

THE WORD AND WORK

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

Wm. Robert Heid, Editor

The Word and Work (USPS 691-460) is published monthly except December for \$4 per year, bundles of 10 or more to one address \$3.50, by the Word and Work, 2518 Portland Ave., Louisville, Ky. 40212. Second class postage paid at Louisville, Ky.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Word and Work, 2518 Portland Ave., Louisville, Ky. 40212

Vol. LXXVI

AUGUST, 1982

No. 8

In This Issue

| | |
|---|-----|
| God's Family – Spiritual Plateaus – W. R. H. - - - - - | 226 |
| Viewing the News – Jack Blaes - - - - - | 228 |
| Thoughts From Romans – “A Hope Too Great To Believe?” – E. E. Lyon - - - - - | 230 |
| Should Christians Support Israel? – Robert Shank - - - - - | 232 |
| Psychological Threats to Biblical Authority – Billy Ray Lewter - | 235 |
| The Christian's Duty to His Country - - - - - | 240 |
| Preparing For a Marvelous Marriage – Alex V. Wilson - - - - | 241 |
| Studies in the Book of Acts – Five Reasons for Church Growth – Larry Miles - - - - - | 247 |
| MISSIONARY MESSENGER - - - - - | 249 |
| Reprints: The Need of Our Day – R. H. Boll - - - - - | 251 |
| “It Is Written” – R. H. Boll - - - - - | 251 |
| The Gospel of John – The Secret of Joy – S. Lewis Johnson, Jr. - | 252 |
| Empty Pocket Hold-Ups – Mrs. Paul W. Knecht - - - - - | 254 |
| The Devils Revival – from <i>Revelation</i> - - - - - | 254 |
| Gleanings – Larry Miles - - - - - | 255 |



God's Family

W. R. H.

SPIRITUAL PLATEAUS

"I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—Phil. 3:14.

The above utterance was from the apostle Paul, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and was written for our admonition as well as the Philippian. It has become a memory passage for many of us, but ought to be a pole star as we sail the trackless seas of life in Christ. May these lines renew in me a vision of that "prize," the high calling that is ours. And may we, together, lift up our eyes to see how high that goal looms above us.

A PLACE OF REST

When we come up out of the waters of baptism, with the glorious presence of God's Holy Spirit within, there is a peace that passes understanding, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. This is that joy "that I knew, when first I found the Lord." We bear that precious Name, and have a song in our hearts that proceeds to tell the whole world that we have been born anew. We pray and we read in a way that is utterly new to us, and the light of God's word beams into every corner of our being. We revel in the pleasures that are ours in our Lord Jesus and in the fellowship of His saints. His Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are Sons of God. This is it!

It is because this plateau of Spiritual life is indeed such a wonderful place, and so easily identifiable, that many are content to abide here and serve and wait. They delight in the five (more or less) steps of obedience that they have taken. They love to hear them preached again and again, since this is what all of the sinners need to hear, and be repeatedly reminded that they are "Safe in the arms of Jesus."

A PILGRIM ATTITUDE

One of my fondest memories of Brother Stanford Chambers was a conversation he held with me about the time we were to print his book "Conquering and to Conquer." He told me of a new concept of the meaning of II Thes. 2:7, which had just recently cleared in his thinking, and which he planned to include in the forthcoming book. Briefly, he no longer understood "that which restraineth" to be the Holy Spirit and to be taken out of the way; but by close examination of the words in the Greek, concluded that "He that *held on* (in the heavenly places)

was no less than Satan himself, and when his grip in the heavenly places would be broken, then he would descend to the earth in fulness of his Satanic meanness, and then the "mystery of lawlessness would no longer be mystery, but a brutal and violent fact. I was not only thrilled and convinced by Bro. Chambers' exegesis of the verse referred to, but marvelled that one of his age and depth of insight, would yet be studying the word with so open a mind as to change a position that he had long held, when he saw that new light. May his tribe increase!

THE OLD PATHS

I am aware that twice in the book of Jeremiah, God speaks of the old paths. We need to seek them out and to walk therein. But many today who think themselves to be in the old paths, are only in the current rut. Formality does not guarantee orthodoxy. Tradition does not prove anything of itself. If we look for some "old paths" in the Bible, we might find: Abraham's path from Ur to Canaan. Abraham's path up Mt. Moriah. Eliezer of Damascus, seeking a wife for Isaac. Jacob seeking the birthright. Joseph forgiving his brothers. Moses' mother hiding the baby Moses. Moses abdicating the court of Egypt. These are old paths that really went places. And time would fail us if we tried to mention even a percentage of the other old paths listed in God's guide book, taken by Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, etc.

HIGHER GROUND

It is a sad day when Christians do not desire to press on to higher ground, yet many today can see nothing ahead to challenge them. We need not slow down and crystallize because of our years. It was Caleb, one with Joshua of the two oldest men to enter the promised land, who said "Give me this mountain" (Where the giants were known to dwell.) He certainly was not running down like an old clock. The joy of the Lord was his strength, and he was well able to conquer the mountain that challenged him.

There are spiritual plateaus that are higher than where we are now encamped. This I mean:

There are areas of liberality in giving, that few have any desire to explore. We say that God's shovel is bigger than our shovel. Then why do we shovel so sparingly?

There are sick and invalid people (Saints or Sinners) who would be so happy for any act of service. We have so long turned this over to the Government and other institutions, that we rarely feel the pleasure of doing humble, menial service for Jesus.

There are arenas for prayer-warfare—where we can wield the whole power of heaven against the hosts of wickedness. There are fears within and foes without. Satan trembles when he sees the weakest Christian on his knees. But who likes to kneel? Prayer is a territory that few explore. Although, what we have explored has proven to be most glorious.

There is a higher place, the path to which reads "Be filled with the Holy Spirit." It is a hill of glory, a veritable mount of transfiguration. Its pathway is Sanctification, a getting real close to the

Lord Jesus. But do we aspire to be on His right hand, or on His left? A negative attitude concerning the Holy Spirit grieves Him and impoverishes us.

There is a high ground of Brotherly love and appreciation, but the path thereto is blocked by pride or bigotry. I can never see the good things in other people as long as my eyes are turned inward, upon myself. There is so much good and pleasant fellowship up on that plateau, but many never get the faintest taste of it. How can you appreciate a brother or sister, if all you can observe is their shortcomings (as compared to your own merits)?

There is a mountain-place for communion with God Himself. He has made us that haply we might feel after Him and find Him, although He is not far from any one of us. We ought to help one another to climb this mountain, also.

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Viewing the News

Jack Blaes

BELIEVE MOSES. Two computer specialists and a Bible scholar at the Technion Institute of Technology (Haifa, Israel) fed the 20,000 words of Genesis into a computer for linguistic analysis. Prof. Yehuda Radday, who headed the team, says the computer indicated it was "quite certain" that the work was written by one person. This doesn't really decide anything, but for years the unbelieving supporters of the school of "higher criticism" of the Bible in their efforts to destroy faith in the Word of God have invented and spread abroad the theory that Genesis was written by different writers.

PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY OF ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY. Dr. William Brennan in his recent book, **Medical Holocausts: Exterminative Medicine in Nazi Germany and Contemporary America**, points out disturbing parallels between the practice of abortion in Germany preceding and into Nazism and in present day America. The

scholarly Dr. Brennan points out that long before the government under Hitler gave in to persistent agitation for expanded legal sanction of abortion from the German medical profession, these same doctors were busily engaged in performing illegal abortions for any and all reasons which suited them. Just so, the courts of America have accommodated the unrelenting demands of American physicians until we have our own national holocaust for unwanted babies, and, just so, America's physicians have been performing illegal abortions while waiting their victory in the courts. Can the righteous judgment of Jehovah be far off from a nation of such ungodly deeds?

"WHEN PARENTS DON'T MIND IF THEIR CHILDREN DON'T MIND, THEN THE CHILDREN DON'T."

FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY. Twenty-three million Americans, one in five adults, lack the reading and writing

abilities needed to handle the minimal demands of daily living. Thirty million more are only marginally capable of being productive workers. Less than two thirds of adults have completed high school, and thirteen percent of these graduates possess no more than the reading and writing skills of sixth graders.

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FLAT-RATE INCOME TAX. One of a growing number of proposals for a flat-rate tax introduced by Ron Paul (R.-Texas) (H.R. 6352) would establish a flat 10% tax on gross income above \$10,000, doing away with all deductions, exclusions, credits, and tax loopholes. It is conceded by most all who know that the present system is unbearably inequitable allowing the people who have the greatest incomes often to pay little or nothing in taxes. Dr. Paul's bill is designed to remove this unfair abuse. A letter to your congressman telling him of your concern in this matter may be helpful in bringing about helpful tax legislation. Most congressmen appreciate it when constituents communicate their ideas to them.

