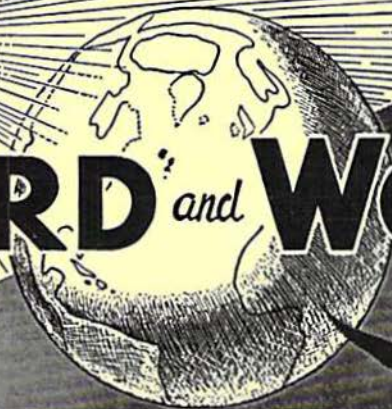


"Holding fast the faithful Word . . ."



The **WORD** and **WORK**



"Holding forth the Word of life."

APRIL, 1990

Cults and Errors:

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NEWS AND NOTES

Something New: Music Camp Week

What a wonderful privilege and blessing to praise God with our voices! I personally believe that song is the most exalted expression of the creature's worship of the Creator.

What innate musical ability we have is a gift of God through our parents' genetic endowment. But training and experience are something we ourselves can modify. And thanks to a dream of Hughes Jones, plans are underway to offer a unique opportunity for our young people to enhance their musical abilities. The **First Annual Antioch Music Camp for young people from grade 7 through college** is set for July 22-28 with John Fulda of Amite, La. as director.

—Bob Ross, in Ebenezer Church Bulletin

[The address of Antioch Christian Camp is Rt. 4, Bark Branch Rd., Frankfort, KY 40601.]

DeRidder, La.:

I'm sending \$10 for extra copies of the Feb. W & W on depression. "God is Easy to Live With," by A.W. Tozer is worth the price of the magazine. I also appreciate especially the editorial, and "You May Be Under False Condemnation," by T. A. Hegre.

—Lois McReynolds

[Editor's note: A limited number of most back issues of W&W in recent years is available @ \$1.00 postpaid.]

Hmmmm

Two ministers given to arguing about their respective faiths were in a very heated discussion. "That's all right," said one. "We'll just agree to disagree. After all, we're both doing the Lord's work—you in your way and I in His."

—via Restoration Review

THREE VERY DIFFICULT FIELDS: PRAY!

Rangeland Church, Louisville: This congregation is located in a very hard area. John Sparrow, who leads the work there, said that of about 30 homes in the community they have had close contact with, **only one** was a "regular" family—husband, wife and children in the household! Efforts to penetrate the neighborhood are being made, but results are often heartbreaking. This

church is worthy of help—in finances and personnel—from sister congregations.

Japan: "I have been invited by my Japanese brethren to return to Japan next month (April) to spend 4 months with them in ministering to churches as well as evangelistic outreach. They had me over there for one month last year. I am expecting to spend some time with brother Nomura and am naturally looking forward to seeing him again. Please pray that the Lord may work through me the next 4 months to be an encouragement to the few churchmembers who remain there. Japan is still one of the most difficult mission fields I know of! It's hard to understand why!"—Harry Robert Fox, 1655 S. 800 E., Orem, Utah 84058.

Bohol island, Philippines: Reports from Nemesio & Myrna Auxtero tell of destructive drought, then floods, plus a killer earthquake, plus armed attacks by Communist guerillas—all in recent months! "There is sickness everywhere due to lack of food, water and medicine. The economy is terrible lately with over 400% increase in prices. The cost of food staples causes panic to the people. Despite all these things, more people are coming to the Lord. For 5 Sundays in a row, Nemesio had several baptisms. Our Bible School graduation is set for March 22. We will have 9 graduates from the 3-year course, and maybe 12 from the 2-year course."

Price Increase, after a while:

The W & W Sunday School Quarterly has not increased its price since at least 1983, while the costs of paper, printing, mailing, etc. have risen astronomically. So beginning with the Fall quarterly (Sept. - Nov.), the price will go from \$2.00/year to \$3.00/year. Even that is a very modest charge compared with other publishers' prices.

Ralph Ave. Church of Christ, Louisville:

Bill Smallwood began preaching for Ralph Ave. on April 15. Bill and Rita labored with the Shawnee Church for over 18 years. Bill continues as business manager at Portland Christian School, and Rita as secretary and office manager there too.

Continued on page 128

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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THEME: **Cults and Errors**

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Alex V. Wilson

Last month our theme was about *methods* of Christian education—*how* to teach. This month we center on the *contents* of Bible instruction—*what* to teach. Or to be more accurate, what *not* to teach. For at present we are stressing the negative side of the subject, seeking to expose false doctrines and confusing ideas which are common in our time.

I would ten times rather talk about what's true than refute what's false. In Manila I had the privilege of teaching classes in Bible doctrines, and loved it. But I also had the duty of teaching classes in cults-and-Marxism. I didn't love doing that, but it was desperately needed because cultists and Communists were so active and growing. People needed to be warned as well as edified.

The same is true here and now. Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses still grow by leaps and bounds. Do you know how to refute their weird, anti-Biblical beliefs, dressed up so attractively by their propagandists? Occultism is on the rise, primarily among young people. We should understand and stand against all of its various forms, especially the more subtle ones. New Age thinking is permeating our culture from many directions, and people who are unaware of its sinister errors are easily beguiled.

On the latter subject, John Wauck had a fascinating article in *National Review* entitled "Paganism, American Style." He cataloged the incredible array of New Age ideas, organizations, trinkets, literature, methods and paraphernalia being marketed in the U.S. today.

Wauck goes on to observe that American education's trust in human reason and science apart from God left a spiritual vacuum. The result is that multitudes of empty-hearted folks are eating up wild superstitions, turning to "a paganism which was never far below the surface of Western civilization—a perfect illustration of Chesterton's dictum: 'When men stop believing in God, they don't believe in nothing; they believe in anything.'" [For more re: New Age-ism, see the editorial, May 1988 *W & W.*]

Preaching Jesus as our Lord or our Slave?

Perhaps even more confusing are those teachers bearing the label "evangelical" (meaning Gospel-preaching) and often quoting the Bible, yet teaching ideas not very different from the New Agers. How sad that popular author and TV preacher Robert Schuller says, "The core of sin is a lack of self-esteem." No wonder one New Age club in Louisville advertised, "If you like Robert Schuller you'll love us!"

Again, televangelist Robert Tilton wrote, "That's right! You can actually tell God what you would like his part in the covenant to be!" Tilton's "miracle plan" begins, "Step #1: Let God know what you need

from Him: New car, new job, fitness, house, finances, salvation." Then the reader/viewer contributes his "best gift" to God (donations always welcome), after which he and Tilton "*decree my miracle into existence in the name of Jesus.*" This is amazingly similar to a New Age magazine's offer of "tools and teachings to *create your own reality.*" And ponder John Wimber's rebuttal of ideas like Tilton's: "In the '90s look for increased tension between Christians who see Christ as their *helper* and those who see him as their *Master.*"

Another example is found in Gloria Copeland's book, *God's Will is Prosperity*. "Redemption from the curse of poverty is part of Jesus' substitutionary work at Calvary. He paid the price for my prosperity—a heavy price. I will not scorn any part of His work." Contrast that with another, greater writer: "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (Phil. 4:12).

Balance 2nd John and 3rd John

Doctrinal discernment and discrimination are essential, but pride and contempt for others are sinful; we must walk the tightrope between the two. (See Carl Kitzmiller's column re: that.) God help us not to *over-react* to cults and errors by becoming suspicious and sectarian toward our fellow-evangelicals, who trust in the divine Christ and him crucified.

I have found it helpful from time to time to preach from John's 2nd letter one week and his 3rd letter the next. 2nd John teaches us to stand without compromise for the truth of Jesus Christ's full humanity and deity. It urges us to reject those who reject Christ. (Reject them *as fellow-Christians*, that is; they are false teachers. That doesn't mean we hatefully reject them as people or friends.) Thus we should oppose and warn against Christ-denying teachers, churches/cults, and philosophies. Some people will blast away at us for this, calling us narrow and negative. But if we remain true to God's Word (2nd John, for one example and Gal. 1 for another), we must not receive those who reject Christ.

3rd John, however, warns of the opposite error. It tells us to acknowledge and love all those who by faith are united to Christ Jesus, all our brothers and sisters in God's family of the born-again. We should receive those who receive Christ (see Rom. 15:7 & Mark 9:38-40). Our arms should be open wide in welcome and fellowship to those who trust God's grace, rely on Jesus as divine Sin-forgiver and Boss, and walk in holiness, whether or not they agree with us on various beliefs and practices. If we do this, some folks will get red-faced and yell, "Compromise!" Nevertheless, just as we must not receive as Christians those who reject Christ, so we must not reject as Christians those who receive Christ.

