all who have any kind of marriage problem. This greatly simplifies things as a course to follow, but it is as bad or worse than the leniency which it replaced.

Discipline, if it is to be scriptural, must be done scripturally, and that means a persistent and loving attempt to bring about repentance, first of all. Do elders have a responsibility to withdraw fellowship from those who enter wrong marriages? Yes, in clear cases of sin. But only as a last resort! Their responsibility began long before the disfellowshipping. Has there been a positive teaching of what is right and wrong? Was there any attempt to correct the person before the sin was committed? Marriage is a strong tie and repentance is harder to bring about once the ceremony has occurred. Were they just "told," or was there a real effort to reach them? Our purpose should not be to get submission to a decree of men but to the word of

God, and the sinner should understand that. After the sin occurred, has there been the observing of the principles and spirit of Matt. 18:15-18? And are you seeking true repentance or a mechanical conformity to an unrealistic concept of what you think repentance ought to be?

There is always one purpose which must be uppermost in discipline—it should seek to bring the sinner to repentance. It is not an easy way out of a hard problem. It is not a way of getting even or giving vent to anger. It is not a tool to give despotic power over people. Men, even those charged with spiritual responsibilities, may act from bad motives. Or, they may proceed, thinking “something must be done,” but not be aware of how to do it. We stress, therefore, that the purpose of discipline always needs to be remembered.

Now, there are some practical problems the average church of today faces in discipline. Some wrong marriages will be known; some will not. These often involve very private matters and the details are not always publicized (cf. Matt. 1:19). Getting at the facts is sometimes very difficult. Surely God did not mean elders to try to be informed in matters about which some of the couples themselves are not sure they know the details in truth. This writer cannot believe that God meant for leaders to go as far as some *almost seem* to want to do, asking converts and prospective members: “Do you believe Jesus is the Christ, and have you ever been divorced or formed a wrong marriage?” Getting the truth—the whole truth—about these matters is not easy.

Again, another practical problem is the support of the church in a disciplinary action. As with the discipline of children, the action needs to be united. Children soon learn how to play one parent against another, and a lax father and a stern mother, or vice versa, is almost sure to mean disciplinary failure. Church elderships sometimes have difficulty in agreeing what is and is not scriptural about marriage. One man allows no remarriage for any reason, another allows it when there has been unfaithfulness, still another says the sin must have been before marriage if divorce is allowed. When there is so much disagreement among those who are supposed to be spiritual and students of the word, the offender may take their “advice” with a measure of skepticism. And, of course, if the congregation will not support the elders in an act of discipline, it will almost surely fail. When the church members choose sides and sympathize with the offender, there is not much to be gained by an act of discipline.

These practical problems go a long way toward explaining why greater attention is not given to discipline. Frankly, I do not know what the elder (or preacher, or leader) can do who does not have the support of his fellows and of the congregation except to teach the truth, try to prevent the sins from occurring, and try to reason with the offenders. There may be cases where churches have drifted so far from what is right that like some of the churches of Asia (Rev. 2:3) the only answer is to “hold fast that which ye have,” and “establish the things that remain.” On the other hand, if he stands on solid scriptural ground, if he has the support of the rest of the elders and of the church,

if the offender cannot by patient dealings be brought to repentance and there is nothing left but disfellowship, then in love and with a view toward the offender's repentance the discipline should be brought to bear.

"My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (Jas. 5:19-20).

113 N. 6th St., Oakdale, La. 71463

Alex Wilson is a missionary in the Philippines.



Baptism and Fellowship

Alex V. Wilson

We refer again to the disagreement between Barton Stone and the early Alexander Campbell. We do this not because either of them is in any way our pope, but because in our congregations today the same two views are held. Thus their thinking back then illustrates present-day thinking.

In 1828 Campbell wrote, "Everyone, in the very instant in which he was put under the water, received the forgiveness of his sins." "No man has any proof that he is pardoned until he is baptized." Stone, in 1831, wrote, "We teach the doctrine, 'Believe, repent, and be immersed for the remission of sin,' . . . but we cannot agree that none but the immersed have their sins remitted. . . . We have fellowship and communion with unimmersed persons."

Campbell's Views Nine Years Later

In 1837 a lady from Lunenburg, Virginia wrote to Campbell. She was a reader of his paper *Millennial Harbinger*, and expressed great surprise at something he had written there. He had said that there are real Christians in all the Protestant denominations. She inquired, "Will you be so kind as to let me know how anyone becomes a Christian. . . . Does the name Christian belong to any but those who believe the Gospel, repent and are buried by baptism into the death of Christ?"

Here is Campbell's answer, condensed and slightly reworded for the sake of clarity: "If there are no Christians in the Protestant denominations, there are certainly none among the Catholics, Jews, Moslems, or pagans. In that case there are no Christians in the world except ourselves. Therefore for many centuries there has been no church of Christ, no Christians, in the world, which means the gates of hell have prevailed against his church! This cannot be; and therefore there are Christians among the denominations.

"But *who is a Christian?* I answer, *Every one that believes in his heart that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God, repents of his sins, and obeys Him in all things according to his measure of knowledge of His will.*

"I cannot make any one duty the standard of being a Christian, not even immersion. I cannot regard all that have been sprinkled in infancy as aliens from Christ. Should I find a pedo-baptist (sprinkled as an infant) more intelligent in the Scriptures, more spiritually-minded and more devoted to the Lord than someone who is immersed as a professing believer, I could not hesitate a moment in giving my preference to the former. Did I act otherwise I would be a sectarian, a Pharisee among Christians. Someone may ask me, *How do I know that anyone loves my Master but by his obedience to His commands?* I answer, *In no other way.* But notice, I do not substitute obedience to one command, for general obedience. *It is the image of Christ the Christian looks for and loves; and this does not consist in being exact in a few items, but in general devotion to the whole truth as far as it is known.* John Bunyan and John Newton had very different views of baptism; yet they were both disposed to obey, and to the extent of their knowledge did obey the Lord in every thing. An angel may mistake the meaning of a commandment, but he will obey it in the sense in which he understands it. Many a good man has been mistaken. Mistakes are to be regarded as declarative of a corrupt heart only when they proceed from a willful neglect of the means of knowing what is commanded.