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AMERICAN COUNCIL FOR A FREE ASIA. Spokesman Gary Jarmin for the above group in coalition with a number of other conservative groups accuse Vice President Bush and "defrocked" Secretary of State Alexander Haig of being largely responsible for pushing the same "policies President Reagan campaigned against. They ask us to note that "under President Carter, Taiwan received twice as much military sales as it has under the Reagan Administration. The administration has also rejected or delayed the sale of every weapon system requested by the Republic of China, including the FX fighter." The coalition warns the President that he faces a political revolt by Conservatives if he decides to end U.S. arms.

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NEW FEDERAL URBAN POLICY. The Reagan Administration intends to return maximum authority to state and local governments because those jurisdictions "have amply demonstrated that, properly unfettered, they will make better decisions than the Federal government acting for them."

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HIDDEN MESSAGES ON POP RECORDS. Congressman Bob Dornan (R.-Calif.) has introduced a bill to require that records with hidden messages bear a warning label. It would read: "Warning: This record contains backward masking that makes a verbal statement which is audible when this record is played backward and which may be perceptible at a subliminal level when this record is played forward." Subliminal messages are inserted at such high speeds that the eye or ear cannot pick them up, but the subconscious perceives them. The congressman is concerned about records with satanic references, such as "Stairway to Heaven" by the group Led Zeplin, which, when played backwards, contains the words, "I live for Satan... The Lord turns me off... There is no escaping it... Here is to my sweet Satan... There's power in Satan." The Dornan bill is H.R. 6363. When you write your congressman you may wish to urge him to support this bill too.

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ISRAELI IN LEBANON. The Israelis have learned that treaties, cease-fires, and U.N. troops have never dealt effectively with the problem of Soviet-backed P.L.O. terrorists. But the Israeli Army has. Those in the free world who desire to remain free must learn the same lesson or they are doomed to the fate of most of Europe, Africa, and Asia.

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THE U.S. HAS LEARNED A VALUABLE LESSON from the invasion. The U.S. and N.A.T.O. had abandoned the concept of using robot drones to destroy enemy SAM's in favor of more expensive weapons. But the U.S. Air Force helped the Israelis set up their attack, demonstrating that the strikes by drones would work. This less expensive approach could help a budget-strapped N.A.T.O. in the next war. (God forbid!)

IN ADDITION. The Israelis managed to uncover the archives of 12 of terrorist activities. American, British, French, Austrian, Irish, and African terrorists are among the hundreds of prisoners that the Mossad agents (Israel's foreign intelligence agency) are grilling. The prisoners are in a state of complete demoralization and the Israelis are in no hurry to turn them over to their respective governments. They

have just scratched the surface of the intelligence which has fallen into their hands. The financial records disclose numbers of very substantial checks from New York to pay for arms for I.R.A. trainee in Lebanon and to cover their expenses while in P.L.O. training camps. In the last year alone more than 2,000 terrorists, from almost every terrorist organization in the world, have received training, briefings, sanctuary, and equipment in the P.L.O.'s Lebanese camps. As to just a small portion of P.L.O. Soviet supplied captured weaponry, to empty just one captured depot will require 500 semi-trailers in constant use for six weeks. According to U.S. and Israeli military intelligence, these weapons were prepositioned for use by force of 100,000 men, quite possibly Soviet airborne troops which could have been unleashed against Jordan, Saudi-Arabia, and the Gulf states in a massive roll-up of the thinly defended Arabian peninsula. To those of you familiar with the prophecies of the tremendous invasion forces "from the North" the possibilities most certainly are there. **"Look up, for your redemption draweth nigh."**

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THOUGHTS FROM ROMANS

Ernest E. Lyon

"A Hope Too Great To Believe?"

Please pardon the question mark at the end of the title of this article. It is there because I am asking you if it is a hope too great for you to believe, but I believe it myself. It would be too great to believe if we did not have such a great God, however, but there is nothing too great for Him and there is nothing that He wants for us that is too great for Him to provide. He has provided a hope almost beyond belief for all those who trust Him for their salvation in Christ Jesus.

The hope I am referring to is simply stated at the close of the second verse of Romans 5—"hope of the glory of God." Now that verse is not speaking of hoping that God has or will have glory; that He is glorious beyond our conception surely goes without saying, but what He is telling us here through His servant Paul is that He has placed in us a hope of having His glory ourselves. If you can see yourself as God sees us in Romans 3:9-19, then maybe you can catch something of what I am speaking about in saying that this is almost beyond human belief— that such ones so filthy by nature in His sight would some day not only have glory, but it would be God's own glory. Our deceitful tongues, our poisonous lips, our bloody feet, and all our unglorious beings will be so changed that we will have His glory. Maybe that helps you see why our salvation has to be by grace,

by His unmeritable favor, provided by him without our earning it. And it should help us see why, after being saved (born again), we can not grow toward our final salvation state by working (the great subject of the book of Galatians).

Peter must have realized (or rather, the Holy Spirit, knowing that about us, guided Peter in this) that we needed to be assured that it is God's glory that we will have through eternity, so he wrote in I Pet-5:10: "And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you." He has called us unto His eternal glory and to be sure that we arrive there He Himself shall perfect, establish, strengthen us. With the old saints we should shout, "Hallelujah!"

But back in Romans five let us notice that Paul also knew we would need to be assured that this goal is not beyond us. We can't reach it on our own, but God has provided a way for us to be assured that He will see that we will arrive at that wonderful goal. We won't go over the details now, leaving that for future articles, but note in the next two verses (3 & 4) that Paul says that "we" (those who know what he is telling) rejoice in tribulations because they make us steadfast and that steadfastness gives us a sense of being approved (in spite of our personal unworthiness) and that sense of being approved of God gives us hope. He then adds this significant statement at the opening of verse five—"and hope putteth not to shame."

I wondered for a long time exactly what "putteth not to shame" meant. It finally dawned on my slow brain that that is his way of saying "it does not end in disappointment." I think it is William R. Newell in "Romans Verse by Verse" who explains this by a simple illustration of a small town boy who aspired to being a doctor. The town needed a doctor so the people of the town collected enough money to send him through medical school with the understanding he would come back to practice there. Unfortunately his hopes were dashed and he flunked out of medical school at the end of the first year. He went back to his home town feeling that he had disgraced himself and disappointed all of them, his hope had "ended in disappointment," so he had been "put to shame." Paul says that will not happen to us. He goes on in that verse to show why—"because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us." The Holy Spirit would not be dwelling in us and giving such confirmation of our salvation in us if God had not already intended that we would reach the goal He has set for us. So in the rest of this first paragraph of Romans 5 (through verse 11) Paul shows us why we can have the greatest confidence that even weak ones like we are will be upheld by Him.

So do not trust in your own strength (or, rather, your supposed strength, for you have none) but trust in the Lord, place yourself completely in His hands and look to Him to bring us home to Himself so He can "establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints" (I Thes-salonians 2:13). Remember, you are a part of the church which is His body and He will "present the church to himself a glorious church,

not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 2:27).

Dear reader, are you one of these or are you still lost because you will not put your trust completely in Him? I implore you, be ye reconciled to God in Christ.

Editor's Note: Bro. Robert Shank is author of the book "Until..." which was reviewed in the June issue of **W & W**. Several have ordered copies of it, and we expect more response in light of this timely article.

SHOULD CHRISTIANS SUPPORT ISRAEL?

Robert Shank

Part II

Some in the churches say that God is not responsible for anything happening in Israel today. They say Christians must oppose Israel because its existence is contrary to the will and purpose of God as disclosed in the Scriptures. "Christians" they say, "must reject the Biblical literalism which is the foundation of the Zionist state of Israel." They insist that the prophecies of the restoration of Israel as a nation and as the Davidic Kingdom under the reign of Messiah, Son of David, are not to be fulfilled literally, but rather only spiritually in the triumph of the Church. Jesus, they say, is now reigning over the nations of the world through his churches, and the so-called "restoration of Israel" is fulfilled in the Church, which has forever replaced Israel as the true "Israel" and chosen people of God.

Those who say such things have failed to observe that in the context of the first categorical prophecy of the existence of the Church as a spiritual body and people of God (Deut. 32:21), Israel's perpetual identity as a people of God and chosen nation is affirmed, whose end and destiny is not oblivion, but blessing and glory when, after a period of estrangement (the great Indignation and Exile), God "will be merciful to his land and his people," for which cause the nations at last will rejoice with his people" Israel (Deut. 32:43).

In the great Prophetic Ode of Moses (Deut. 32) two peoples are in view—Israel, and another "people." God declares that because Israel "stirred me to jealousy with what is no god (and) provoked me with their idols, so will I stir them to jealousy with those who are no people, I will provoke them with a foolish nation" (v. 21). Because of their unfaithfulness, Israel was to be scattered among the nations and severely chastised, but the design of the chastisement was not the annihilation of Israel as a people, but rather discipline, recovery, and national restoration. A people who were as yet "not a people" (the Church) would become the catalyst by which Israel, seeing their enjoyment of the favor and blessing of God as also his "people," at last would be provoked to jealousy and be moved to seek the mercy of God in a great renewal of penitence and faith.