And when we are unsure about these matters, let's give folks the benefit of the doubt. We are not mankind's Judge; God is. We don't keep the Lamb's Book of Life; He does. (I'm glad of that.) Let Leroy Garrett's article stimulate further study about this. And may our Lord help us weigh carefully these issues and their implications.

Show this to your Jehovah's Witness friends

Jehovah's Witnesses and Prophecy

Compiled by Gary Van Riper

Many of Jehovah's Witnesses do not even know that their organization claims to act as a "prophet" of God. Is this true? *The Watchtower Magazine* (4/1/72) says yes!

"Identifying the 'Prophet'—So, does Jehovah have a prophet to help them, to warn them of dangers and to declare things to come? The questions can be answered in the affirmative. Who is this prophet? . . . This 'prophet' was not one man, but was a body of men and women. It was a small group of footstep followers of Jesus Christ, known at the time as Jehovah's Christian Witnesses . . . Of course, it is easy to say that this group acts as a 'prophet' of God. It is another thing to prove it."

Keeping this in mind, please read the chronological listing of excerpts from the Society's own publications, concerning the last days and the threat of Armageddon, even to the point of announcing specific dates.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF DIVINE DIRECTION?

1886: "Marshalling of the hosts for the battle of the great day of God Almighty is in progress while the skirmishing is commencing."
—*Zion's Watchtower* 1/86

1889: "The 'battle of the great day of God Almighty' . . . which will end in A.D. 1914 . . . is already commenced."—*The Time Is At Hand*. (The 1915 edition of this text changed the "A.D. 1914" to read A.D. 1915.)

1894: "The skirmishing is already beginning all along the line." "The end of 1914 is not the date for the beginning, but for the end of the time of trouble."—*Zion's Watchtower* 7/15/94

1897: "Our Lord, the appointed King, is now present since Oct. 1874."—*Studies In The Scriptures*, Vol. 4, page 621

1904: "The stress of the great time of trouble will be on us soon, somewhere between 1910 and 1912, culminating . . . October 1914."
—*The New Creation*, 1904, page 579

1915: "The Battle of Armageddon, to which this war is leading."
—*Watchtower Reprints*, VI, 4/1/15, page 5659

1915?: "The present great war in Europe is the beginning of the Armageddon of the Scriptures."—C.T. Russell, *Pastor Russell's Sermons*, page 676

1916: "The Bible chronology herein presented shows that the six great 1000-year days beginning with Adam are ended, and that the great 7th day, the 1000 years of Christ's reign, began in 1873."—*The Time Is at Hand*, page 2, foreward

1917: "We anticipate that the 'earthquake' will occur early in 1918, and that the 'fire' will come in the fall of 1920."—*The Finished Mystery*, page 178 (the 1926 edition changed: "and that the 'fire' will follow in due course").

1918: "Therefore we may confidently expect that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the faithful prophets of old, particularly those named by the Apostle in Hebrews 11, to the condition of human perfection."—*Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, page 86

1922: "The date 1925 is even more distinctly indicated by the Scriptures than 1914."—*Watchtower* 9/1/22, page 262

1923: "Our thought is, that 1925 is definitely settled by the scriptures. As to Noah, the Christian now has much more upon which to base his faith than Noah had upon which to base his faith in a coming deluge."—*Watchtower* 4/1/23, page 106

1925: "The year 1925 is here. With great expectation Christians have looked forward to this year. Many have confidently expected that all members of the body of Christ will be changed to heavenly glory during this year. This may be accomplished. It may not be. In his own due time God will accomplish his purposes concerning his people. Christians should not be so deeply concerned about what may transpire this year."—*Watchtower* 1/1/25, page 3

1925 (Sept.): "It is expected that Satan will try to inject into the minds of the consecrated the thought that 1925 should see an end to the work."—*Watchtower*, page 262

1926: "Some anticipated that the work would end in 1925, but the Lord did not state so. The difficulty was that the friends inflated their imaginations beyond reason; and that when their imaginations burst asunder, they were inclined to throw away everything."—*Watchtower*, page 232

1931: "There must be a measure of disappointment on the part of Jehovah's faithful ones on earth concerning the years 1914, 1918, 1925, which disappointment lasted for a time . . . and they also learned to quit fixing dates."—*Vindication*, page 338

1939: "The time for the battle of the great day of God Almighty is very near." "The disaster of Armageddon is just ahead."—*Salvation*, page 361

1941: "Receiving the gift, the marching children clasped it to them, not a toy or plaything for idle pleasure, but the Lord's provided instrument for most effective work in the remaining months before Armageddon."—*Watchtower*, 9/15/41

1955: "The war of Armageddon is nearing its breaking point."—*You May Survive Armageddon into God's New World*, page 331

1968: "Why Are You Looking Forward to 1975?"—*Watchtower*, 8/15/68.

We would do well at this point to consider Deuteronomy 18:20-22 as well as "Awake" 10/8/68.

DEUTERONOMY 18:20-22

Verse 20, "But the prophet, who shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, how shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the

Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him."

AWAKE, 10/8/68

"True, there have been those in times past who predicted an 'end' to the world, even announcing a specific date. Yet nothing happened. The 'end' did not come. They were guilty of false prophesying. Why? What was missing? Missing from such people were God's truths and the evidence that he was using and guiding them."

On the basis of this history how can anyone remain associated with an organization which claims to speak on behalf of God, yet obviously does not?

Although some Witnesses argue that the difference between a false prophet and a true one is that a true prophet admits his mistakes, neither the Bible, nor even the Society's own publications agree.

When a prophet makes even one mistake, we are told by the Bible that that prophet is a false prophet and should be ignored.

Perhaps you are a Jehovah's Witness and this is new information to you. Perhaps you were not aware that you are part of an organization which claims to act as a "prophet" of God. I would refer you to one other quote which comes from what was most likely your first publication from the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

"We need to examine, not only what we personally believe, but also what is taught by any religious organization with which we may be associated. Are its teachings in full harmony with God's Word, or are they based on the traditions of men? If we are lovers of the truth, there is nothing to fear from such examination."—*The Truth That Leads To Eternal Life*, page 13

Review these references in context. This message is presented in love and out of a compassion for you and your eternal destiny. We beseech you to repent and turn from the Watchtower to the Real Jesus and the Real Gospel as proclaimed in God's Holy Word. —Available in tract form from Philippian Fellowship, P.O. Box 164, North Syracuse, New York 13212

* * * * *

The Contradictions In Mormonism

Alex V. Wilson

Mormons say we should follow the Bible, but also three books written by Joseph Smith, their founder. These books are *The Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price*. Of these three *The Book of Mormon* was written earliest and is a little nearer to the teachings of the Bible than are Smith's later writings.

Mormons also believe that the official teachings of their "latter-day apostles and prophets" are fully inspired by God. They look upon Joseph Smith "as a prophet of God, in the same literal sense as they look upon other prophets of the Old and New Testaments, and they

so accept Joseph Smith's successors, from Brigham Young and including the present president of the Church." So writes apostle Richard L. Evans in "What Is A Mormon?"

Mormon missionaries visiting in your home can make their message and claims sound convincing. But really their beliefs are permeated with numerous contradictions. Mormonism contradicts the Bible, and history, and even itself. Knowing some of these contradictions can equip us to help people who are being confused and deceived.

Their Teachings Contradict Each Other

1. *How many Gods are there?* *The Book of Mormon* speaks of the "true doctrine of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, which is *one God*, without end. Amen." (2 Nephi 31:21). (In this article, all the italics in quotations are mine.) Again it mentions singing praises "unto the Father and unto the Son and unto the Holy Ghost, which are *one God*" (Mormon 7:7).

Again it tells how Zeezrom asked, "Is there more than one God?" and Amulek replied, "No." A few verses later the statement is made, "*There is but one God*" (Alma 11:28, 29, & 35). Of course these statements agree with the Bible's teaching of God's tri-unity.

But note the following contradictory statements: "And the *Gods* said among *themselves*, on the seventh time we will end our work which we have counseled... And thus were their decisions at the time that they counseled among themselves to form the heavens and the earth" (Doct. and Cov.: Abraham, p. 44).

Again, "In the beginning, the head of the gods called a council of the *Gods*..." (Joseph Smith, *The Journal of Discourses*, Vol. VI, p. 5). Again "In the heaven where our spirits were born, *there are many Gods*, each of whom has his own wife, or wives, which were given to him previous to his redemption, while yet in his mortal state" (Apostle Orson Pratt).