"My correspondent may think that we detract from the authority and value of an institution the moment we admit the bare possibility of anyone's being saved without it. But we think we do not undervalue either seeing or hearing when we affirm that neither of them, nor both of them together, are essential to life. I would not sell one of my eyes for all the gold on earth; yet I could live without it.

"There is no occasion then for making immersion, on a profession of faith, absolutely essential to being a Christian—though it may be greatly essential to his holiness and comfort. My right eye is greatly essential to my usefulness and happiness, but not to my life. As I could not be a perfect man without it, so I cannot be a perfect Christian without a right understanding and a cordial reception of immersion. But he that therefore infers that none are Christians but the immersed, as greatly errs as he who affirms that none are alive but those with clear and full vision.

"I would unhesitatingly say that I think every man who despises any ordinance of Christ, or who is willingly ignorant of it, cannot be a Christian. Yet it is against my convictions to teach anyone that if he mistook the meaning of any institution, while in his soul he desired to know the whole will of God, he must perish. But to conclude for the present—he that claims for himself license to neglect the least of the commandments of Jesus because it is possible for some to be saved without it, does not possess the spirit of Christ. So I reason, and I think in so reasoning I am sustained by all the prophets and apostles of both Testaments."

Later Thoughts

Three months later, in answer to many people who criticised his position, Campbell wrote, "Some of our brethren were too much *addicted to denouncing the denominations* and representing them *en masse* as wholly aliens from the possibility of salvation—as wholly anti-christian and corrupt. These very zealous brethren gave support to the widespread *accusation that we make baptism a savior, or a passport to heaven*, disparaging all the virtues of the professing Christians among denominations.

When I see a person who would die for Christ; whose brotherly kindness knows no bounds; whose seat in the Christian assembly is never empty; whose inward godliness and devotion are attested by punctual obedience to every known duty; whose constant companion is the Bible: I say, when I see such a man ranked among heathen men because he never happened to ask but always took it for granted that he had been scripturally baptized; when he is thus criticized by someone who is greatly destitute of these virtues and whose chief recommendation is that he has been immersed: I feel no disposition to flatter such a critic but rather to say he is in error. And while I would not lead anyone to disparage the least of all the commands of Jesus, I would say to my immersed brother as Paul said to his Jewish brother: "Sir, will not his uncircumcision, or unbaptism, be counted to him for baptism? and will he not condemn you, who though having the true baptism yet dost transgress or neglect other statutes of your King?" (Rom. 2:25-29).

About twenty-five years later the whole question of immersion, salvation, and fellowship came up again. The belief of Stone and of Campbell in his later years was this time succinctly stated by Isaac Errett in four propositions: "1) In primitive times all who partook of the Lord's Supper were immersed believers. 2) Corruptions have crept into the church because of Popery and have scattered the people of God into various sects. 3) 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. 4) We are compelled, therefore, to recognize as Christians many who have been *in error* on baptism, but who in *the spirit of obedience* are Christians indeed."

So we have seen the Biblical interpretations and implications which led Stone to have fellowship with unimmersed persons and led Campbell in later years to believe there were true saints among the Lutherans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Methodists. Many today hold the same views and so participate in para-church groups mentioned earlier. Many others do not, and agree with the view of Campbell during the 1820's and of Ben Franklin, who in reply to Isaac Errett wrote, "Did the first Christians commune with unimmersed persons? It is admitted they did not. Shall we, then, deliberately do what we admit they did not do?" What shall we say to these things? Let each one be fully persuaded in his own mind, without despising or attacking those who disagree.

On the Other Hand

Before concluding, it might be fair to hear the views of those who oppose immersion of believers and support infant baptism. Though I believe they err, *they* believe the practice is Bible-based.

Once I saw a tract with this title on the outside: "What the Bible Teaches About Infant Baptism." Opening it up, I discovered nothing but the blank pages! The point, of course, was that the Bible says nothing about the practice, therefore it is unbiblical and wrong. But those who believe in it draw a different conclusion from the silence of the New Testament, and argue thus: In Old Testament times, infants were accepted into the community of God's covenant people (via circumcision and the parents' membership among God's people). Therefore, if God intended His New Testament people to operate on a different principle, He should have commanded infants *not* to be baptized! Silence implies consent, runs the argument—consent to the principle of accepting infants among God's people. They admit that Scripture says faith and repentance should precede baptism, but insist that this refers to outsiders converted as adults rather than to children of believing parents. Now I believe this argument overlooks some basic differences between the Old and New Covenants (though there are similarities too, of course). We lack time to develop a Scriptural rebuttal here; David Kingdon in *Children of Abraham* does a good job of it. Church history also opposes infant baptism: it cannot be traced back to earliest times but came as a later innovation; also its practice has often produced tragic results. Nevertheless the point here is, many Christians sincerely believe they have a Biblical basis for this practice of baptizing the infants of believing parents. The Lord knows their hearts.