Fifteen centuries after Moses, Peter wrote to the faithful of the Church,

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Pet. 2:9, 10)

Let the church rejoice in her privilege as "God's people" and in legitimate spiritual applications of Old Testament prophecies to herself. But let her understand that spiritual application of prophecies to the Church in no way obviates their literal fulfillment in the experience of Israel. There are two peoples in view in the Prophetic Ode of Moses rather than one, and the prior people is Israel, prominent throughout the ode to the end, which foretells the time when God "will avenge the blood of his servants and render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful to his land and to his people" (v. 43). Israel's prophetic prospect is here identified with the *land* of Israel, as throughout the Scriptures. Israel is to be a kingdom again, a nation-kingdom far more overtly defined in the world perspective than the Church has been as a spiritual kingdom in the present age. In the Messianic Age, when the kingdom is restored to Israel by the authority of the Father (Acts 1:6, 7), Israel will be first among the nations in the world kingdom of Messiah.

The Prophetic Ode of Moses affirms a cardinal thesis of Bible prophecy: the ultimate restoration of Israel to her Land and her perpetual identity as a chosen people of God. Any interpretation of Bible prophecy which is contrary to the thesis of the Ode of Moses is false. Nothing could be more contrary to the scenario of the Ode of Moses than the teaching that the Church has forever supplanted Israel as the people of God and that Israel is not to be restored to her Land and to the blessing and favor of God in the Messianic Age.

Those who have failed to observe the full spectrum of the prophetic significance of the Ode of Moses have also failed to observe that God said during the days of the Exile, while the people of Israel are "cast far off among the nations" and "scattered among the countries, I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come" until the time when "I will even gather you from the people and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel" (Ezek. 11:16, 17). The Church, truly "God's people" and a spiritual "Israel," has not supplanted God's people Israel, and from the beginning of the Dispersion, God's purpose has been to regather Israel to the Land and to give them "a new spirit and heart" and to "give them the land of Israel," where "they will be my people, and I will be their God" (Ezek. 11:17-20).

Should Christians support Israel? They *must* if they are to fulfill one of God's purposes in the Church: to serve as a catalyst to provoke Israel to envy and thus to encourage her to seek God more earnestly in penitence and faith in preparation for the coming of Messiah.

Near the conclusion of Paul's great excursus concerning the temporary partial blindness and ultimate recovery and restoration of Israel collectively ("all Israel"), the apostle writes to the church at Rome, "Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now be-

come disobedient in order that they too may receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you" (Rom. 11:30, 31 NIV). But how will Israel and the Jewish people see anything of the mercy of God reflected in God's other people, the Church, and be moved to "envy" if Christians are unmerciful, uncaring, and unloving toward Israel and the Jews and are instead anti-Semitic and anti-Israel? Christians and churches who are hostile toward Israel and the Jewish people are failing God in one of his purposes in the Church, a cardinal aspect of his great prophetic plan for Israel, the Church, and the nations. How will such Christians answer in that Day?

"We will love Israel after God circumcises their hearts," say some in the Church, "but we cannot love Israel now." Oh? When did God first love *you*, Christian friend? God loves Israel with "an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3, see the entire chapter), and he has continued to love Israel in the long dark centuries of her Exile, a chastisement imposed for discipline and recovery rather than for destruction and annihilation. Do you think God will hold you guiltless for failing to love Israel whom he loves with "an everlasting love"? Have another thought, friend.

While the full restoration of Israel to the Land and "circumcision of heart" awaits the coming of Messiah, a vanguard of the people must be established in the Land prior to the time. To provide for the fulfillment of certain prophecies concerning the end of the age and the coming of Messiah, Israel must be established as a nation in the Land in the final years of the age, though not yet the restored kingdom, which awaits the coming of the King. God is at work in Israel today—the Jewish people and the little nation struggling so valiantly for survival.

On May 14, 1948, Israel again became a nation. The restoration of Israel as a nation is of utmost significance in the light of the great Restoration prophecies and of our Lord's words in Matthew 23:37-39 and elsewhere (cf. Luke 21:24, Acts 1:6, 7). The prophetic significance of the nation Israel is reflected in the words of Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, in two addresses:

"I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel." In our sight and in our days the scattered people is coming home from every corner of the globe and every point of the compass, out of all the nations among which it was cast away, and it is coursing over its Land, over Israel redeemed.

What has secured the survival of the Jewish people throughout the generations and led to the creation of the state is the Messianic vision of the prophets of Israel, the vision of redemption for the Jewish people and for all humanity. The ingathering of the exiles, the return of the Jewish people to its land, is the beginning of the realization of the Messianic vision.

Significant, too, are the words of Isaac Ben-Zvi, second President of the State of Israel, in his inaugural address:

We are witnessing today the wondrous process of the joining of the tribes of Israel, bone to bone and flesh to flesh, the merging of them into one nation. . . . I pray that the Rock and Redeemer of Israel may prosper our ways, and that in our days Judah may be saved and Israel may dwell securely.

The following two passages are from the Order of Prayer prepared under auspices of the Chief Rabbinate of the State of Israel, to be prayed with other prayers on Independence Day, the anniversary of the proclamation of the reconstitution of the State of Israel.

May it be Thy will, O Jehovah our God and the God of our fathers, that as we have been granted the dawn of redemption, so may we be granted to hear the trumpet of the Messiah.

He who performed miracles for our fathers and for us who redeemed Israel from servitude to freedom, may He speedily redeem us with a complete redemption and gather our dispersed ones from the four corners of the earth, and we shall sing before Him a new song. Hallelujah.

Three thousand years ago David, great warrior king of Israel and prophet of God, wrote words soon to be fulfilled:

O that deliverance for Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad. (Psa. 14:7)

I am told by men who know him personally that Prime Minister Begin is a devout man of faith who believes God for the covenants and the coming of Messiah. Unless duties of office prevent it, every Saturday night he gathers friends into his home for an evening of Bible study and prayer, and they study especially the Prophets. O that all the people of the churches believed God for the coming of Messiah as faithfully as some of the leaders of the little nation Israel!

God is at work today in Israel, both in the little nation and among Jews throughout the world, in preparation for the final prophetic events of the age and the coming of Messiah. Developments are rapidly shaping the world scene for that great climactic event toward which all history past has moved.

It is emphatically clear from the Scriptures that God will pour vengeance on all who persecute Israel in the time of her travail in the last days of the age. "He that touches you touches the apple (pupil) of my eye," said God of Israel (Zech. 2:8). To Abraham, God said, "I will bless them who bless you, and curse him who curses you" (Gen. 12:3). "Oh, that promise was only to Abraham," say some, and not to Israel as a nation in later generations." Indeed! Was the Spirit of God mistaken when, some five centuries later, he caused Balaam to prophesy concerning the little fledgling nation Israel, "Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you"? (Num. 24:9). It is noteworthy that Balaam's prophecy looks to the day of the coming of Messiah and the triumph of Israel over her adversaries (vs. 17ff). Woe to all who in these last days oppose God's work in his people Israel. How will Christians answer God in that Day who oppose the little nation of Israel today and label it "the work of Satan rather than of God," as some have done because of their tragic misconstruction of God's prophetic Word?

Should Christians support Israel? They *must* if they are to enjoy the favor and blessing of God and to be found faithful to God and to our Lord the Messiah, Son of David and the greatest Son of Israel—Redeemer, Messiah, and King of Israel and the Church, coming soon to reign over all the nations of earth.

In these last days of the age, as the dark storm clouds gather over the Middle East and the whole world, let Christians everywhere love and support Israel in her time of travail. Let them speak out for Israel at every opportunity. Let them undergird the little nation in continual prayer to God.

Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth. (Isa. 62:6, 7).

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper who love thee. (Psa. 122:6).

Psychological Threats to Biblical Authority

Billy Ray Lewter, Ph. D.

The problem of the authority of scripture is the most fundamental problem the church faces. Without the authority of the Bible, any belief on any issue would have about as much validity as any other. Without an objective standard of judgment, no belief system could be removed from subjective, relative reasoning and declared as truth.

The Bible claims to be truth as it describes a series of divine interventions in history. In all its parts it is infallible and final as to authority. Paul summarized this in II Timothy 3:16, "Every scripture is inspired by God."

This doesn't mean God has revealed everything. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "The secret things belong to Jehovah, but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever." Neither can we understand all that has been revealed. Because of our sinful nature, our understanding is limited. We see in a mirror darkly. Not a single doctrine can be grasped in its brilliant totality. But still, scripture claims authority can be grasped over our lives and destinies. It must be approached with all the care, ability, and humility we can bring to it.