2. *Is Adam our God, and did he make the World?* "The God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob... created the heavens and the earth and all things that in them are. Behold, he created Adam." Thus speaks *The Book of Mormon* (Mormon 9:11, 12). With these statements we agree.

But listen to the declaration of Mormon president and prophet Brigham Young. "When our father Adam came into the Garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is Michael, the archangel, the Ancient of Days, about whom holy men have written and spoken. *He is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do.*" (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 1, p. 50).

If Adam is our God, and helped make the world, then who is the God of Abraham who created the earth and also created Adam? I asked two Mormon missionaries who visited our home about this. After quoting Brigham Young's statement, I asked if they agreed with it. They squirmed and tried to wriggle out of answering by changing the subject.

But after they were directly confronted with the question two or three more times, they said "Yes," they believe his statement. Their attempts to explain it were quite pathetic, especially after I quoted *The Book of Mormon* and the Bible to the contrary. Young's statement and also Pratt's (quoted in no. 1) accurately unveil Mormonism's weird theology.

3. Does God condemn or commend polygamy? According to *The Book of Mormon*, God forbids polygamy and calls it "wicked" and "abominable." "Hearken to the word of the Lord; for there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none." "The people of Nephi began to indulge themselves somewhat in *wicked* practices, such as like unto David of old, desiring many wives and concubines." "David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was *abominable* before me, saith the Lord" (Jacob 2:27; 1:15; 2:24).

Yet Joseph Smith's later writings make God contradict Himself completely, when He reportedly said, "David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon . . . and David's wives and concubines were given unto him *of me*, by the hand of Nathan . . . and *in none of these things did he sin* against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife" (Doct. and Cov. 132)!

Again, Smith writes that God said, "If any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second and they are virgins and vowed to no other man, then is he justified . . . And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified" (Doct. and Cov. 132).

Their Teachings Contradict the Bible

Already we have seen several examples of Mormon beliefs which totally oppose the doctrines of the Bible: there are many gods; the gods have wives; Adam is our God—the only God with whom we have to do; etc. Let us note only two more examples.

1. *Where was Jesus born?* This statement is made in *The Book of Mormon* about "the Son of God": "Behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem . . . she being a virgin . . . who shall be overshadowed, and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God" (Alma 7:10).

But the Bible clearly says that "Jesus was born in *Bethlehem* of Judea" (Matt. 2:1-12), and the following verses tell how the wise men from the East first went to Jerusalem to look for the baby, but were then sent to Bethlehem, which was five miles away. The two cities were always distinct. Bethlehem never belonged to any "Greater Jerusalem" metropolis, or Jerusalem province or anything of the sort, as Mormons say.

2. *Was Jesus begotten by the Holy Spirit, or not?* The Bible, of course, says yes. An angel told Joseph, "Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 1:20, KJV). Even *The Book of Mormon* agrees; see the preceding quotation from Alma 7:10.

But Brigham Young said, "When the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten Him in His own likeness. He was *not* begotten by the Holy Ghost." "Remember from this time forth, and forever, that Jesus Christ was *not* begotten by the Holy Ghost" (Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1, pp. 50, 51).

Their Teachings Contradict History

The *Book of Mormon* contains a number of factual errors, especially in chronology. Dr. Gordon J. Lewis, in his book, *Confronting the Cults* lists the following blunders:

Laban wielded a sword made of "the most precious steel" before 592 B.C. (1 Nephi 4:9). Although compasses are thought to have originated around A.D. 1000, Nephi sailed across the ocean with the aid of a compass around 600 B.C. (1 Nephi 18:12). The earliest French developed from Latin about A.D. 700, but Jacob, before A.D. 421 concludes his book by bidding his brethren "adieu" (Jacob 7:27).

We have seen that *The Book of Mormon* is contradicted by *Doctrines and Covenants*, and by other writings or sayings of Joseph Smith, and by Brigham Young, and by apostle Orson Pratt. Yet Mormons believe that all of these books and men are authoritative sources of doctrine! But how can that be? You can take one side or the other, but not both. For example, either God condemned David and Solomon's polygamy, or He commended it; but He didn't do both.

Conclusion

More seriously, Mormonism opposes the Bible and its teachings. The contradictions are many, not just a few. And they involve major doctrines, not just minor ones.

So why does anyone need the Mormons' books and so-called revelations, filled as they are with inaccuracies and self-contradictions? The Bible by itself clearly reveals how we can be saved and can know we are saved. It tells us all we need to know about how to live for Jesus Christ, and how to serve Him, our Lord and Savior.

* * * * *

Understanding the Occult

Dr. Roger E. Olson,
Assistant Professor of Theology at Bethel College, St. Paul

My first close encounter with the occult occurred while teaching a course on new religious movements at a Texas university. I picked up a guest speaker at the airport one afternoon; he was a leading expert on exotic and fringe religions in America, and was to speak to my class that evening on modern witchcraft—the religion called "Wicca." As he stepped off the plane he said to me, "Let's go find some witches." He explained he was doing research for a book on the subject, and wanted to test his thesis that one can find authentic witches within a few hours after arriving in any major city in America. That afternoon I learned that Houston was no exception.

With more than a little fear I drove him to a small stucco building on a major thoroughfare not far from the airport. He had located the

address in the yellow pages under "occult." The sign on the front of the slightly dilapidated storefront read "Occult Shoppe." I immediately sensed this was the real thing—a center for the practice of pagan witchcraft, or "the craft" as it is often called.

The room was dark and heavy with incense. A large bookcase contained a variety of volumes on occult topics. One wall was filled with shelves of motley jars of herbs and potions. A jewelry case displayed charms, fetishes and amulets with assorted occult symbols. A sinister charcoal drawing of the "horned god" (man with goat's head) inside a pentagram (upside-down five-pointed star) looked down from the wall upon a large circle painted on the floor. Inside the circle was a pentagram—clearly indicating this spot as a meeting place for covens of witches to practice their pagan rituals.

My friend talked with two women who owned the shop for about 15 minutes while I lingered nervously near the door. Only after he dropped the names of some nationally known leaders of the "old religion" (Wicca) did they open up and tell him they were indeed suppliers of over 50 covens in the Houston area.

That number would represent only a fraction of the Wiccans or "neo-pagans" in a city the size of Houston. All the Wiccans in the country represent only a fraction of all occultists, for the occult is a much broader religious category than just this one small, rather exotic form.

Occultism includes such diverse groups as spiritualism, Rosicrucianism, theosophy and numerous other esoteric lodges, metaphysical study groups, and human potential organizations. The New Age movement is deeply influenced by occult beliefs and practices, and these have also made deep inroads into some unorthodox churches such as Unity. A nation-wide organization called The Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship promotes understanding and practice of occultism in Christian churches.

Secret Religions

What do all these groups have in common that make them occultic? First, "occult" does not just refer to overt Satanic worship or even ritual magick. ("Magick" is spelled with a "k" by many occultists to distinguish this from illusion and sleight of hand. It is the practice of manipulating supernatural powers for one's own purposes.) "Occult" refers to any teaching/practice that is hidden or secret. Occultism claims to preserve an ancient wisdom which is not for everybody, but only for "initiates" or "adepts." Some occult groups are more open to the public than others, but nearly all maintain at least a veneer of mystical secrecy and have levels of membership. The full truth is disclosed only to those who have attained the highest degrees and are considered worthy.

Another common characteristic of occultism is the nature of the secret wisdom these groups teach their followers. According to occult philosophy, humans are sparks of the divine spiritual energy or substance from which everything has evolved and back to which everything is returning. Occultism does not believe in a personal god. "God" is this impersonal field of spiritual energy which pulsates out-

ward and draws back within itself. "Cosmic spiritual evolution" is a common term for this process of progressing back into the divine through many lifetimes. (Most occultists believe in reincarnation.)

By mastering occult knowledge and spiritual power through study, meditation, ritual, soul-travel, magick, etc., some humans evolve further and faster than others. Some even attain full participation in the divine life force of the universe. Some may attain freedom from material existence and "ascend" temporarily or permanently to higher levels of reality (e.g., the "astral plane").

Thus, occultism claims to offer its followers salvation in the form of freedom from ordinary, mundane, creaturely existence. Most occultists do not expect to attain such a supernatural state in this life. However, by learning occult principles and practices they do hope to better their mundane existence now, and progress further in their own spiritual evolution in their next incarnation.