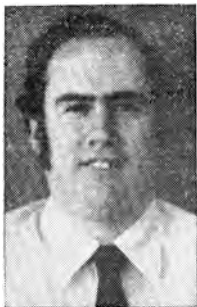
Thank God for the truth of 2 Tim. 2:19, "The Lord knows those who are his, and, 'Let every one who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.'" We may misjudge others, though we seek not to, but God knows His people. For our part we must depart from iniquity and disobedience to His will as we understand it, and urge others to do the same. God clearly commands baptism, so let us preach and practice it. But remember too those wise words of Campbell: "It is the image of Christ the Christian looks for and loves; and this does not consist in being exact in a few items, but in general devotion to the whole truth as far as it is known."

But even greater than devotion to the truth is devotion to Him who is The Truth. Probably the most important words in this protracted series of articles were those of E. L. Jorgenson, with which we conclude:

Among many heresies, there is "the heresy of emphasis," wrong emphasis; and of this heresy too many Christians of our kind have been guilty. If we aspire to be "New Testament Christians," a people after the pattern of Paul and Peter, James and John, we must *put the emphasis where they put it. Christ was central.* Jesus Christ himself, the glorious risen, living Being who is the center of all that concerns Him—*He* is our main concern. It is quite possible, in fact easy, to be-

come taken up with "movements" and subjects good as they may be, more than with Him, our only Lord and Savior.

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



Studies in the Book of Acts

Larry Miles

The Healing of the Lame Man and Its Result

Acts 3:1-26

THE HEALING ITSELF: ACTS 3:1-4

Peter and John, as was their custom, were traveling towards the temple. They would enter through the vast Court of the Gentiles through the Gate that was called Beautiful which led into the Court of the Women. It was the ninth hour. This would be 3:00 p.m. It was the hour of prayer associated with the evening sacrifice. Concerning scriptural background for this practice the reader is referred to Ex. 29:38-42; Ps. 55:17 and Dan. 6:10.

The lame man they came in contact with was well known to the multitudes who came to the temple. We are told, later, that he was 40 years old. Everyday he was brought to the same place. To be situated outside the Gate, that is called Beautiful, was a very advantageous place to be. The many people who entered the temple to worship would pass him and give him the opportunity to ask of them alms.

It was at this time that Peter and John came on the scene. As they were about ready to enter, the lame man asked of them alms. We are told that the apostles said, "Look at us." I am sure that the lame man expected to receive alms from them.

But we are told that Peter and John had none to give. In the Name of Jesus Christ they healed him. He now could walk. He had never walked in his life, but here he was doing it like he had done it all his life.

He went into the temple with Peter and John, all the time leaping and praising the Lord for the miracle that he had experienced.

In verse 9, we are told that the people in the temple were aware of the change that had taken place in the lame man's life. They said, "Isn't he the one who used to beg alms at the Beautiful Gate? What's happened to him." The multitudes gathered together at the portico of Solomon. It ran the length of the east side of the outer court of the Temple.

THE SECOND GOSPEL MESSAGE: ACTS 3: 12-26

Seeing the people gathered together, wondering what was happening, gave Peter the opportunity to preach to them. He told them that he and John had not, of their own power, healed the lame man.

In verse 13, they referred to the God of Israel and declared that He performed a miracle when He had glorified Jesus Christ. He reminded them that they were the ones who had brought Jesus before Pontius Pilate. They were the ones who had, when Pilate sought to release Him, called for His death. Verse 14, says that the Jews rejected their Messiah in favor of a murderer.

In verse 15, Peter tells them that although they crucified the Christ of God, The Father raised Him from the dead. The grave could not hold the Messiah. He conquered death itself. The apostles stressed again the fact that they were witnesses to the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. He tells them that it was by the authority of the Risen Saviour, that they were able to heal the lame man.

In verse 17, he says that although they, along with their rulers, acted in ignorance, they should have known that Jesus was, indeed the Messiah. The Jew had the Old Testament Scriptures. Although they acted in ignorance, God could not and would not overlook this ignorance.

In verse 18, he tells them that the Word of God prophesied that the Messiah would have to suffer. An example of this was in Isaiah 53. The Jews could not see how Jesus could be the Lion of Judah and still be a suffering Messiah. It is apparent that they did not realize that, in His first coming, Jesus would come as a suffering lamb. It would be when He comes to establish His kingdom on the earth He will come as a conquering Lion.

In verse 19, Peter again gave the Jews present, a chance to repent of their sins and accept Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah. He gave them the chance to reverse the verdict and come to Jesus in believing faith. According to verse 20, if the Jews had repented and accepted Jesus as the Messiah, at that time, Jesus would have returned to the earth and set up the kingdom.

Verse 21 tells us that Jesus must remain in Heaven until the times of restoration. What time is this? Jesus Christ will remain in Heaven until He returns to the earth with His raptured saints to set up His millennial reign. God has said through his servant Zechariah in 14:4, that the Messiah will again set foot on the Mount of Olives. This will be a fulfillment of Acts 1:11. Yes Jesus is coming again to this earth.

Verse 22 tells us that Jesus incorporated the Old Testament concept of a Redeemer. He was both a prophet and Messiah. If one does not heed the words of Jesus, that one is lost.

Peter tells the crowd that the prophets, from Samuel on, spoke of these days and witnessed to the fact that the Messiah would come. In verse 25 Peter says that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Gen. 22:18.

The chapter ends with Peter telling them that it was God that raised Jesus from the dead to bless the world.

One fact that can be learned from the chapter is that God wants everyone to repent and acknowledge His Son as Lord.

In preparation for the next lesson, read the 4th chapter of Acts. The lesson will be titled "Why the Early Church Grew." Until next time, Maranatha!