Of all Satan's efforts to undermine this fundamental truth, from within and without the church, the more subtle challenges are the most threatening.

INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOLOGY

A current example comes from the impact of Psychological principles. There has been a very positive shift in the church in recent years toward body life and small group movements, interpersonal relationships, personal development, marriage enrichment, and pastoral counseling.

This shift has brought personal involvement and openness, insight and sensitivity to others, and less rigidity and authoritarianism. It is such practice of truth that helps to heal the incredibly fractured relationships within so many churches. It enables us to be more spiritual and less "religious."

Exciting, yet alarming! There are real dangers in the uncritical application of psychological understanding. Robertson McQuilkin, president of Columbia Bible College, perceptively states that in the next two decades the greatest threat to Biblical authority is the Christian behavior scientist who would guard the front door against any attack on the inspiration and authority of Scripture, while at the same time letting the content of Scripture slip out the back door through psychological interpretations.

HUMAN POTENTIAL

A real danger is the one-sided emphasis on self-fulfillment and happiness. Never in history have people been so occupied with the study of self. There are currently over 2,000 books dealing with self-improvement. Popular Christian writers, through glowing anecdotes and testimonies, present formulas for how to get God to meet our needs, to make us happy, and to give us positive mental health.

Books of a generation ago, such as *Calvary Road* and *Sacrifice*, and the Keswick movement's "deeper Christian life," emphasized brokenness and self-denial, and often produced feelings of worthlessness and guilt. Most of the new books react to such teachings, emphasizing the need to feel good about ourselves. A common theme is the effort to pump up our self-image.

Abraham Maslow's "self-actualized" person has been equated with the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. While many of the characteristics are similar, the fruit of the Spirit is precisely that; it does not come from within man, but from without, from the Spirit of God. Maslow's self-fulfillment is exactly the opposite. There is a great gulf between them which is glossed over and minimized. The authority of Scripture concerning the nature of man is undermined by the humanistic assumptions of man's goodness and innate potential.

Most of the newer Christian books concentrate almost exclusively on *justification*, in which the believer is declared righteous in Christ. Because of this truth we can and should see ourselves as worth the life of Jesus to God, accepted in Christ, and competent in the Holy Spirit.

The problem is that few of these books ever deal with *sanctification*, need for holy living, or being conformed to the image of Christ.

Luke 9:23-27 tells us to deny self, not affirm it, to follow Christ's way, not to become all that we're capable of being. Romans 6:11 says to be dead to sinfulness and alive to God. Galatians 6:3, 4, as well as II Corinthians 10:12, says to judge ourselves by God's standard, not of other people. Romans 12:2-8 teaches the need to think soberly and balanced, being prepared for God's personal plan by having our thinking transformed.

We need a balanced, accurate self-appraisal that includes both justification and sanctification. We don't need to establish our self-worth, just accept it.

The positive self-fulfillment emphasis overlooks Hebrews 11 and the heroes of the faith. Tribulation seems to be necessary for the development of patience, faith, and love. Job's "though He slay me yet will I trust Him" may be more precious in God's sight than a faith that removes mountains of tribulation. In the final analysis, emotional

welfare, as well as physical health, are of less value than our relationship to God.

SOURCES OF TRUTH

Another subtle threat arises from a widely held interpretation of special and general revelation. The Bible is God's special revelation and concerns truth that could never be discovered empirically or rationally. Scriptures provide the frame work within which all true knowledge fits, and also set the moral and spiritual absolutes for the vast expansion of modern knowledge.

General revelation refers to the truths God has revealed in nature. All truth, whether from a sacred or secular source of revelation, is God's truth. To regard any part of creation as secular and independent of God, is to rob Him of His glory.

Yet sin has darkened the intellect and dulled sensibilities so that it is difficult to comprehend the evidences (Romans 1:21). Science has exalted general truth to the ultimate principle of explanation.

The threat to Biblical authority comes when Christian psychologists move beyond the recognition of two sources of God's truth to the specific belief that a conflict between psychology (as a part of general revelation) and the Bible is in *appearance* only. Since truth would not contradict itself, (it is taught), either we have an error in psychological interpretation, or we have misinterpreted the Bible, or both. Evangelicals are seen as being too isolationist, as viewing psychology as an inferior truth when compared to the Bible, and as failing to grab hold of a large portion of God's truth, leaving a truncated gospel. These sources are seen as equally meaningful, equally clear, and equally authoritative.

One problem with the "two sources of truth" issue concerns what is truth in psychology. I agree with Cervantes in *Don Quixote*, "where truth is, insofar as it is truth, there God is." But where is the truth in psychology? Every so-called "fact" has a theoretical context in which it arises, and which is disputed by other philosophical "schools" of psychology. Which "fact" is truth and can be separated from its theory-laden base as neutral?

There are no hard, firm, value-free facts in psychology. The more we look into any conclusion, the weaker it is. Psychological "truths" change often, are fragmented, have limited applications, and have about as many interpretations as there are psychologists. "In the last analysis," according to Carl Rogers, "all psychological knowledge rests on the personal subjective experience of the researcher." It is relative to the faith-context of the thinker.

The conflicts between psychology and Scripture have been reduced to the gap between "facts" and "theories." Conflicts exist in appearance only. In their unity efforts many Christian psychologists are minimizing the relativity of "facts," as well as the radical opposition of psychology to any *absolute* truth. The "truth" of much contemporary psychology may not be God's at all, but simply an illusion of human ignorance. There must be an acceptance of this conflict as serious, genuine and real.

There is another flaw in unity thinking. If in a conflict our interpretation is at fault, the supreme value involved is human reasoning— which is humanism!

The purpose of general revelation is to make known God. Nature reveals His “power and name” (Ex. 9:16), “glory” (Ps. 19:1), “greatness and might” (Isaiah 40:26), and “eternal power and divine nature” (Romans 1:19-20). General revelation is a partial but beautiful representation of the personality of God.

The purpose of general revelation, however, is not to tell us how to live, which is what psychology invariably does. Sweeping generalizations are made to profound levels of behavior, and into the very bedrock of society, from research on the most superficial, isolated “bits” of behavior, often of animals.

THE QUESTION OF AUTHORITY

Some seminary psychologists have stated even stronger positions. Evangelicals are said to be dishonest when they talk of integration and dialogue between psychology and theology for they always opt for the Bible in a conflict and assume psychology should be modified. This is considered a step backward, since “theology” should have no authority over Christian psychologists. Assumptions about the truth revealed in the Bible need not be regarded as authoritative over the assumptions of psychology. Neither should they have authority over the other since we don’t have full understanding of either. Acknowledging the authority of scripture in matters of spiritual faith does not force us to acknowledge Biblical authority over physical and social sciences. Statements such as these seem to put psychology on an equal basis with Scripture.

Another position states that Scripture must be taken as conditioned by its historical and cultural context. “It is imperative that the Bible’s human limitations and historical irregularities be differentiated from its redemptive material.” Psychologists must bind themselves to scientific investigation rather than the assumptions that were current in Bible times. Such cultural interpretation strikes a heavy blow at the authority of Scripture.

One other example of putting psychological understanding over Scripture comes from a current view of homosexuality. A Christian Association for Psychological Studies panel discussion on homosexuality rejected the traditional view and concluded that God condemns promiscuity, whether heterosexual or homosexual, but not homosexual behavior between committed Christians in a relationship of love and loyalty. They believe clinical practice forces us to take another look. A popular psychiatrist, who considers himself to be an evangelical, stated:

“It is my conviction that the legalistic interpretations of the various scripture passages bearing on this condition (homosexuality) are in error, both theologically and psychologically. I further am convinced that the homosexual who is a Christian can find his condition, however he chooses to handle it, a gift, rather than a curse. The church has much to gain from accepting these brethren openheartedly

and expectantly, profiting from the peculiar perspective on life and relationships which is theirs." It seems here, then, that the highest authority is the ministry and practice of the psychologist.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The purpose of this article is not to minimize general revelation, of the integration tasks of Christian psychologists. As mentioned earlier, psychology has had a tremendous impact on the church, and much of it is beneficial.

Psychology often discovers some of the dynamics of God's principles. There are kernels of truth in many otherwise conflicting positions. But we should be extremely careful and exercise great caution in what we use and how we apply it. Much of psychology falls outside the *overlap* between "disclosed truth" and "discovered truth," and is unworthy of a Christian's time, attention, and integrative efforts.

The greatest threat of all, however, to the authority of scripture is our own personal failure to *demonstrate* our belief. Our Biblical knowledge is so superficial, and our behavior falls so far short of the standard we profess to believe, that, with friends like us, God doesn't need enemies to challenge His word.

The Christian's Duty to His Country

It is a Christian's duty to pray for his nation and its leaders.