Harnessing Spiritual Entities for Personal Gain

A third feature of most occult religions is belief in supernatural spiritual entities whose wisdom and power can be harnessed for personal achievement. Sometimes these are believed to be "ascended masters"—beings who were once human, but have now permanently evolved out of this material world of space and time. Often, however, they are believed to be nonhuman powers which can be manipulated by magickal words and rituals. Whether these are called "spirit-entities" or "The Mother Goddess," they are believed by occultists to have powers available to humans who know how to invoke them.

Few indeed are the occultists who actually master the secret wisdom and power of the spiritual realms. Most are satisfied to gather adoringly around some magus (sorcerer) who has unlocked the door to the other world for himself. The magus might be a medium or trance-channeller for the ascended masters, or an adept of the great mysteries of astral projection who frequently travels out of the body to commune with great beings of light high in the mystical Himalayas.

If all this sounds a bit like Saturday morning children's programs, do not assume it is fanciful nonsense copied from television. The influence is more than likely the other way around!

Growth and Expansion of the Occult

One of the fastest growing new religious movements in America today is Eckanker, which claims to be the "ancient science of soul travel," the oldest religion in the world. Its 50,000 - 100,000 followers, called "chelas," are ordinary middle-class men and women who take courses in traveling out of the body. The movement's founder, Paul Twitchell, claimed to have studied with the great spiritual master who oversees human history from a hidden monastery somewhere in the Tibetan mountains— out of his body of course.

Another rapidly growing new religion is the Church Universal and Triumphant whose leader, Elizabeth Clare Prophet ("Guru Ma"), delivers messages from ascended masters such as El Moya, Saint Germain and Jesus Christ. She practices psychic healing and teaches her 75,000 - 100,000 devotees the power of "decreeing"—powerful verbal

declarations which can change circumstances in their own lives or even in history.

It should be obvious that occultism is far broader than just witchcraft and Satanism. Christians who limit it to these exotic and sensational forms often remain ignorant of the much more influential types of occult religion. Worse yet, many Christians identify the occult exclusively with such practices as astrology and fortune telling with tarot cards. While these certainly are occultic, they do not exhaust the reality of occultism as a diverse, rapidly growing and often highly organized movement.

The Darker Side of the Occult

But what about witchcraft and Satanism? Are they the fastest growing forms of the occult, as many people claim? Probably not. While both are on the rise in America today, most experts agree they remain small and disorganized. It is important to distinguish carefully between them in order to gain a right perspective in their modern influence.

Wiccans adamantly insist they do not believe in, let alone worship, the devil. They worship nature personified as the Mother Goddess, and celebrate their oneness with her. As one Wiccan told me, "The earth is the Mother Goddess and we humans are her brain cells." Wiccans are trying to revive the ancient fertility religions of pre-Christian times. They hold secret rituals and festivals to celebrate the forces of nature and harness their power for personal fulfillment and social change. Some knowledgeable researchers estimate their total number at around 20,000.

Somewhere between Wicca and overt Satanism lies the practice of ceremonial or "thelemic" magick. This is an extremely rare phenomenon which gains an undeserved amount of attention due to its sensational and sinister nature. These occultists are usually loners who have read books on "theurgy—invocation and evocation of demons—by people like Aleister Crowley. They try to bind and loose these powers for selfish purposes.

Occasionally they affiliate with one another and practice ritual magick which may include animal sacrifice, ritual sex, and even blood drinking. The actual number of people involved in such hideous activities is unknown since they exist "underground," and do not speak to outsiders about their practices. The majority of occultists consider them dangerous fanatics who give esoteric religion a bad name.

Worshipping the Prince of Darkness

Finally, at the furthest end of the occult spectrum lies Satanism. Satanists choose to worship the prince of darkness in order to participate in his rule over the world. They believe that he gives his devoted followers power and success. Also, he gives them license to live out their sexually perverted and often violent sociopathic fantasies. Although there is one church which bears the name "Church of Satan" in San Francisco, most Satanist groups exist underground.

They are populated largely by psychopathic criminals and mentally unstable teenagers seeking the ultimate form of rebellion. Their recent discovery by the media has led to a kind of mass hysteria which

promotes the myth that America is being overrun by a massive, highly organized Satanist conspiracy responsible for everything from cattle mutilations to half of all child abductions. While some abhorrent evils of modern society may be linked to Satanists, objective research indicates they are few in number and not connected by any national network. Best estimates place their number at 5,000 to 10,000.

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OCCULT TERMINOLOGY YOU SHOULD KNOW

Ascended Masters: Supernatural persons believed by occultists to guide them into spiritual wisdom.

Astral Projection: Out-of-the-body travel.

Church Universal and Triumphant: Major occult church in America today. Followers of "Guru Ma" (Elizabeth Clare Prophet).

Eckankar: Occult organization which promotes itself as the "Ancient Science of Soul Travel."

Magick: Practice of changing reality through powerful rituals, spells, incantations, etc.

Magus: A sorcerer or magician. One who is able to change reality through magick.

New Age Movement: Occultism for mainstream America.

Occult: Secret or hidden religious knowledge about the powers that rule the universe.

Rosicrucianism: Occult philosophy/religion that teaches the mystery of the Great Inner Self which is man's divine nature.

Satanism: Worship of Satan, the prince of darkness. Most exotic form of occultism and rejected by most occultists.

Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship: Organization that promotes occultism in Christian churches.

Spiritualism: Practice of communicating with the spirits of the dead.

Theosophy: Occult philosophy/religion that teaches man's role in the spiritual evolution of the cosmos and speculates about reincarnation, psychic phenomena, and the role of "ascended masters" in history.

Theurgy: Form of magick which calls upon supernatural spiritual beings (demons) to change reality.

Wicca: the religion more commonly known as "witchcraft." The worship of nature personified as the "Mother Goddess."

—from *Pulpit Helps*

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The New Age Movement

Ed Merryman

Introduction

On April 25, 1982, millions around the world opened their newspapers to be greeted by a full page ad proclaiming that "*Christ is now here.*" The ad ran from Rome to Jerusalem, from Kuwait to Caracas and from New York to Los Angeles at the cost of \$500,000

dollars. This was the *first* in a series of events and was part of a plan to go public and bring what is known as the New Age Movement out in the open and into the limelight of American society. Shortly afterwards Benjamin Creme, the spokesman for this Christ, held press conferences around the U.S. He said that when the Christ appears on television around the world he will not utter a word but speak telepathically to each person in their own language while simultaneous healings would take place proving he is indeed the Christ.

Four years passed by until *three events* took place in less than a month. On December 31, 1986 what is known as "World Peace Day" took place, to bring healing, peace, and harmony to the world. On the surface such an event sounded very positive and harmless. However, the event was organized for a specific occultic purpose. The plan called for fifty million people to gather and pray, meditate or visualize the world as peaceful. The organizers for this event believed that a shift in the world's consciousness would take place and a New Age would begin, an age where man would achieve his full potential and realize he is God.

The *second* event took place on January 12, 1987 when *USA Today*, a major newspaper, ran a full page ad similar to the 1982 ad declaring "The Christ is in the World." This particular ad was paid for by the Tara Center, a New Age front organization based out of Los Angeles.

The *third* event took place on January 18-19, 1987 when ABC TV presented a five hour mini series based on Shirley MacLaine's book "*Out On A Limb*." Both the book and the movie chronicle her spiritual journey into the realm of the supernatural. Ms. MacLaine, like many of us, began as a person full of questions about the meaning of life and her journey led her from skepticism of the supernatural and the occult to now being a prominent spokesperson for this movement.

The last event took place on August 16, 1987. It was called the "*Harmonic Conversion*." This was very much the same as the December 31 event where millions around the world gathered together and used different occult practices to help usher in this New Age and bring man to a correct knowledge of who and what he really is.

Because of these events major newspapers and magazines have carried articles on the events, the movement and the individuals involved with it. Newspapers from the *New York Times* to the *Omaha World Herald* carried stories, and magazines like *Time*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *US* and *Redbook* have written on the subject. The New Age Movement is here. It's real, it's dangerous, and it's gaining momentum in every aspect of our culture. The question may be asked, where did it come from?

Background: A Shift in World Views

In the last decade Western society has been slowly experiencing an ideological shift toward pantheism. This can be seen in America's shifting religious beliefs. Currently 23-25% of Americans believe in reincarnation; 23% believe in astrology; and 25% believe in "a non-personal energy force which is called God." In a University of Chicago

poll 67% of the public claims to have some type of psychic experience.