REPRINTS:

Spiritual Weapons for Spiritual Warfare

by R. H. Boll

"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." It is in this matter especially that sight leads us astray. We think we see certain evils, and the best and shortest way to put them out of existence. We roll up our sleeves and attack the strongholds with human force and human expedients: with the sword, by the law, by political coercion, and such like measures. And, if we succeed, we think we have accomplished something. But our warfare is spiritual. Carnal weapons do not reach the spot here. You cannot distress the devil with such weak and clumsy means. We are not fighting against flesh and blood, but "against the principalities, against the power, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." What if you have cast out some crying evil by means of carnal force and weapon? You have only demolished a symptom and a manifestation, not the evil itself; for behind these several manifestations is a spiritual power and stronghold. Satan is the prince of this world; he is "the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience." And back of the various forms and outbreaks of evil are his spiritual hosts of wickedness, who laugh at the crude attempts of men to spoil their work with weapons of human warfare.

But the innocent-looking word of God, the feeble-sounding prayers of the saints, applied in line with God's instructions—these are the formidable weapons before which Satan trembles. Sight cannot discern this, but only the eye of faith. And it is, of course, to Satan's interest to ridicule the apparently inadequate spiritual weapon, and cause Christians to spend their time in employment of carnal means and tactics. But, trust God for it, no sword can strike that elusive spirit of evil—nothing but "the sword of the Spirit". No political movements have even so much as the shadow of the power of the prayers of God's people "for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity." (1 Tim. 2:1-2). No sort of wire-pullings nor lobbyisms nor reform movements can phase the walls of Jericho; but before the steps of obedient faith they fall in ruins. "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds." (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Missionary Messenger

"Greater things for God"

Joy Garrett

Harare, Zimbabwe

April 30th

Sunday we took advantage of the availability of gasohol (because of the school holidays) and went 40 miles to Gomomonzi church.

Bro. Goodwill Nyakudya started this rural congregation some years ago. He is from this area.

On our arrival about 9 am Bob taught the teenagers and adult Sunday School class and Bro. Goodwill the smaller children (about 50). Then Bob spoke at the morning service; then immediately after the Lord's Supper, I taught the Ladies Bible Class inside the small building while Bob had the men and boys outside. Bro. Goodwill took the children down by some big rocks for their lessons. After a quick lunch we had an afternoon service where Bob taught a 4th time. The building was full and the people thirsty for the word of God.

The regular April afternoon Bible Study at Glen Norah had every available bench and chair occupied. Bob taught on Leadership—the woman's role. There were a lot of questions afterwards.

I've been teaching on the Signs of the Times at Glen Norah, Highfields and Hatfield. 2 Peter 1:19.

Note that Salisbury is now Harare.

GLEANINGS

Larry Miles

"OCCUPY TILL I COME"

Grace is our message; prophecy is our encouragement; missions is our task. As we look at missions in the light of present world developments, the commission of our Lord becomes more urgent. The need for evangelism at home is hardly less than abroad. At home the need is for the church to awake, for every member to begin to exercise his priesthood, for us to go with the Gospel—instead of waiting in our church buildings for the world to come to us. "Laborers!" The fields cry out for reaping; yet, even here at home, where are the laborers? . . . And let us all obediently pray for the Lord of harvest to send out laborers. The challenge of our times is tremendous, but we have a tremendous God! Hallelujah!

—Gordon R. Linscott in *"Talking Things Over"*

CHRIST'S COMPASSION

Six times the compassion of Jesus is mentioned in the Gospels:

1. At the sight of the multitude in Matthew 9:36, "because they

- were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd.” (Mark 6:34).
2. At the sight of a hungry multitude in Matthew 14:14—“he had compassion on them, and healed their sick,” and afterwards fed them with loaves and fishes.
 3. At the sight of another hungry multitude in Matthew 15:32 (Mark 8:2).
 4. For the leper that came to Him for cleansing. (Mark 1:41)
 5. For two blind men who had made their appeal to Him. (Matthew 20:24).
 6. For the widow at Nain, whose only son had died and was being taken out for burial. (Luke 7:13)

—*R. H. Boll in Words in Season*

THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

Jeremiah 33:18; Revelation 1:6

The race of God’s anointed priests shall never pass away;
 Before His glorious face they stand, and serve Him night and day.
 Though reason raves and unbelief flows on, a mighty flood,
 There are, and shall be, till the end, the hidden priests of God.
 His chosen souls, their earthly dross consumed in sacred fire,
 To God’s own heart their hearts ascend in flame of deep desire;
 The incense of their worship fills His Temple’s holiest place;
 Their song with wonder fills the heavens, the glad new song of grace.

—*Gerhard Tersteegen, 1697-1769*

THE ROYAL ROUTE TO HEAVEN

There’s a royal route to heaven—will you travel it today?
 ‘Tis the path of full surrender all along the homeward way.
 It is yielding every moment to the blessed Savior’s will,
 Seeking only for His glory, and His purpose to fulfill.
 There’s a royal route to heaven—They who travel it may know
 Peace that passeth understanding which the Father doth bestow.
 Dead to self and its desires, living unto Christ alone,
 Finding joy and satisfaction which the world has never known.
 There’s a royal route to heaven—which will bring a rich reward
 When the last long mile is covered and we face our loving Lord.
 Oh, how small will seem the trials of the steep and rugged way
 When we stand in His blessed presence at the close of life’s brief day.
 There’s a royal route to heaven—
 ‘Tis the way the Savior trod.
 ‘Tis the path of full surrender
 And the deep, sweet peace of God.

—*A. B. Christiansen*

GRACE AND PEACE (I COR. 1:3)

If I asked you to define the word “grace,” perhaps you would say, “It is the undeserved lovingkindness of God which has met us in our sin and need.” Yes, grace is that, but it is far more than that. It comes, as Paul says here, from God our Father through the Lord

Jesus Christ: God the Father is the source and Jesus Christ is the channel through whom it comes. Grace, therefore, is His life of purity and holiness; His death that was sufficient to pay the price for our sins; and His present ministry by which He imparts the Holy Spirit today, enabling us to die to sin and live in His power.