The scripture requires that ". . . supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life" (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

There is much that is evil in our government and in those who are leaders. We have experienced almost unbelieving deception and disappointment. New scandals involving the morals of leaders and the abuse of public moneys are coming to light almost daily. Yet, no matter what the government may come to, it is clearly our duty to pray for those in authority and for our nation. Moreover, when compared to other human governments, we still have abundant reason to thank God for our blessings. Let us pray for a great national awakening.

In precept and by example, Jesus taught that His followers should support their government by payment of taxes.

Jesus said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21).

Paul said, "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" (Rom. 13:6-7).

A follower of Christ should obey every ordinance of government for the Lord's sake with the exception of a law that is contrary to the commandments of the Word of God.

A Christian is to be subject to the laws of the land for the Lord's sake (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). Except where those laws are

directly contrary to the clear teaching of the Word of God, the Christian is to obey every ordinance (see e.g., Acts 4:18-20). The officials of the government, generally speaking, are not there to harass good works, but rather to restrict and discourage evil works. For the Lord's sake and to maintain a good testimony, a Christian must obey even the traffic laws and the local ordinances. He must also faithfully and honestly report and pay taxes.

A good Christian will be a good citizen.

This does not mean that he will be involved in the ways everyone suggests, but his obedience, his moral values, his pursuit of good, his reliability, etc., should be such as to make a solid citizen.

Let us thank God for the glorious heritage we enjoy in America. More missionaries have gone out from our shores than from the rest of the nations of the world combined. More Gospel radio and television programs are broadcast here than in all the rest of the world. Let us join in earnest prayer for our nation, that evil may be overcome and that men of high principle and strong faith will become leaders in our government. Let criticism of the government decrease and prayer for it increase. We need not be blind concerning the evil, but neither let us be dumb before God in interceding for our nation.

Remember, the Christian's duty to his country is to *pray, pay, and obey*. —Adapted

"For our citizenship is in heaven..." (Phil. 3:20).

Alex Wilson is a missionary in the Philippines.



Preparing For A Marvelous Marriage

Alex V. Wilson

Deciding about marriage is the second most important decision you will ever make in your lifetime. (The most important, of course, is whether to follow Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior). Should YOU marry? Believe it or not, there are some advantages to single life. See what Paul said about it in 1 Cor. 7. Since this side of the question is rarely presented, study it carefully.

If you should marry, WHOM will you marry? Jane or June or Joan or Jean? Jim or Jack or Joe? How will you decide? And even if your choice is already made, WIEN will you marry? That is important too.

The pressures of modern life put a great strain on marriage. In some parts of the U. S. as many as one out of every two marriages end in divorce! Here in the Philippines many homes are broken even though divorce is not allowed. A few years ago it was discovered that

65% of the students at an expensive school for Filipinos were from homes where their father and mother were not living together. That it tragic, for broken homes usually produce broken lives.

Prepare Beforehand

Strong and happy marriages do not just happen. They result from careful preparation: praying, thinking, evaluating, planning, and character-building. Churches need to help their members prepare for vibrant, Christ-centered marriages and homes. We should *teach* about God's standards and resources for the family. Perhaps start a lending-library of *good books* about the home. Perhaps hold a *seminar* on Christian family-life. Or use some of the valuable *Sunday School Materials* that are available regarding courtship and marriage. *Pre-marital counseling* is also an important ministry. A wise policy is for a pastor to refuse to marry any couple unless they first meet with him for at least one and preferably two or three counseling sessions. Announce this policy to your congregation, so they won't be caught by surprise. I prefer to meet for the first session at least one month before the wedding, and then hold another session one or two weeks later. I recommend some books for them to read before the wedding too.

Here are helpful questions to ask during pre-marital counseling. Perhaps this list will assist new pastors to formulate their own set of questions. Or maybe it will enable couples who are engaged (or thinking about it) to consider these important matters before their pastor asks them.

PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING QUESTIONS

1. **How long** have you known each other? How long have you gone together seriously?
2. Your **ages**: If there is a wide gap in your ages, what effects might this have on your relationship, now or later?
3. Your **educational attainments**: If differing, what effects might this have?
4. Your **occupations**: Are you happy in your occupation, or hoping to change?
5. Your **racial/cultural heritage**: If they differ, what effects might this have?
6. Your **economic status**: well-to-do? average? poor? If differing, what effects might such differences have?
7. Do you know and enjoy each other's **friends**?
8. Are your **goals in life** basically harmonious? Have you ever discussed them?
9. Are your **moral standards** basically harmonious?
10. Are your **temperaments** basically harmonious? Do you understand each other quite well? (A good book to read: **Spirit-Controlled Temperament**, by Tim LaHaye).
11. How would each of you describe your **relation to Jesus Christ**? How long have you been His disciple? What changes has He made in your lives? Do you pray together? Do you plan to have a "family altar"? What makes you believe it is God's will for you to marry each other?
12. Do you attend the **same church**? If not, then what church do you intend to attend after you marry? Are you agreed wholeheartedly on this, or is there any reluctance or irritation on the part of the one who is "giving in"? Will you really be active in your church, or just "attend"? If you are from different church backgrounds, then what beliefs and practices will you teach your children to follow?

13. How would you classify the **married life of your parents** through the years that you were growing up:
 ___extremely happy ___fairly happy ___satisfactory ___unhappy
 ___very bad
 What do you believe were the reasons why their marriage was the way it was (whether happy, unhappy, etc.?)
14. **How do your parents feel** about your forthcoming marriage:
 ___very favorable ___favorable ___OK ___disapprove ___strongly disapprove
 If they disapprove, what **reasons** do they give? Have you seriously considered these?
15. Do you know each other's **parents** and **other relatives** well? Do you feel comfortable with them?
16. Are you aware of each other's **faults**? How do you react to them? How might they affect your marriage, now and later?
17. Have you ever been quite **angry at each other**? How did you respond? Did you truly forgive? How will you respond next time? Do you know how to handle such situations constructively?
18. When you **disagree** over an important decision, what do you do?
 Who will be the head of your home? How should such headship be carried out?
 What does this mean in practical ways? (Eph. 5:21-33)
19. Do you know each other's physical conditions—health; tendencies toward sickness; strength; weaknesses?
 Have you **recently** had a thorough physical check-up by a doctor? You should, as soon as possible—before the wedding! Inform the doctor of your plans to marry.
20. Do you know the amount of your income? Have you discussed and planned at least a tentative **budget**? Do you know at least approximately what your expenses will be? What kind of **Lifestyle** will you follow, economically . . . not only now, but later? Do you agree on this matter—the kind of home you will desire, and furniture and appliances you consider essential, etc? Will you title regularly? Do you know how to set up a budget? Have you while single been able to live within a budget? What debts do you owe to any one, which will affect your budget?
21. Do you **both plan to work**? Have you carefully thought about if the wife should hold an outside job once she becomes a mother (or even before then)?
 If you both plan to hold jobs, and your budget will be based on the combined incomes, then what will you do if the wife needs to stop her outside job because of children?
22. Are you well informed about matters related to **sex**? Do you understand the Bible's teaching about mutual sex duties, as in 1 Cor. 7:1-5 (use a modern translation)? This passage clearly implies that sex is God's good provision for husband and wife, even apart from its reproductive purpose. Have you planned your honeymoon? Where, and how long?
23. Have you discussed and agreed on **how many children** you want, and when you want them? Are you aware of various family-planning methods, and do you agree on this matter?
 Have you ever discussed your ideas on **child-rearing**?
24. **Where will you live**? With the parents of one of you, or separate from them? Have you considered how you can use your home in the service of Christ?
25. Have you planned your wedding? Where? When? How many in the wedding party? Have you considered expenses? What to include in the ceremony? Have you applied yet for a marriage license?

Comments on the Questionnaire

Wow—so many questions! Yes, it's a long list. But each ques-

tion is important. It only goes to show that marriage calls for a good deal of maturity and experience. It should not be entered into lightly, by any means. Especially risky is early marriage. One well-known authority on marriage, Judson Landis, concluded from statistics some years ago that the "divorce rate was six times higher in the marriages where both spouses were under 21, than in the marriages in which both spouses were 31 or over at the time of marriage." And in a recent survey almost one-fourth of the wives said they felt they had married too early. In other words, Slow down! What's the rush? Those who dash into marriage are usually the first to wish that they could dash out of it somehow.

One lesson is clear: It takes *time* to know someone well enough to discover if he or she is right for you. That fact is the basis of questions #1, 7-11, and 15-19. That is, you will not be able to answer those questions intelligently and sufficiently unless you have known each other for quite a while.