The nation's top paperback book publisher, Bantam, reports that New Age type books are its fastest growing line of non-fiction. A Gallup poll indicated that 10 million Americans were engaged in some aspect of Eastern mysticism. Whatever the numbers involved, *its influence is far greater than its numbers!*

The 1960's was a period of confusion and uncertainty for many Americans. There was political unrest, social unrest, and a general decline in morals. The youth of America lost its security and rejected traditions. Many experimented with drugs while others turned to the supernatural. Out of this came the birth of the counter culture which was a rebellion against the political, social and religious structure of America. A new world view was born. Rationalism began to die, and experience and emotions became part of a new way to measure truth and reality.

Meanwhile the West was invaded by the East. The gurus and their pantheistic philosophy began to gather converts. The Hare Krishna Movement along with Transcendental Meditation were the most influential of Eastern thought. At the same time Western occultism exploded throughout America. Interest in astrology, witchcraft and Satanism became popular with the youth of America.

When the dust settled a new breed of cults was formed out of the pantheistic teachings of the East and the occultism of the West. Today it's estimated that there are over 5,000 cults in the United States. Many are an attempt to blend combinations of humanistic psychology, science, or Hinduism with Christianity. The primary differences between the new cults are mostly matters of semantics and techniques. Thus what is known as the New Age Movement emerged. It is a revival of occultism and a counterfeit to Christianity, reality and the rational.

Defining the New Age Movement

The New Age Movement is hard to define because of its nature. But it has seven characteristics that help us understand it better.

The *first* characteristic of the New Age Movement is that it is *eclectic*, meaning that it draws from many different sources. First, it draws from Eastern tradition including Hinduism, Taoism, and Zen Buddhism. Second, it draws from Western occultism like astrology, witchcraft, Satanism, spiritualism, native American religions, and mediums. Third, it draws from modern sources like parapsychology, UFO contacts, evolution and psychology.

The *second* characteristic is that it's *multifaceted*; meaning there are many aspects to it. First, it's political because many in the movement promote a one world government, one world religion, one world draft, one world monetary system, etc. Second, it's philosophical because it promotes the cause of world peace. New Agers believe in the protection of creation and wild-life. Third, it's religious in nature because it draws from many belief systems, traditions, superstitions, and techniques.

The *third* characteristic is that it's *multifaceted* in that it's very active in several areas of society like medicine, psychology, public

education, business, the media, books, and it has even influenced the church.

The *fourth* characteristic is that it's *diverse*, meaning that statements made by the representatives of the movement may not hold for all those associated with it.

The *fifth* characteristic is they have no official headquarters to work from but are *organized through networking*. This means they trade information and ideas back and forth. This is done through newsletters, conferences and conventions.

The *sixth* characteristic is that those involved have a *common world view*, meaning they have the same basic belief system about reality. Many of those involved have had some psychic experience that confirms this. This experience usually comes through drugs, yoga, Eastern meditation, and other occult techniques. This produces a world view that is pantheistic and occultic in nature.

The New Age movement is not the only name for this movement. It goes by several others, such as the Aquarian Conspiracy, the New Consciousness Movement, Cosmic Humanism, Mystical Humanism, the Wholistic Health Movement, the New Church, etc.

Fundamental Teachings of the New Age Movement

The *first* belief is *Monism*. Mono means "one." Monism is the belief that all is one. Everything is interrelated, interdependent, and interpenetrating. Since all is one then there is no difference between God, humanity, the animal world, the vegetable kingdom or a rock. All is one. Separation and difference are only illusions. This is a foundational teaching in New Age thinking and it permeates the movement in various forms.

Second, this movement is *pantheistic* in nature. Pantheism teaches that "all is God" or "God is all." This identifies God with the universe. Everything in the universe is part of God because the universe and everything is God.

The *third* belief is that *humanity* is divine or part of God. Everything in the universe, including humanity, is God. According to New Age teaching we are gods in disguise and only ignorance stops us from understanding and realizing this. This is called metaphysical amnesia. But there is hope.

The *fourth* belief is that *a change in consciousness is needed*. This can be done by Eastern and Western occult techniques designed to alter ordinary consciousness. These techniques open "the doors of perception" so that we can see true reality. This change in consciousness, whatever the means, whether it be drugs, Eastern meditation, hypnosis, yoga, silva mind control, etc., can lead to an awareness of oneness with the universe and spiritual power. This then helps mankind to understand its true identity.

The *fifth* belief is called *syncretism*. New Age gurus frequently say that all religions are one and the same at the core of their teachings. There is no difference between Hinduism, witchcraft, Christianity, Taoism, Zen, etc. They are just different paths to the same place. There may be many paths to the one truth, many methods to become one with God.

And sixth, the god that New Agers believe in is an *impersonal energy*, force, or vibration which is both male and female, and good and evil. (But in reality the god that the New Agers follow is the god of this world which is Satan, arch-enemy of both man and God.)

Other Beliefs

Reincarnation is a belief that when a person dies they come back again in a different body. This is also called *rebirth* or *transmigration of the soul*. A person can go through several reincarnations. This is part of the occultic evolutionary process. One can be reincarnated as a human or as an animal. The whole goal is to reach enlightenment and thus godhood, and become one with the One. In India reincarnation is considered a curse, but Americans have picked it up as the latest discovery or fad.

A second belief is *Karma* which goes with the reincarnation idea. *Karma* is another Hindu belief. It basically means cause and effect or you reap what you sow. If you live a good life you will be reincarnated to a higher life form. If you live a bad life then you may become a person with lots of health problems or be born in a country that is poor, etc.

Mind power is also becoming popular. If one thinks good and positive thoughts, only good and positive things will happen to him. If one thinks negative thoughts then bad and negative things will happen.

[—Adapted from materials by Ed Merryman of the Cult Awareness Project, 301 E. Braasch Avenue, Norfolk, NE 68701. For further study, read *Unmasking the New Age*; *Confronting the New Age* (both by Groothuis); *The Universe Next Door* (by Sire).]

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Is “positive confession” Biblical? Are “word of faith” claims valid?

The Prosperity Gospel

Dennis Roberts

I have nothing against money. Like most people, I would rather be rich, happy, and saved than poor, happy, and saved. Furthermore, I have experienced God's loaves-and-fishes type of provision in ways that any grade-school math instructor can tell you are simply impossible.

Certainly God's *provision* for his people is a biblical promise that we can lean on. Still, I sense a growing concern among Christians about our Americanized fixation on the popular gospel of prosperity.

Our current prosperity-mania is a reaction to an opposite concept—the poorer a Christian is, the more spiritual he is.

But today the pendulum has swung to the other side. Now we have ministers who passionately proclaim that God really wants you to be prosperous in every circumstance. The secret often is that in

order to get you must give. As soon as you have paid your dues, you can claim your blessing. And God is duty-bound by verses like Matthew 19:29, Luke 6:38, and 3 John 2 to back the truck up to your door and dump the whole load on your step.

American Christians live in a country that is blessed for a variety of reasons (including scriptural ones, I believe) with wealth and freedom. It is easy for us to say that "the abundant life," as Jesus called it, involves material plenitude. But we tend to forget the millions of persecuted Christians in other lands who are hard put to scrape together their daily bread, let alone drive home a new automobile. I can just see one of our prosperity preachers poking a Bible under the nose of a Soviet Christian and saying, "Brother, you must be living in sin. Don't you know you should be prospering? Our Father owns the cattle on a thousand hills!"

We tend to forget that we are blessed with a land where the cattle are fairly fat and easy to catch, while the cattle in less fortunate countries are lean, mean, and seldom seen! In short, the American Christian's evidence for the prosperity of believers is largely circumstantial.

The principles of prosperity, if wholly scriptural and true, should apply as universally as the gospel. They should work as well in Cambodia, Bangladesh, and Harlem as they do in suburban America. If they do not, we should stop touting them as universal truth and bill them simply as nice ideas that may apply to certain situations.

POSITIVE CONFESSION

Despite discrepancies between theory and reality, prosperity stock continues to rise overall. It has been aided by another scripture-plated philosophy called positive confession. The gist is that you have what you say you have, and you are what you say you are. If you say you are going to be rich, God will make you rich. Along the road to riches, however, beware lest you speak a negative thought into existence. That will send you directly to poverty.

Similarly, if you say you have a cold, you have a cold. If you pray for healing, the cold is gone even though the symptoms may remain. If you observe this formula properly, you need never have a cold, though you may have symptoms on a regular basis. You should continue to go to work even when you have symptoms, of course, because to stay at home would be a negative confession.