It seems to me that "grace" in the New Testament is that which brings into our lives everything that delights the heart of God. There is grace to make me like the Master, grace to give me triumph when otherwise I would fail, grace to make me patient where I would be impatient, grace to enable me to glorify the Lord Jesus in every situation. Are you concerned about pleasing God today? Let me remind you that He has already placed within you that possibility: His life, His character, His Spirit.

The second word, "peace," does not imply laziness or inactivity. It is movement without friction, creating perfect harmony. It also means balance and unity which result from every part of your life being centered upon doing the will of God. These two inner powers God has given to each one of His children. If we are Christians, therefore, and have begun to travel this royal route to heaven, we have some tremendous potentials.

—Alan Redpath in *The Royal Route to Heaven*

We invite you to be with us next month, if the Lord tarries. If not, we will meet together with Him in the air. Until next time, **MARANATHA!**

Edited by Dr. Horace E. Wood

MATTHEW:

Dogged Faith Triumphant Over The Silent Messiah

S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.

Matthew 15:21-28

The Canaanite woman is one of the marginal figures of the New Testament story. She does not stand out among the primary characters, like a Peter, a James, a John, a Virgin Mary, or a Mary of Bethany. The spotlight only touches her for a moment. "She is not a disciple or a high-priest or a prophet or a Pilate," Thielecke points out. "All these help to push the wheel of history. They all know something about Jesus as followers or opponents in the great drama then being enacted on the world stage. This woman neither advances the history nor has any essential knowledge. She can make no profession of faith. She is quite unaffected by the question whether Jesus will conquer the world or whether He must suffer. She certainly has no inkling of the Christ problem. She is a poor, unknown beyond the border of Tyre and Sidon. She is a secondary figure, such as those

we can see in the obscure light on the margin of the paintings of Rembrandt."

All of this is true, and yet at the same time the woman is one of the unforgettables of the New Testament. It is to her that the Lord Jesus said, "O woman, great is thy faith" (Matt. 15:28), and this remarkable testimony to her trust in Him is only matched by that which He said to another secondary figure, the centurion, "Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (8:10). It is as if the two almost unknown figures are the divine examples of the triumph of faith. One was a man, the other was a woman. One incident took place in Israel, the other in a Gentile land, but both the individuals were Gentiles!

The woman, then, becomes for us a beautiful illustration of the proper approach to the Savior, and of the proper attitude that we are to have before Him. When Habakkuk wrote, "The just shall live by faith" (2:4), he expressed in pithy form her experience. And when Peter cried out in his message in Cornelius' house, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever BELIEVETH IN HIM shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43), he was merely epitomizing the theology of her encounter with the Lord Jesus.

Now, while the incident does afford us a lovely picture of the reward of a persevering faith, there is more to it than that. It is not without profound significance that the miracle of healing and the details of it occur outside the land of Israel. And the peculiar way in which the Lord responds to her appeals makes it evident that there is something more to the account than a simple lesson of the power of faith. As we shall see, His words to the disciples, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (v. 24), give us a clue to His silence before her piteous cries. And, further, when He does finally respond to her, we learn some important things about the purpose of the ministry of the Lord Jesus, and they have to do with His Messianic calling and the relation of the Gentiles to it. As we have previously commented, the sense of the Lord's ministry is effectively caught by Paul's words in Romans 15:8-9, "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, TO CONFIRM THE PROMISE MADE UNTO THE FATHERS, and that THE GENTILES MIGHT GLORIFY GOD FOR HIS MERCY; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name." This pattern is maintained here and gives a clue to His dealings with the woman. "To the Jew first" is still the dominating passion, but there is still something left for "the Greek."

THE SITUATION

From the district of Galilee the Lord Jesus passed over into Gentile, or foreign, territory, driven there by the hostility of the very ones who ought to have welcomed Him with open arms as their own promised Deliverer. Both Matthew and Mark place the incident immediately following His discussion of the clean and unclean things and the traditions of the elders. The encounter provides a concrete illustration of His disregard for the concepts of defilement held by the scribes and the Pharisees, which were not found in the Old Testament

(cf. Acts 10:1-48). The faith of the woman also provides a dramatic contrast with the unbelief and rebellion of the leaders of Judaism.

The Markan account implies that He went out into the land of Tyre and Sidon for purposes of seclusion, but it was impossible (cf. 7:24). He could not be concealed even in the house.

THE ENCOUNTER

The first request of the woman (15:22). Mark says the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by race. The words do not mean that she was a Greek by nationality, as the following words show. The description simply means that she was Greek-speaking, or Hellenistic in culture. It might be better to translate, as some have suggested, "Now the woman was a Gentile." In other words, she is a citizen of the Phoenician republic of Tyre, a Gentile by birth and culture. Phoenicia belonged administratively to the province of Syria, and that is why she is called a Syrophenician woman.

Matthew's term is "Canaanite," and it indicates that she is a descendant of the ancient race of Israel's enemies. In spite of this, somehow she had learned certain important things about Him, for she came out of those borders and cried to Him, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon." Canaanite though she is, she has learned that He is the Son of David. She, thus, owns His Messiahship and Kingship, although His subjects had not. It is certainly true that the brightest jewels are found in the darkest places. The sight of her plight cannot but have moved the Savior.

"It was a sight to stir pity to behold a woman calling aloud in such distress, and that woman a mother, and pleading for a daughter, and that daughter in such evil plight," Chrysostom says. Sir John Cheke quaintly describes the condition of the daughter as "veri evel develled."