Equally Yoked and Well Matched

Another point is of crucial importance, and it is the reason for questions #2-12. The more *areas of similarity* that exist between a man and woman, the more likely they are to have a happy marriage. When quite large gaps exist, whether educationally, economically, spiritually, socially or morally, there will almost always be dangerous tensions. Of course this does not mean that a couple must be completely similar in background to get along well. A man with a Ph.D. *might* have a successful marriage with a high-school dropout (if, for example, she is an intelligent, self-educated person), but such would be a very rare exception to the rule. When several disparities exist, or even just one disparity that is really big, then it is almost certain that the marriage will turn sour. This point is verified by countless statistics, by almost every marriage counselor, and—in the case of a believer marrying a nonbeliever—by 2 Cor. 6:14ff in the Bible. (The matter of temperaments is an exception to what we are saying here. Many happy married couples are of different temperaments. But you need to be sure you are compatible temperamentally. Again, time is needed for such a discovery.)

Differences in cultural background (question #5) affect us deeply, often without our even realizing it. Marriage counselor Emily Mudd gives an interesting example of this.

Leo and Marie had been married three years when Marie came to us for help. They had met at work and fallen in love. Leo's family was from Italy, Marie's from Ireland.

Marie told us that from the beginning Leo was inconsiderate. For instance, when they became engaged he rented an apartment *without consulting her*, and brought dining-room and bedroom furniture without consulting her. Then he said, "Now we're ready for the wedding." Also, he made more fuss over his mother than he made over her. Also, he wanted her to cook all sorts of Italian messes that took forever to fix. With two small children she just couldn't manage to prepare them.

Leo was angry when he came in. He told us he'd done everything to show his wife how much he loved her. Before their wedding, for instance, he got their home all ready for her *without bothering her about it*. All he asked was that she learn to cook the kind of food he liked. His mamma would teach her, but Marie was jealous of mamma. Was a man supposed to stop loving his mother when he got married?

The counselor helped Marie understand that most Italians grew up assuming that the man made the decisions and did the major buying. Also, Italians made a big fuss over their mothers. Leo wasn't criticizing her when he asked her to do things differently; he was merely expecting what he was used to.

As a start, the counselor suggested, why didn't Leo and Marie sit down and plan their menus for the week together? Marie could say how many of the Italian specialties she thought she could cope with—and then ask Leo's mother to teach her. This they did. Talking about food led to talking about other differences and ultimately to a new understanding.

Your Parents and Your Spouse

Our ideas and expectations of the roles of husband and wife are shaped not only by our culture but also by the way our parents carried out those roles as we grew up. Note question #13. A marriage counselor gives us three examples of what I mean.

a. A wife had a father who ran around on weekends with a bag of tools fixing things in the house and yard. She expects her husband to be like her father. That is the husband's role as she saw her father live it. If her husband is all thumbs, and can't drive a nail, she feels betrayed.

b. A husband whose mother spent all of her spare time fixing bountiful meals, cleaning house, and mending clothes may feel let down if his wife is not enthusiastic about housework. His concept of the wife-and-mother's role has been fixed by his mother, and now he feels resentful toward his wife—perhaps without realizing why.

c. Someone whose parents expressed their affection for each other warmly and openly might feel deprived if his spouse was very undemonstrative. On the other hand, if his parents were inhibited and restrained in expressing affection, he might feel embarrassed and smothered if his spouse is demonstrative.

These areas are worth thinking over and discussing.

Health, Sex and Money

Question #19 deals with a practical matter that too often is taken for granted. A thorough medical check-up revealed to a prospective bride that her run-down condition made it wise for her not to conceive a child during her first year of marriage. In another case, a very minor operation (one night in the hospital) was needed by a bride-to-be, so that the first time of sexual union would not be extremely difficult and painful. Although those two cases were unusual, it is still common sense to see your doctor several weeks before your wedding.

Sex (question #22) is a vast subject in itself, but a number of good books from a Christian standpoint are available. For a couple who expect to be married soon, one of the following is recommended: *Sexual Happiness in Marriage*, by Herbert Miles, or *The Marriage Act*, by Tim LaHaye.

Here is some advice about the family budget (question #21). If it is likely that the wife will be a wage-earner for a year or so, but then quit her paying job and stay with the children at home, wise foresight is needed. Let's say, just for the sake of example, that she earns \$1,000 monthly and her husband earns \$1,000 monthly. So they base their budget on a regular income of \$2,000 a month. Then the baby arrives, the wife quits her job, and suddenly three persons have to live on \$1,000 monthly whereas up till now two persons were living on \$2,000. Disaster!

Here is a solution. Base your budget of major, *regular* expenses on the husband's income only, not on the wife's. In other words, pay your love-gifts to the Lord, and your food, rent or housing, utilities, transportation, and taxes from the amount earned by the husband. Then when the wife stops earning, you can continue paying for these necessities without trouble. Use the wife's income for other things: furniture and appliances, clothes, repaying of debts, medical expenses, and savings. When you buy furniture, appliances, and clothes, they should last for quite a while and therefore be occasional expenses rather than monthly ones. (You pay less if you pay all at once instead of by installment.) Medical costs also will be occasional, we hope; but set aside a monthly amount for them because when they come they are big. Repaying debts and putting money into savings should be done regularly, of course. But hopefully by the time the wife stops earning, the debts will already be paid off and the husband will be earning more than before so that the savings can be made from his income by then.

Marriage is no easy matter. It needs much care and prayer. If Christ is truly the head of the marriage, it can be rewarding and enriching. But an unwise, unstable marriage will be devastating. Here's wishing the best to you.

Recommended Reading:

Many Christians around the world have been helped by the writings of marriage counselor Walter Trobisch. *Living With Unfulfilled Desires* is for younger teenagers. *I Loved a Girl* probes the subjects of courtship, sex and marriage. *I Married You* deals with husband-wife relations.

For counselors, a book of pre-marital questionnaires, much more detailed than this article, is published by Bethany Fellowship. It is *A Pre-marital Guide for Couples*, by David Thompson. It is designed to be used in four or more one-hour counseling sessions.



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Studies in the Book of Acts

Larry Miles

Five Reasons For Church Growth

I would like to thank Brother Carl Ketcherside for supplying the ideas for this essay. I had the privilege of hearing him in a three-day meeting with the Westside Church of Christ in Hamilton, Ohio. It is my prayer that these words can assist us in our efforts to unite the Christians in all the sects.

We read in Matthew 16:18 that Jesus promised to establish His Church. This glorious event took place on the Day of Pentecost. The Book of Acts tells us that it was on that day that the God of Heaven launched His Church.

We are going to base our remarks on the 4th chapter of Acts. We want to encourage all to follow along in the Bible and come to their own conclusions. In the first few chapters of the Book of Acts, the Bible tells us that the infant church centered her ministries in the city of Jerusalem. The Christians had not ventured out of the city as Jesus had told them to do. The narrative centers our attention on the work of Peter and John. In the third chapter they had just healed the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple.

We would like to briefly spend some time on each of the five reasons for church growth that we have gleaned from this chapter. If we are willing to see how the early church existed among the Jewish, Roman, and Greek cultures, and implement their techniques, we too, can experience church growth. It will help us work for the unity of all believers in Christ.

THE EARLY CHURCH PREACHED THE RIGHT MESSAGE

In Acts 4:2 we read the following, "Being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people, and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead." As the apostles were teaching, opposition arose from the Sadducees. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection from the dead. There are many, today, who deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Today, like in the Apostolic Age, it takes boldness to proclaim the resurrection. But we must, like Peter and John, declare it from our pulpits and in our conversations with all whom we contact. The infant church stressed the importance of proclaiming the resurrection of the Lord of Glory. The resurrection is the driving force behind the gospel. It should be the basis

for all our messages. Jesus proved Himself to be the Christ through the resurrection. It makes the church and her mission strong. We should declare it as the bedrock of Christian faith. For if Christ was not raised, then there is no hope. If Christ did not rise from the dead, then He is not Savior, and we are destined for a devil's hell. The resurrection of Jesus demonstrated that the power of God was, and is, superior to that of Satan. The resurrection of Jesus is the most essential element of the Christian faith. So, we must be found proclaiming to the world, and to the assembly, that Jesus Christ conquered death. This is why we can die with the hope of the resurrection from the dead.

THE EARLY CHURCH PREACHED THE RIGHT NAME

In Acts 4:12, we read, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." This passage declares that salvation is in the name of Jesus Christ. When the Bible uses the expression, "in the name of," as used here and in Acts 2:38, it means by the authority of. Many today are saying that it does not matter what you believe in or who you believe in. That is not the case. A world that is under the sentence of death needs a redeemer. In John 14:6 we read the following, "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me.'" The primitive church declared that Jesus was the hope of the world. Let us lift up Jesus to a dying world. Let the world know what Jesus means to us. Jesus Christ offers the only hope there is.