Now I must say that there are genuinely good principles buried beneath the hoopla of prosperity teaching and positive confession. If one asks if I believe in Christian prosperity, I have to say that I believe in what the Bible says about prosperity but not necessarily what the latest best seller has to say about it.

Prosperity preachers always seem to emphasize that they are "preaching from the Bible, just like it says." In fact, these folks are offering their interpretations of isolated Bible texts and presenting them as literal truth. It is possible to prove almost anything by taking a scripture passage out of its immediate context or out of the context of the total message of the Bible.

This is apparent if we examine some of the favorite proof texts often used by prosperity faddists. One of the favorite is 3 John 2:

"Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers."

From this gentle greeting a variety of hidden meanings are extracted: that God (not John) wants everyone (not just Gaius, to whom the letter was written) to prosper monetarily. The logical pitfalls in such an interpretation are obvious.

But in recent years the idea has been touted that Bible verses should be taken entirely at isolated face value, like a personal message from a Ouija board. Therefore, objective biblical exegesis is ranked by some as a form of unbelief. A person need only say, "God showed me," or, "God told me that," in order to set an audience at ease regarding the authenticity of his message.

MILLIONAIRE APOSTLES?

This kind of face-value interpretation is also used to make Matthew 19:29 and a similar scripture, Mark 10:29-30, appear to be a promise of material wealth.

"Jesus said, 'Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, along with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life'" (Mark 10:29-30).

What the prosperity folk neglect to observe is that Jesus is speaking in direct response to Peter, who has just reminded the master, "Behold, we have left everything and followed you. What then will there be for us?" (Matt. 19:27).

It would be difficult to prove that the disciples experienced financial prosperity between the time of Jesus' promise and the time that many of them died martyrs' deaths. If anyone were to receive a financial fulfillment of that prophecy, would it not be the men to whom it was directly made?

Does that mean that Jesus failed to keep a promise to his disciples? No, for the apostles were given new families of born-again believers, new homes which, though not theirs to claim on their personal financial statements, were theirs all the same in that the early church had all things in common.

But theirs was not the kind of personal prosperity that is promoted today. On the contrary, even after the church was well-established with more than 3000 members in Jerusalem, the apostle Peter told the lame beggar, "I do not possess silver and gold (Acts 3:6).

The disciples also received the promised persecutions, an unfortunate addendum which proponents of Christian affluence do not like to mention.

People who try to apply this back-with-compound-interest principle are often disappointed. A friend of mine heard this teaching a couple of years ago. Someone he knew gave away a stereo and was promptly blessed with another, better one. My friend then felt impressed to give away his stereo, thinking that God was obligated to give him back a better one. He is still getting his music from a clock radio today.

WHAT KIND OF PROSPERITY?

Part of the difficulty with the prosperity question is that there is no absolute definition of prosperity in scripture. Often prosperity preachers misuse God's promise of *provision* with guarantees of *financial wealth*. The meaning of the 23rd Psalm and Philippians 4:19 ("But my God shall supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"), among a host of others, are stretched so that it appears that God will provide not only the day-to-day, life-saving necessities but also a host of niceties.

Those of us who have experienced God's great grace in this area admit that God does often go far above and beyond what we need to sustain our bodily functions. But to thump our fingers on these little verses and demand that God fulfill his promises as we interpret them because we are children of the king shows we are nothing more than spoiled brats who associate Daddy's love with the number of toys he lets us have.

We might add that if prosperity as used in scripture is a vague term, the word *riches* is not, especially as it is used in the New Testament.

Jesus spoke of the "deceitfulness of riches," of being "choked with cares and riches," of the difficulty of ushering the wealthy into the kingdom of God. Where riches are spoken of positively in the New Testament, they usually have nothing to do with temporal prosperity. Rather these references are concerned with "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8), "the riches of his glory" (Eph. 3:16), "the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom. 11:33) and other nonmaterial attributes of God. God is not stingy in supplying us with good things, but the things we receive from him may be blessings that "money can't buy."

Still it would be unfair to say there is no scriptural support for the possibility that Christians might be prosperous in a material sense. There are several passages which indicate that God rewards generosity and that he withholds blessing from those who are selfish.

In 2 Corinthians 9:6-13, Paul extols the "cheerful giver," and says he will be "enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God." But why does God enrich? "God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, *you may have an abundance for every good deed.*"

The emphasis is not on personal prosperity but on personal provision and selfless liberality. God gives so that we can give. Too often the prosperity preachers seem to say that we should give so that we can get. They are correct in saying that God is faithful to reward those who give, but the spirit of the message is somehow wrong. What then of Christians who are materially prosperous? Should they feel guilty about their wealth or condemned if they do not give everything away? Paul did not seem to think so. He encouraged wealthy Christians "not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy... to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share" (1 Tim. 6:17, 18).

The rich Christian should not feel either superior or inferior spiritually, but should see himself as a fortunate channel for good works and as a faithful steward of God's trust.

Prosperity is not an issue because it is right or wrong in itself but because of the attention it focuses on itself, and because of the radical, perhaps dangerous, attitudes it fosters.

DISTORTED CONCLUSIONS

The simple teaching that we need not be poor to be spiritual has branched out into any number of bizarre philosophies. For instance, there is the theory that since God gives back in proportion to what you put in, you should give in proportion to what you want to get back. You want to make \$30,000 this year? Write a check for \$3,000.

You did not receive what you asked for? Did you really believe that you would get it? Did you expunge 100 percent of the doubt from your heart? Did you confess your conviction that you would receive the thing you wanted? You are not sure? Well, no wonder! Did you expect God to act? Did you hold up your Bible and explain to him that he is legally bound to give you what you asked for?

This whole approach smacks of a formula Christianity that has been popularized in recent years by an avalanche of how-to books and radio programs. It seems that whenever someone discovers a principle that works in a particular way for him, he concludes that the principle will work in an identical way for everyone, and he writes a book about it.

These books are genuinely helpful to some people, but a source of spiritual frustration to others who just can not understand why their lives are not happy and perfect and prosperous the way author so-and-so says his life is. One of the byproducts of this approach is a generation of Christians who measure their spirituality in terms of results (Do I have joy? Did I get a blessing? Do I feel God's presence? Am I prospering?) rather than simply focusing on relationship with Jesus and letting him take care of the byproducts.

Thus the key to our prosperity fixation seems to lie in the way it has been marketed, rather than in its relevance to scriptural or experiential reality. Those who preach prosperity are usually enthusiastic types who could probably make plenty of money whether they were Christians or not. Enthusiasm is often mistaken for spirituality in pop Christianity, so it is little wonder that the fervent teachings of Christian affluence have been easy to sell as spiritual revelation.

Prosperity, like so many other good, potentially helpful concepts, has been grandly prostituted. In its proper context the teaching of prosperity and provision in God's kingdom is a wonderful, life-changing concept, because it reminds us that God does care about our needs and that generosity and good stewardship do mean something to him. As packaged and marketed by today's popularizers, poor little prosperity has become a star, though he was only an extra to begin with.

Along the way, not only have we taken a sound concept and misapplied it to the point of absurdity, but we have also fallen victim to a bit of false and dangerous logic: If God wants us to prosper no

matter what, then we must be in God's will if we are prospering. That is a devilish perception of God's will if there ever was one. Let us realize that God wants us, not our formulas, and that it is he we should be seeking, not his fortune.

And where prosperity is concerned, let us learn to say with Paul, "I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:12, 13).

Then and only then will we experience the true prosperity God wants for us. —*New Covenant*

[Interestingly, this was written by a Pentecostal preacher. Though many Pentecostals advocate the "word of faith" teaching described above, many others—like brother Roberts—reject it. —A.V.W.]

* * * * *

Reprint:

TWO CAUSES OF RELIGIOUS ERROR

R. H. Boll

Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.
—Matthew 22:29

With these words the Lord Jesus points out the two chief causes of religious error—namely: ignorance of the scriptures on the one hand and ignorance of the power of God on the other. Take away the knowledge of the scriptures, and what wonder if men walk as blind men, groping in the dark. For it was never in man that walketh to direct his steps; God's word is the only lamp to our feet and light to our path. "The entrance of thy word giveth light," said the Psalmist, "it giveth understanding to the simple." And if a man does not know the power of God he will forevermore be limiting God's promises and prophecies to the measure of his own small ideas of what can and cannot be. Both these cases of error operated in the case of the men to whom Jesus addressed these words.