The response of the Lord (15:23a). Now, what would you expect the Lord to do? Yes, I would, too. It is, heal the child, of course. We read, however, "But he answered her not a word."

Recollect now the situation. Maclaren has expressed it beautifully, "In her humility she does not bring her child, nor ask Him to go to her. In her agony, she has nothing to say but to spread her grief before Him, as thinking that He, of whose pity she has heard, needs but to know in order to alleviate, and requires no motives urged to induce Him to help. In her faith, she thinks that His power can heal from afar. What more could He have desired? All the more startling, then, is His demeanour. All the conditions which He usually required were present in her; but He, who was wont to meet these with swift and joyful over-answers, has no word to say to this poor, needy, persevering, humble, and faithful suppliant. The fountain seems frozen from which such streams of blessing were wont to flow. His mercy seems clean gone, and His compassion to have failed. A Christ silent to a sufferer's cry is a paradox which contradicts the whole gospel story, and which, we may be very sure, no evangelist would have painted, if he had not been painting from the life."

The silence of God is often the greatest test of our faith, and few there are who pray, who have not known and puzzled agonizingly over this. It was the experience of John the Baptist in prison as he reflected upon his experience and the course of Jesus' ministry (cf. 11:2-6). O God, have we not prayed, why do You not speak and make things clear?

It was, as we learn in a moment, our Lord's test for her faith, because she was making an improper approach to Him. He had been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and He must obey His mission. The promises to the nation must be confirmed, and then, and only then, can He turn to the Gentiles.

The request of the disciples (15:23b). The disciples cannot keep silent, just as other men could not keep silent in the presence of the woman's agony. Evidently the woman had been following the group, perhaps before they entered the house. One can picture in one's mind the Lord, with the twelve, followed by a frantic-vocal woman!

Are we to think of the disciples as more merciful than the Lord? After all, they did respond to her cries. No, they are men who cannot bear to hear the distress of the woman nor the silence of Jesus. That does not, however, mean that they were the merciful ones. The woman knows this, too, for she never turns *to them* for help. Sometimes weak nerves make people seem more compassionate than others!

The woman, whom tradition gave the name of Bernice, turned rather to the silent Lord. Obviously, then, the silence of God is to be measured by standards different from human ones. And the cross, where the Father-God was silent to the cry of the Son, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" is the greatest silence of all. There the sun and the earth spoke, but the Creator of all held His peace. There are times when silence is not the sign of lack of compassion; it is "the silence of higher thoughts." The woman must have sensed this, for she was undeterred by their, "Send her away; for she crieth after us." She persists. Their "us" revealed their self-concern.

The response of the Lord (15:24). The disciples had betrayed the fact that they were not interested in His granting her prayer, but in getting rid of her. They did not like to have a shrieking woman around them. But what would He do?

He answered and said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This answer explains the problem of His silence. While some have attributed the need of going to Israel alone to the necessity of concentrating one's labors in a more limited place in order to succeed, it is clear that the point of His words has to do with God's plan of the ages, that is, His dealing with the nation Israel and the nations of the Gentiles. The promises of the Old Testament regarding the Messianic Kingdom have an order of development, and God gave them originally to Abraham and his seed. To them they must first be confirmed. Even Lenski, the Lutheran commentator, has seen this, for he wrote, "The divine plan, according to which Jesus 'was commissioned,' was to work out redemption in the Jewish nation and not elsewhere; as soon as it had been worked out, it would be carried to all the world." And Bernice was not an Israelite.

So much love could be silent in the presence of so much sorrow only because the Lover was subject to a higher duty, the will of God. Even human suffering must bow to that, and divine mercy and grace have their tracks upon which they must run.

The second request of the woman (15:25). The preceding words evidently were not heard by the woman, being intended primarily for the disciples who knew something of the Old Testament order of development in the Messianic promises. The persistent female came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me." In Chrysostom's phrase, with "beautiful shamelessness," she fell at His feet and with pathetic brevity uttered the one quick cry, "Help me." "The intenser the feeling, the fewer the words," claims Maclaren, adding, "Heart prayers are short prayers."

It is to be noted that, while she has called Him previously, "Son of David," now she addresses Him as, "Lord."

The response of the Lord (15:26). Replying directly to the woman, He says, "It is not right to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."

The reply contains a frank refusal on the surface, and we should not attempt to explain it away out of jealousy for the character of Christ. His refusal is a real one, founded on obedience to the will and purpose of God. He was bound to refuse her request in the way He did.

The "bread" is the blessing of the Messianic promises He is bringing. The "children" are the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The "dogs" are the Gentiles. In other words, there is a necessary restriction in His ministry (cf. Rom. 1:14-17).

There are, however, two mitigating factors that must be noticed. In the first place, Mark's account of the reply is this, "Let the children FIRST be filled; for it is not right to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs" (7:27). Pay close attention to the "first." This word implies the later feeding of others (cf. Rom. 1:16, "first").

In the second place, the word "dogs" is important. The Greek word is *kunaron*, a diminutive of the ordinary word for dog, *kuon*, and it means *a little dog*. It, therefore, does not refer to the fierce, unclean animals that haunted Eastern cities, starving and masterless. They deserved their bad name, for they were ugly, savage, and dangerous. The word the Lord uses referred to domestic pets, who lived in the house and lived near the tables. They were part of the family, or at least they lived in the home amid the family. It appears, then, that implicit in the words of the Lord is the belief that, while the Gentiles may not eat first, there does exist an opportunity for them, if they receive their "bread" from the Jews. This is, of course, what the Messianic promises taught. Israel was to be the means of the evangelization of the Gentiles, who were also included in the divine plan (cf. Isa. 42:6; 49:6).