THE EARLY CHURCH HAD BOLDNESS IN DEFENSE OF THE TRUTH

Read Acts 4:13-21 concerning this proposition. The Sanhedrin commanded Peter and John not to preach the resurrection of Jesus under the threat of punishment. We see, in this passage, that the apostles possessed boldness in defense of the gospel. They were ready to go anywhere and everywhere to announce the good news. What is the good news? In I Corinthians 15, sometimes called the resurrection chapter, verses 1-4 tell us that the gospel consists of the fact that Jesus died and was buried and that He arose from the dead. Let us look to the boldness of these disciples and today, in our time, be strong in the strength. Let us know what we believe and why we believe it. Let us believe that the Word of God is both infallible and inerrant. If we know why we believe we can have boldness in presenting the gospel to a lost world. In Jude 3 there is a passage that fits the situation, "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you, appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once and for all delivered to the saints."

THE EARLY CHURCH WAS A PRAYING CHURCH

After Peter and John had been released by the Sanhedrin, they went back to the rest of the apostles and other fellow Christians to give a report of what had transpired. But an account of the facts was not all that took place. Verses 24-31 record that the early church was a

praying church. In Acts 4:2:9 we read, "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence." The infant church believed in the power of prayer. The early church not only believed in the power of prayer, they believed in answered prayer. We must not only preach and teach about prayer but we must pray. Many of the great figures of the Old and New Testament were men of prayer. God has told us to pray. If we pray knowing that God hears and expecting that God will answer in a way that will bring glory to His name, we can have a victorious prayer life. Remember, it is our creator that we are talking to. If we can recapture the prayer life of the infant church we can better stimulate church growth.

THE EARLY CHURCH WAS ONE IN CHRIST

Verse 32 tells us that the early church was one. The primitive saints did not make matters a test of fellowship that God did not make a condition of salvation. The infant church of the Living God was ready to work together in her mission to reach the lost with the saving grace of Jesus Christ. If we today could work together, realizing that we can differ on non-essential things, we would see the world evangelized for the Risen Lord. But it seems that we are content to differ and argue over minute things while the world is going straight to hell. Perhaps we might have to answer to God for our attitudes. Let us put aside our differences that fall into the realm of opinion and let us unite in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is not to say that we have to sacrifice any teaching that we hold. But we must, in the areas of non-essentials, give our differing brethren the same liberty we would want them to give us.

If we are willing to learn from the experiences of the infant church, we can have church growth. The early church spread across the known world. The early Christians, wherever they went, preached the Word. If we put into practice the methods used by the early church, we, today, can have growth. We today can work for the unity of all believers in Christ. Remember, it is the Savior's prayer that we all be one. Let our circle of fellowship be as large as God's.



Shichiro, Teruko & Michiya Nakahara

Shizuoka City, Japan

July 20th

Some time has passed since my last report was made, and it is time again for me to share with you some of the things the Lord has done for and with us in between the times. Before going any further, I would like to express my personal appreciation to you who have had greater part in supporting us for the work here in Shizuoka. You

just don't know how much we feel we've been indebted to you for the promotion of the work as well as for our well-being. And we always give praise due to God and thanks for you.

I think I've told you about a boy of 14 yrs. of age, a Junior High School student, whose father strongly opposed to his becoming a Christian, was finally baptized on June 21. He came to our S.S. when he was only 8 and ever since. He is one of those few who have been led to the Lord all the way through these years. It was at our spring Bible camp when he first reached a conviction that he must be saved, but he wasn't allowed to be baptized. In the evening of the day we got back from the camp, he rushed into our house crying. He said his father was outside waiting for me to meet him, so I did. He gave me several reasons for the opposition and so I took time to explain each one accordingly and told him that's the best thing that ever occurred in the boy's life. He couldn't quite understand what I meant but by the time he was ready to leave me, his whole attitude was seen changed. He left me with a word of hope. He said, "We must wait and see how serious our son is with regard to his becoming a Christian!" One month passed and nothing took place. Another came to pass, but there was no sign whatsoever on his part. I began to worry that he may be drifting away from the conviction and we began to pray fervently for him. One afternoon in the first week of the month of June, he came to see me with a big smile on his face, and then I knew what he's going to tell me, so I said, "Congratulations!" before he said anything. He was overwhelmed with joy and tears sparkling in his eyes. It was no other than an evidence of the Spirit's working in his life and gave him a strong conviction that enabled him to overcome the opposition. This will tell you how much time it will take to lead one soul to Christ here in our country and we work with each soul intensely—sometimes over many years just like his case. He is now trying to lead two other boys to the Lord, and we all hope him to grow to be a useful servant of the Lord. Your prayer is so much appreciated for him. His name is Yoichi Ohashi.

Joy Garrett

Harare, Zimbabwe

July 7th

In the last month we have visited churches in the distant areas. Using the new 2½ ton Datsun Caball, we took a group to Henderson Farm church about 10 miles north from Raffingora which is about 100 miles from Harare which is the new name for Salisbury. It was a cold cloudy day and those in the back of the truck were pretty cold.

Robert is cutting and bending steel with some tools he bought in South Africa, to make a framework for a canopy for the Caball to shield the folk using it from the cold, sun, and rain.

When we arrived at Raffingora, we had tea at Bro. and Sis. Yesaya (Isaiah), who has ministered to that congregation for over 30 years. The Raffingora church which is across the road was having its thatched roof replaced. We added some members of that church to our "load" and went on to Henderson Farm. That compound has expanded greatly since the church started there about 10 years ago. A man and his wife had been baptized that morning. Robert spoke and the

Glen Norah group led by Bro. Machaya had three Chewa songs. Chewa is the language of these people from Malawi which work on the farms. After a good dinner we loaded up our group and the Raffingora members and headed home.

REPRINTS:

The Need of Our Day

R. H. Boll

Our young people are going to perdition, our children walk the path that leads to hell. Our brethren in Christ are growing sleepy and careless; the church is getting formal and worldly and losing its power. The world, the flesh, and the devil are holding high carnival all around us, thousands of lives drifting and rushing to destruction; and shall we sit back in easy chairs, and console ourselves that *we* at least are all right? Oh, that some of us would become burdened and oppressed with the awful need that cries to us from every side, and our selfish, lazy, self-complacency would give way to anxiety and anguish, till rest forsake us, and we cry out of crushed hearts: "Lord, help!" Then there might be a prospect of a new life and a new work, and a turning toward light and truth and righteousness.

"IT IS WRITTEN"

R. H. Boll

This is the sure anchorage of our faith: the written word of God. It is the certain proof of the spirit of error when men begin to exalt themselves above the written word; when they lay claim to some inward illumination which makes them independent of the Scriptures; or some supposed "Christian consciousness" by which they can discount or even discard what the Bible says. No one could more justly have relied on inward impressions and consciousness, but to the Lord Jesus, the "it is written" was final, the last and only court of appeal, against all the pleas of Satan. And when the latter tried to use the same argument, the Lord Jesus, far from denying the validity of the words which Satan quoted, by another "It is written," countered the misapplication of Satan's quotation. (Matt. 4:5-7). So to the Christian also "It is written" is a rock-foundation. A modernistic infidel likened the gospel to a composition of Mozart's music from which some would get one impression, another another; but no one a definite, final one. This is the attempt to destroy the authority of the written word, and the unfailling tell-tale mark of the cloven hoof. "He that is of God heareth us," says John; "he that is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." (1 John 4:6) And every effort to darken, to detract from, to change, to discredit God's written word, is the mark to that extent of that same evil spirit.

The Gospel of John

The Secret of Joy

S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.

John 3:22-30

Part II

The personal application (John 3:28-29). John now turns to the application of the principle to his ministry, and he does this both negatively and positively.

First of all, he points out that he made it clear that he was not the Messiah. He was the Messiah's ambassador. That was his function, a function that found expression in the Old Testament (cf. Mark 1:1-8).

And then, secondly, using the figure of a marriage, he likens his position in relation to the Messiah to an ancient friend of a bridegroom or, as we might say, to a best man. The friend of the bridegroom in an ancient eastern marriage had these functions: He asked the hand of the young woman. Then he acted as the mediator between the bridegroom and the bride during the period of their betrothal. And finally, he presided at the marriage feast just before the consummation of the marriage. The figure is an admirable one of the relation of the Baptist to the Lord Jesus Christ. So, in effect, John says that he has the joy of a friend of the bridegroom. It was his task to ask for the hand of the nation Israel for marriage to their Bridegroom, the Messiah. This he did for the Messiah. In this respect his ministry finds its fulfillment, and in it John finds his joy and satisfaction. Therefore, for the disciples and others to turn to the One coming after him was his sought-after goal. He could not be upset over the things that were disturbing his disciples. That had been his witness to them, although it seems that many of them had not understood.

The vital conclusion (John 3:30). That leads on to John's climactic statement concerning his ministry, "He must increase, but I must decrease." It is a magnificent utterance, and we must give it attention.

In the first place, the statement makes it clear that John knows Jesus' place in the program of God for the nation. "He must increase" is its bellwether, both nationally and individually. The joy of John is that of what Henry Drummond called "otherism," the joy of living for others. What John did in fulfilling his historical function in the carrying out of the divine history of salvation in the progress of revelation is the pattern for individual living as well. In Paul's words, it is that in all things He might have the pre-eminence (cf. Col. 1:18).