They were Sadducees—men who took a common-sense view of religion (as they thought)—who considered themselves honest, hard-headed, sensible, practical thinkers, and had no use for anything supernatural and miraculous (Acts 23:8). They undertook one day to entrap the Lord Jesus, for they knew He taught what their party creed denied. They told Him a highly improbable tale of seven brothers who died having been married to the same woman; and finally the woman also died. Now they sprung the triumphant question, which they thought would surely puzzle and fluster the Lord—"In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife shall she be?" Ah, that (they thought) He would never be able to answer. The Lord doubtless looked on them with pity when He said, "Ye do greatly err." And why did they err so greatly?

IGNORANCE OF THE SCRIPTURES

First, they knew not the scriptures. The Sadducees would have repudiated that charge indignantly. They would have replied that they knew the scriptures as well as anybody. And in a sense they did know them. Many of these priests and scribes and rabbis as well as some modern ones had an astonishing knowledge of the text of the scriptures. They could repeat long stretches of the law and prophets verbatim, from memory. Some of them knew the whole Old Testament by heart. They could instantly cite and quote any text called for. Nevertheless they did not know the scriptures. They had words, the grammatical sense, the literary exegesis of the scriptures—but they did not know them. They lacked the spiritual insight, the real understanding and comprehension, without which all the knowledge of facts and terms and phrases leave man in darkness.

And if you ask *why* the Sadducees with all their learning did not know the scriptures—the first answer is because they were Sadducees. They belonged to a party which was committed to a certain interpretation of the scriptures. Those views, they felt, must be maintained. They could not afford to read the Word with an open mind, to see what God had to say, but every passage must be looked at from the standpoint of their Sadducean doctrine. They must see how each statement could be made to fit into the frame of Sadduceism. They must hunt for passages that could be used to refute opposing doctrines and contrive ways by which inconvenient scripture statements could be “explained” into harmony with their foregone notions. It is not strange if those who pursue such a course should miss the plain truth of the scriptures and all of the spirit and purport of God’s word. Those who have an axe to grind will never come to a true understanding of the divine oracles. As a poet said,

Some read to prove a pre-adopted creed
Thus understanding little what they read.
And every passage in the Book they bend
To make it suit that all-important end.
Some people read, as I have often thought,
To teach the Book instead of being taught.

Today also much religious controversy is due to plain ignorance of the Bible. Often the one thing needful to unity and harmony between contending teachers is just a faithful and unbiased study and acceptance of the word of God by the parties concerned. The Sadducees could never do that. They must first of all and at all cost uphold their tenets, they must conserve their prestige, they must hold their positions in their party and they must by all means save their faces. So it was then; and so it is in many quarters today. The chief source of error among some reputed Bible students is often nothing more than ignorance of the scriptures.

IGNORANCE OF THE POWER OF GOD

The other cause of error mentioned by the Lord is ignorance of the power of God. It seemed incredible to the Sadducees that God should raise the dead—and the reason why it was judged a thing incredible by them was that *they* did not *see* how it could be done.

Then (as now) the idea of bodily resurrection presented so many difficulties to educated but limited intellects that in their judgment it simply couldn't be. And though many statements of God's word may plainly declare it—it matters not: such passages are not to be taken at face value—they possibly mean something else; they are figurative, symbolical, hyperbolic, or what not, but they cannot mean anything like what they plainly say. This attitude is taken not only with reference to the resurrection or other prophetic teachings, but even in the matter of salvation. Often when we see the awful ruin of some man's soul we are ready to say, "Such a man cannot be saved." It seems utterly impossible. And when we glimpse something of our own incurable evil nature, we secretly draw the same conclusion. We risk the laws of nature and conclude that the case is hopeless. There are many such Sadducees; and now as then their error is this, that they know not the scriptures nor the power of God.

Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

Should Christians ever be guilty of criticizing one another?

There are at least two different kinds of criticism—constructive criticism and destructive criticism. The purpose of constructive criticism is to help, to build up, to make people aware of failings and to help them overcome them and to make them aware of strong points and to encourage their use. Destructive criticism is meant to hurt, to get even, to put down, to expose the weaknesses and failings to the injury of the one criticized. Destructive criticism is not necessarily very zealous for the truth and may use falsehood and hasty conclusions as its instruments of vengeance. Then there is a type of criticism which falls somewhere between these two. It is not aimed so much at correcting the individual or group or movement that is being criticized as it is in making others aware of the error or wrong emphasis, that they be not unduly influenced by it. There may be little hope of doing much for the persons being criticized, but the purpose is to help those who might be influenced; hence, it is not constructive so far as some are concerned, but it is constructive as to others.

Now it sounds very sweet-spirited and "spiritual" to declare that Christians ought never to criticize one another. If that meant only that hasty, unjust, unfair, uninformed judgments were forbidden, then, of course, Christians ought not be guilty of that kind of conduct. The sort of self-righteous hypocrisy that always thinks the worst, is ready to believe the worst, and delights in exposing failures to the world is hardly a Christian attitude. Judgments that are not motivated by love and which deal in falsehood instead of truth are surely wrong for the Christian. There are some people who seem to be born in the "negative case," whose chief contribution seems to be sitting in judgment on everyone and everything, who seldom have a word of praise or commendation for any one or anything; they seem to be in a constant battle against Christians as much as against the ways of the world. Need-

less to say, these are not happy, fruitful Christians, and such an attitude needs to be seen as the evil thing that it is. But, as we have pointed out, that is not the only kind of criticism that exists.

We cannot live and function as Christians without some critical evaluation, without making judgments, without discerning between the good and the bad. In such an evaluation as that, are we not criticizing those who exercise wrong attitudes in criticism? Not so long ago I heard a man very wrought up in a message; he was criticizing Christians for criticizing Christians. He was doing the very thing he was preaching against. Was it right for him and wrong for others? No, he simply failed to realize that what he was doing was a form of criticism. Preaching which touches life necessarily involves a judgment as to right and wrong.

The New Testament is full of criticism, some of it directed at the unregenerate and some of it at Christians. John the Baptist denounced those of his generation as "offspring of vipers" and seems to have been pretty abrasive in some of the things he said. Jesus had some very harsh language for the scribes and Pharisees, criticizing them for their hypocrisy in a number of ways (cf. Matt. 23). Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, criticized them for their carnality and denounced the things that were wrong. True, he had some words of praise, but there was not a mealy-mouthed acceptance of all that they did or believed because of a notion that he must not criticize. On one occasion (Gal. 2:11ff), Paul confronted the apostle Peter and strongly criticized his conduct to his face. To be sure, it was not a case of a jealous or mean little man seeing an opportunity to put Peter down; there were big issues at stake, and Peter deserved the rebuke. Such examples could be multiplied. The early church had to watch for false teachers, to prove the spirits, to discern those fitted for leadership, to recognize the weak and to help them, to determine matters for fellowship, and many other things which call for critical evaluation. The church of today has the same responsibilities and must, therefore, exercise certain judgments. The important thing is for us to judge righteous judgment (John 7:24), to act in love for the Lord and His church, including individuals involved, and not to be on an ego trip of our own.

The church will be in a sad state if it is ever universally accepted that Christian cannot criticize one another. That leaves the door open for every kind of evil. Teachers of falsehood, whether only posing as Christians or being misdirected and uninformed Christians, will be free to work without opposition. No one will be able to challenge them because "that is to criticize." Preaching will be bland nothingness, because any strong, positive message concerning sin will be refused as criticism. There can be, under such conditions, no denouncing of humanism, evolution, or even hedonism because there are some "Christians" who have accepted these things. To denounce all criticism is to denounce too much!

Of course, what is often meant when it is said we must not criticize is that we should not engage in the mean-spirited, self-righteous denunciation of others. The New Testament does forbid this—the kind of judgment that tolerates sin in ourselves while denouncing it in others (Rom. 2), or the kind of judgment which allows others no

room for conscience or growth (Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8). But we need to make the distinction, because it is too easy to include what is necessary and good under the blanket condemnation of all criticism. To use a passage like Rom. 14:4 as a means of destroying the necessity of baptism or demanding that we embrace modernism, or the like, is a vicious misuse of scripture and of the Lord's intention in the passage.

Now we readily admit that there is too much of the wrong kind of criticism in the church today. People criticize others because they feel less guilty in their own wrongdoing thus. Carnal Christians are especially prone to the fault-finding, backbiting, destructive kind of criticism which injures individuals and mars the work of the Church. Preachers are often unduly harsh on the differences or failings of other preachers. Church members denounce in others the things they do themselves. We can be quick to set others straight and establish a standard for them from which we excuse ourselves. This is evil and of such we ought not be guilty.