The third request of the woman (15:27). The critics have often found national scorn in the words of Jesus, but the woman, who might well have given way to self-pity, panic, or hopelessness, found some-

thing else there. First of all, she admits that He is right in carrying on the kind of ministry that is directed first to the national hopes. "Truth, Lord" is her acknowledgement of the justice of His reply. "Yes, Lord, I am one of the doggies," she admits, but out of His very words she forges a petition that conquers Him. While confessing that grace may justly pass her by, she adopts His phraseology and argues that she is, then, not an alien, but a member of the household! "She does not enter a caveat against the analogy, but accepts it wholly," Maclaren beautifully says and adds, "and only asks Him to carry out His own metaphor." A crumb is enough for her. So, she confesses His mission, its purpose, and pleads only that He may remember that the breadth of it includes her! Thus, in her answer there is humility, perseverance, divine insight, ingenuity, boldness, and submissiveness, —in a word, FAITH. Acknowledging herself to be only a doggie, yet *in the family*, she triumphs by dogged faith!

The word "master's" indicates that she has accepted submissively the place of the Gentiles.

As Luther said, "she catches Him in His own words." Or, as Thielecke put it, "She has done what none other could do, namely, entangled the Saviour in His talk. She has 'flung the sack of His promises at His feet,' and He cannot step over it."

The evaluation of Jesus (15:28a-b). As Paul has pointed out in Romans 10:9-10, a genuine faith is always seen in confession from the mouth. That saying of hers, as Mark's account shows, was the product of a faith that was the instrumentality of healing (cf. Mark 7:29, "this saying").

The encyclical of deliverance (15:28c). It seemed in the beginning that He would give her nothing but silence. The account ends with Him giving her, not just a crumb, but all that she willed! And no one rejoiced more in this than He.

The emancipation of Bernice (15:28d). Through Israel the dogs do get bread! That is the divine purpose, for salvation is of the Jews, and Bernice, the daughter's name according to tradition, is blessed through David's greater Son. He had commended her faith, her saying, and now He gives her the desire of her heart, the healing of her daughter. O! the power of true faith! Matthew Henry was right, "Note great believers have what they will." Lord, increase our faith!

It is clear that this incident underlines the importance of understanding God's plan of the ages if we are to make sense of His Word (cf. Gen. 9:24-27; Psa. 67:1-2; Rom. 11:21-23).

And it is also clear that the incident illustrates the mighty power of faith in the God of the Word. Faith argues mightily and winningly when it takes God at His Word. And, if I am speaking to any who have not yet come to the Savior for pardon and forgiveness, may you employ the argument of the following text and come, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst . . . and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (cf. John 6:34-37).

BOOK REVIEW:

An Important New Book on Bible Prophecy

One of the most arresting books to come to my attention in a long time is a new book by Robert Shank, author of the book *Life in the Son*, which has had a great impact on many in counteracting the false doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy. Shank, who was many years a Baptist minister and Bible professor, has ministered among the churches of Christ for some years. Now he has authored a book which is sure to displease many among the larger body of churches of Christ who hold amillennial views.

The new book, *Until: The Coming of Messiah and His Kingdom*, is one of the most comprehensive books on Bible prophecy ever published—517 pages. The case it presents for a truly Biblical eschatology is overwhelming and, in our judgment, will be devastating to opponents of premillennialism, whose attempts to answer it will be embarrassing to them.

The thrust of the book is indicated in a brief summary which appears on the back of the cover:

“In a comprehensive survey of the prophetic Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments, the author demonstrates that fulfillment of God’s redemptive purpose for Israel, the Church, and the nations awaits the coming of Messiah and His world kingdom, soon to appear on earth as the consummation of all history past and the prelude to the ultimate realization of the kingdom of God in its eternal dimension in the new heaven and earth.

“The precise correlation of the Messianic thesis of Old Testament prophecy and the eschatology of the New Testament is observed in depth. The significance of the nation Israel today, the Arab-Israel confrontation and explosive Middle East, and the entire contemporary world scene is examined in the light of the total prophetic disclosure of the Bible. Attention is focused on the whole biblical panorama of end-time events and the accelerating clash of ideologies, nations, and blocs in the rush to Armageddon and judgment at the coming of Messiah.

“Scholarly and comprehensive, but written for all thoughtful readers of the Bible. Essential reading for all who in these turbulent final days of the age long *until* look with faith and hope to the coming of Messiah and the promised golden age for Israel, the Church, and the world, and the time of the great gathering of the nations into the everlasting kingdom of God.”

An idea of the ground covered in the book is indicated in the chapter titles: The Waiting King; The House Left Desolate; Jerusalem, City of the Great King; Israel, the Indestructible Nation; The Times of the Gentiles; Israel’s Seventy Weeks; The Conflict of the Ages; Armageddon; Thy Kingdom Come; Until the Day Dawns; Waiting for the King.

In addition to the eleven chapters, the book contains six appendices: Was Pentecost the Coming of the Kingdom?; The Rhetorical Mode of the Prophets (very helpful to all students of Bible prophecy); The Time Frame of the Olivet Prophecy; The Chronological Structure of the Revelation (with a chart and outline of the book); Revelation Twenty (91 pages, and totally decisive against antimillenarian interpretations); The Church and Premillennialism (41 pages, and unanswerable by those who deny that premillennialism was the original faith of the churches).

Shank's approach to the great themes of Bible prophecy is different from the usual approach. In the Preface he writes:

"My purpose was to survey the whole spectrum of the Messianic kingdom thesis of the Bible. My starting point was the eschatological definitions of Jesus and the apostles, as recorded in the Gospels and the Acts. Proceeding from their definitions, I surveyed the Old Testament antecedents—Moses and the prophets—and the prophetic passages of the New Testament Epistles and the Revelation. The survey, I believe, has defined categorically the precise correlation of the Messianic thesis of Old Testament prophecy and the eschatology of the New Testament."