In the second place, the clause, "I must decrease" indicates that John knows John's place. His place is subordinate to the Lord's. We have all seen the Christian placard, or framed inscription:

THE SECRET OF JOY

God First
Others Next
Self Last

Most of us act as if joy comes from the reverse order, but it is this mistake that lies behind the worship of wealth, pleasure, and power in our society.

And, sad to say, the failure exists in Christian ministry, where there is much jealousy and back-biting. There is a church in the Highlands of Scotland, which has in its vestry in a prominent place the well-known saying of James Denney, "No man can give at once the impression that he himself is clever and that Christ is mighty to save." He must come first, and John knew His place and his place!

And, finally, John knew John's disciples' place. And that place was to be attached to Jesus Christ, too, and so he pointed them in the direction of the Messiah. He told them he was only the Ambassador of the King (cf. v. 28), and that it was He who must increase (cf. v. 30). As Paul said of the Corinthians, "I have espoused you to ONE HUSBAND that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2). There can be no third party in a proper marriage, and we are married to Him (cf. Rom. 7:1-6). In a moment John will say, "He that cometh from above is above all" (cf. John 3:31), giving the reason why it is to Him alone that we must be attached.

The secret of joy, then, according to the Baptist is the putting of Christ and ourselves in our proper places, and our proper places are those that have been given to us by God. In the submission to His will and pleasure for us in the preeminence of Jesus Christ in our mind and heart is the secret of Christian joy. That is something that can only be "given" from heaven, as John said. We have the assurance, however, that, when we respond to the stirrings of the Holy Spirit to that end, it will be given, just as it was to John, Paul, and others.

If it should be asked, "How may we do this?" is there not a suggestion in John's own words, "the friend of the bridegroom, WHO STANDETH AND HEARETH HIM?" It was a Nigerian preacher who quaintly said, "You cannot place a load on a running donkey." If we do not have a place for His Words in our lives, then there is little likelihood that we shall enter into the joy of the Lord (cf. Luke 10:38-42; 2 Cor. 3: 18). It is by looking into the mirror of the Word of God that we are transformed into the image of the Lord. That "good part" is to sit at His feet and go on listening to His Word. Joy will, then, come.

The very order of the clauses of verse thirty accentuates this, too, for it is first the increase of His place in our lives that makes for an easy transition to the decrease of ourselves. Is He increasing in our lives? May the Lord enable us to give Him His proper place of pre-eminence, that we may learn to genuinely sing:

"O Christ, in Thee my soul hath found,
And found in Thee alone,
The peace, the joy, I sought so long,
The bliss till now unknwon.

Now none but Christ can satisfy,
None other name for me;
There's love and life, and *lasting joy*,
Lord Jesus, found in Thee."

Empty Pocket Hold-Ups

Mrs. Paul W. Knecht

Not long ago a man with his hand in his pocket held up a bank in the city of Louisville. How much money he got I don't know the amount is not pertinent to the main thought of this brief article. This article is concerned with the idea of empty pocket hold-ups.

I am reminded of an incident that took place some years ago down on the river bank in the Portland area. My daughter and I had gone to look up a woman who had visited the Portland Ave. church. My youngest son, a child of five or six, was with us. We were walking through an area where houses had been demolished and the ground had been worked over with a bulldozer, (perhaps in connection with the building of the floodwall)—a sort of no-man's land—when the child began pulling my hand and saying "There's a man following us". My reply that the man was just going the same way we were did not satisfy, and, indeed, the child was right. The man, who had been drinking, approached us with an obscene suggestion, and threatened us with "a gun" in his pocket. About that time he stumbled and fell, at our feet. I called to someone in the distance to get the police and stood over him while my daughter put her hand into his pocket and found it empty. Aroused by the word "police", the man struggled to his feet and hurried away. We finished our errand. . . . Later some men from the church searched him out, found him a job and a place to stay, and led him to the Lord.

To have given in to fear of an unseen gun would have been a lack of faith in the God who has promised to be with us always. Moreover, if a man has a gun and wants to scare somebody, he will show the gun. Why wouldn't he?

Our adversary can pose to us many real threats; but he also uses many bluffs. His job is made easy if we are defeated by fear before we even face a serious threat. There is a certain boldness that becomes a saint and honors God.

The Devil's Revival...

Any spiritual revival that is apart from true faith in Christ is satanic. The prince of this world has set so many of these movements in motion during the course of the centuries that the very meaning of the word revival has come to give a false idea to many people.

The word *revival* should not be used of anything except a spiritual movement among those who are already born again. The use of the prefix *re* denotes a movement back to an original or former state or

position. It is improper to speak of an evangelistic campaign as a revival unless the Christians who have long since believed come back to a renewed state of consecration. You can revive someone who has been spiritually alive and grown cold but one who is dead in trespasses and sins needs to be quickened by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. . .

This is not a mere quarrel over words, there is a profound spiritual truth involved. As long as people believe that any movements towards spiritual things is a revival they will fail to see that men are without hope, without God, dead in trespasses and sins and that a common faith movement of religion cannot help in the slightest. Men must be born again. —from *Revelation*

GLEANINGS

Larry Miles

PROCRASTINATION

Dream not too much of what you'll do tomorrow,

How well you'll work perhaps another year;

Tomorrow's chance you do not need to borrow—

Today is here!

Boast not too much of mountains you will master,

The while you linger in the vale below;

To dream is well, but plodding brings us faster

To where we go.

Plan not some day to break some habit's fetter

When this old year is dead and passed away;

If you have need of living wiser, better,

Begin today.

—Selected

WAS THE CHURCH FORETOLD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

The Editor also received a query as to whether or not the church was ever foretold in the Old Testament. It was foreshadowed in Adam and Eve (Eph. 5:31, 32); and dimly prophesied of in such passages as Psalm 45. But no direct and plain prophecy of the church is found in the Old Testament. There is much O. T. scripture that is applicable to the church; in fact all scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable to all the church, whether by way of example (I Cor. 10) or for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16), or to minister patience, comfort, hope (Rom. 15:4).

But of the church itself the Old Testament revealed nothing. We are distinctly told that the church embodies a mystery "which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit"; and, again, the apostle speaks of "the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God, who created all things; to the intent that now . . . might be made known through the church the manifold purpose of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in

Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph. 3:4-11) Now a "mystery" is "not a thing unintelligible, but what lies hidden and secret, till made known by the revelation of God" (Bloomfield, Greek Test.) or (as says Sanday in his commentary on Romans) "something which up to the time of the apostles had remained secret, but had then been made known by Divine intervention. That the Gentiles were to be saved and blessed, was indeed no secret: the Old Testament abounds with predictions of that fact. But even a superficial examination of those prophecies shows that it is always through Israel's exaltation, and in subjection to Israel's supremacy that the Gentiles were to be blessed. But the conception of a Body in which elect individuals of Jews and Gentiles were to be "fellow-members" on perfect parity and equality, and "fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel"—this was a thing never before revealed. And that is what we see in the church. The church is a new thing—not indeed new in God's mind, but so far as His revelation to men and His dealings with them today is concerned.

—R. H. Boll in *Words in Season*

HE MUST DO IT ALL

Psalm 57:2

In creation and redemption it was God who did it all,
 Marvelling at His love and wisdom, we in adoration fall.
 We behold His works with wonder, all is perfect He has made,
 And we trust Him for salvation, since for us the debt He paid.
 But in daily life how often we distrust His glorious might,
 Vainly thinking we can help Him, walking not by faith, but sight:
 Striving to perfect His purpose, striving to fulfil His will,
 Waiting not alone upon Him, restless, not content and still.
 Oh! to learn the blessed lesson just to dwell with Him each day;
 Resting in Him, walking with Him, waiting on His power alway,
 Saving humbly with rejoicing, as before His feet we fall,
 We are weakness, He is power, therefore He must do it all.
 Are we tempted? He will conquer if we leave it all to Him.
 Are we weary? He will rest us. Is our faith too often dim?
 He abideth faithful ever, He cannot deny His word.
 So we'll lean upon His promise, trust it all unto the Lord.
 We are glad 'tis God who worketh for the ones who wait for Him,
 And we'll taste more of His fulness till our faith no more is dim;
 He will work and who can hinder, if the thing be great or small
 Matters not, since He is able, and since He must do it all.
 Yes, He is able and He only; we have not to do but yield.
 He will be our strength and wisdom, He will be our help and shield;
 He will perfect what concerneth those whom He has bought with blood,
 And at length present us faultless with rejoicing to our God.

—Alan E. Redpath, in *Kingdom Tidings*

It is my prayer that these illustrations can help you in your daily walk with Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory. Until next time,
 MARANATHA!