The book offers some important fresh insights to great Bible truths. As with any book, the reader may not agree with Shank at every point of his interpretations and constructions, but these are minor matters of no real importance. Shank's central thesis and the main thrust of the book are clear and convincing, and every serious student of Bible prophecy will be blessed and amply rewarded by his reading of the book.

The book is beautifully printed and the type is easy to read. It is offered only in paperback, but on high quality book paper and Smyth sewn to open flat and be very durable. *Until* offers a wealth of material for many hours of profitable study of Bible prophecy, and the devotional quality of the book will inspire and warm the hearts of readers.

Until may be ordered from *Word and Work*. Price is \$11.95.

Turning Loose

Mrs. Paul W. Knecht

In my working days, now many years ago, I had to ride a street-car to and from work. One day as I was returning home late in the afternoon I stepped off the street car before it came to a complete stop. I had seen many do it—mostly men and boys—with ease.

I stepped lightly down—made only one slight mistake. It was not a careless one, but an ignorant one. I thought I should get my feet firmly on the ground before loosening my hand-hold. I saw nothing wrong with that . . . but found out that something was wrong with it when my head hit the cobblestones first and hard. I was not knocked out and was on my feet before the motorman could come to my rescue.

When the time comes for us to leave this world, the world won't stop. The people of God need not fear. We can turn loose, step off and go forward in faith in the God who loves us. The ease with which the transition is made may well depend on the willingness to turn loose of the world.

NEWS AND NOTES

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

Please renew our subscription to **Word and Work**. I'm requesting a little bit early so we won't miss an issue. (Lord willing.)

We enjoy the many worthwhile and thought provoking articles we read in your publication. Hold up God's **Word**, and keep up the good **Work**.

Stephen M. Golden

Just want to let you know how much I have enjoyed the series of articles by Bro. Alex Wilson. They are very well balanced, taking all current thoughts into consideration.

Supportive material is very well researched. Truly in the spirit of the

Restoration Movement.

But other articles and writers deserve equal commendation.

Jack Thompson

Enclosed is check for renewal of my subscription to **Word & Work**.

I am happy to receive such an inspiring magazine and appreciate each contribution. —Thanks

E. Hargesheimer

Dear Christian Friends,

What is left of this after my year's subscription use where it is needed.

Thank you.

Mrs. Johnnie Thompson

35th Annual Louisville Christian Fellowship Week

August 9 - 13, 1982

"GOD GIVE US CHRISTIAN HOMES"

Evening Sessions: Sellersburg Church of Christ, Sellersburg, Indiana

Day Session: Portland Avenue Church of Christ, 2500 Portland Avenue

MONDAY

Evening Session

7:30 - 9:00 The Divine Design/The Divine Directive

TUESDAY

Day Session

9:00 - 9:30 Prayer Time

9:30 - 10:30 The Marks of A Christian Marriage

10:30 - 11:00 Break

11:00 - 12:00 Bridging The Generation Gap

12:00 - 1:30 Lunch and Fellowship

1:30 - 2:15 The Influence of Christian Grandparents

2:15 - 2:25 Break

2:25 - 3:10 Christian Attitudes For Grandchildren

Evening Session

6:00 - 7:00^o The Strong Willed Child — Film (Dobson)

7:30 - 9:00 Christian Fathering — Film (Dobson)

WEDNESDAY

Day Session

9:00 - 9:30	Prayer Time
9:30 - 10:30	The Christian Husband
10:30 - 11:00	Break
11:00 - 12:00	Shaping The Will Without Breaking The Spirit – Film (From James Dobson's Focus on the Family)
12:00 - 1:30	Lunch and Fellowship
1:30 - 2:15	The Christian Family's Contribution To The Church
2:15 - 2:25	Break
2:25 - 3:10	Church's Contribution to the Christian Family

Evening Session

6:00 - 7:00*	Christian Fathering – Film (Dobson)
7:30 - 9:00	Christian Homes And Missions

NOTE: Wednesday Evening is Missionary Evening. A love offering will be taken and forwarded to our missionaries on the field. Checks should be made payable to "**Louisville Christian Fellowship**".

THURSDAY

Day Session

9:00 - 9:30	Prayer Time
9:30 - 10:30	The Christian Wife
10:30 - 11:00	Break
11:00 - 12:00	The "Wild Oats" Myth
12:00 - 1:30	Lunch and Fellowship
1:30 - 2:15	Parenting By Proxy
2:15 - 2:25	Break
2:25 - 3:10	Discipline

Evening Session

6:00 - 7:00*	Preparing For Adolescence Peer Pressure & Sexuality – Film
7:30 - 9:00	What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women: The Lonely Housewife – Film (Dobson)

FRIDAY

Day Session

9:00 - 9:30	Prayer Time
9:30 - 10:30	So You're No Longer In Love/Solving Problems Biblically
10:30 - 11:00	Break
11:00 - 12:00	Preparation For Adolescence: The Origin of Self-Doubt – Film (From James Dobson's Focus on the Family)
12:00 - 1:30	Lunch and Fellowship
1:30 - 2:15	Frustration Or Fulfillment?
2:15 - 2:25	Break
2:25 - 3:10	Question and Answer Session

Evening Session

6:00 - 7:00*	What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women: Money, Sex, and Children – Film (Dobson)
7:30 - 9:00	The Challenges For Christian Homes

* Optional viewing of "Focus on the Family" films by Kevin Dobson. Actual Fellowship Meeting to begin at 7:30.