Moreover, even the criticism that seeks to correct ought to be offered in much wisdom and from a heart of love. None of us especially like to be told we are wrong or to have this pointed out to us. And it may be that we are so carnal that we will be angered no matter how wisely, how diplomatically, or how lovingly the criticism is done. Even so, there are good ways and bad ways of presenting criticism. It is always right to put ourselves in the other's place and to deal with him as we would wish to be dealt with. There is good psychology, as shown in the Revelation letters, for example (Rev. 2; 3), of offering praise along with the rebuke when that is necessary. In short, there is a "how" criticism that needs to be learned and observed. "Cutting out" a wrong that is in us can be a painful process even when it is done well. But it is a good and needful matter sometimes, so beware of throwing out the baby with the dirty bath water! Exhorting one another and building up one another almost certainly involves some critical evaluation of the other's needs and of the progress he is making in following the Lord and His ways.

* * * * *

Why Luther Could Not Be Saved As A Roman Catholic

(AND WHY HIS PARENTS COULD BE)

by Leroy Garrett

In all my reading of Alexander Campbell I have found nothing that states his understanding of the meaning of religion as well as a dialogue that he invented between Martin Luther and a monk named Erastian. The dialogue deals with the nature of piety, which is the essence of religion, according to Mr. Campbell. The dialogue helps us to understand something very important in the thinking of our pioneers: *the principle of available light*, or the view that one is to be judged by the opportunities he has had.

In the dialogue Campbell has the monk asking Luther, "Friend Luther, What think you has become of your father?" Luther replies that he is sure that his father has gone to heaven. "And your mother too?" asked the monk. Luther expresses confidence that not only his parents but his grandparents as well are all in heaven "for Saxony cannot boast of more devout Catholics than they."

At this Erastian presses his point: "In the name of both St. Peter and St. Paul, why have you raised all this fuss in Germany and throughout the world? Do you expect anything better than to go to heaven when you die?"

Luther concedes that nothing is better than heaven and that he expects no more. The monk now wants to know that if his parents could be saved in the Roman church why couldn't he. "How dare you separate from the church in which your parents were saved?" he asked Luther.

Luther answers: "Because my parents were *pious* members of that church, which I could not possibly be." Erastian wants to know why not. The Reformer answers: *Because I have been favored with more knowledge than they.*

Campbell goes on to use this device to show that "more knowledge" condemns, more knowledge than one conforms to, for one is responsible according to his knowledge and ability. And so Campbell has Luther say of his parents: "They lived in conformity to all they knew, and died in the church; I live in conformity to what I know, and have left the church."

This gives Campbell an opportunity to deal with the nature of piety. It was piety that kept Luther's parents loyal to the Roman church, and it was piety that caused Luther to leave that church. In other contexts Campbell equates piety to sincerity and makes the pious, sincere heart the basis of one's acceptance before God. He is quick to explain that he does not mean anything like "It doesn't matter what you believe so long as you are sincere." To Campbell piety and sincerity imply that one is never wilfully ignorant but he humbly seeks to know and to obey God's will.

Campbell has Luther make an incisive observation in this mock dialogue: *the ratio of piety is the ratio of conformity to the revealed will of God.* So to be pious one must sincerely seek to do the will of God as he understands it, and not merely conform to the knowledge of his ancestors. Campbell also says: "No man can be justified today by living in accordance with the knowledge that he had yesterday."

We have here a sobering view of the nature of piety. How many of us really make a sincere effort to conform to the truth we know? When we see how Campbell has Luther saying, "I must obey the light which God has given me," we can ask ourselves if we are responsive to the light given to us in this enlightened 20th century.

And it makes us less judgmental to realize that others can respond only to the light they have. Many people, such as the American Indians for instance, have been so blighted by ignorance and by limited opportunity that they can only be judged by the measure of light given to them. But this is part of what Paul argues in *Romans*,

that even if people have but little light they are responsible to that light. And we all have some light, to which we are less than faithful. This is what makes us all sinners. But still we are to grant to others what the God of heaven grants to all in terms of judgment, that it is required of a person according to what he has and not according to what he has not. —*Restoration Review*

HOSEA, THE HEART AND HOLINESS OF GOD

“WHEN GOD LEAVES”

(*Hosea* 5:1 - 6:3; read the passage first)

Ernest E. Lyon

God is the speaker in chapter 5. In it He continues the subject of the unfaithfulness of those who should be loving and obeying Him. He had warned Judah not to take part in the sins of Ephraim (Israel), but Judah refused to listen. How often it is true that God's warnings go unheeded. In this chapter we see the result of not listening, ending with a progressive statement of judgment in verses 12, 14, and 15. It is the last and worst of these that gives title to our article this month.

How badly both nations and their priests and kings needed to listen to God. Instead, they had become like hunters catching game. As a result God would have to discipline them. Their actions were so bad that they could not return to Him (verses 1-4).

As so often happens, pride was at the root of their problem, so they felt no need of God. That truly sounds contemporary, doesn't it? In World War II think of how many quoted the saying, "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition," but their hearts really meant, "Praise the ammunition and pass the Lord." Judah was stumbling, along with Ephraim, because they did not heed His warning in 4:17. In all this pride they might go to seek the Lord, but they would not find Him (verses 5 and 6). He always withdraws His face from those that seek it unpenitently.

The next four verses lead up to the first of the judgments brought before us—"I am like a moth to Ephraim, like rot to the people of Judah." The moth may seem insignificant, but it devastates what it curses. And at least as bad is rottenness. What rotten thing can you use? And think of the terribleness of God being these things to them. As they did so often, both nations turned to the wrong sources for help. Seeing the problem is of no benefit when you turn to the wrong one for help. Only God could help them. Don't make that mistake in your need!

Next in verse 14 comes the judgment that would "tear them to pieces"—becoming like an angry, tearing lion. They would not be like Daniel, who was treated friendly by a group of hungry lions; they would be more like Daniel's accusers, who, with their families, were torn apart before they reached the floor of the cage.

But in verse 15 comes that most devastating of all the judgments—the departure of God. He would leave and go back to His place, but note the "until"—"until they admit their guilt." His grace is never out of sight when God chastens or disciplines. His departure was to

bring them to their senses to realize their real need—the need of God Himself.

But you might ask, how can God depart? After all, isn't He omnipresent? Is there any place in the universe where you can say that He is not there? No, God does not give up governing His world. But He may withdraw His blessing. God's withdrawal, then, is withdrawing His guidance, leaving one to his own ways, abandoning him to his own choices. That, of course, is exactly what men think they want—because they are ignorant of the result.

The departure of God is the greatest calamity that can overtake a nation. We lose so many things. We will note three of those—holiness, the certainty of absolute wisdom, and worst of all, love.

First, then, it is obvious from the world today that when men put God aside, there is no true concept of holiness. There is no longer any inspiration of holiness and no demand for it. How true this is when man turns so far away that God withdraws Himself, His guidance being no longer present. The distinction between what is right and what is wrong is lost to a great extent in our schools. The schools are teaching what they call "values," but it is a misnomer. They are teaching that there is no standard of right and wrong, that your desires should decide if an act is right or wrong on any occasion. It is no wonder that suicide is so rampant among teenagers. They have nothing to direct them, thanks to the National Educational Association and our courts and schools. A decision made at the time of every action, especially the time of every temptation, is just too much for them to handle.

Secondly, wisdom is something people vainly expect students to gain from the knowledge learned in school. We are not speaking of knowledge, of course, for this age is multiplying in that. A brilliant mind like that of Einstein can develop a mathematical formula that leads to atomic research—and to the atomic bomb. The wise use of knowledge is obviously gone.

Finally, may I point out the loss of true love. My, how that word is bandied around today! But is it true love they are speaking of? John rightly says, "Love is of God" (1 John 4:7). Love is not the self-centered, pleasure-seeking thing that is so often called love today. We know love because God gave His Son for us and the Son gave up His life for us. Contrast that with the love that the world speaks of today.

Now look back through this chapter again. God would not leave the nations of Ephraim and Judah until He had tried every remedy—first the moth or rottenness (insignificant but destructive); then the lion; then finally the departure. He does not leave us until we leave Him. Note verse 13—the first discipline made them aware of their weakness, but they turned the wrong way for help. Then came the lion, then the departure as a last resort. Even though no man can accurately interpret his own time, we still can see many of these problems in our day.

But note again that God says, "Then I will go back to my place *until* . . ." He leaves reluctantly and is always looking for the possibility of returning. Check that out in Matthew 23:37-39, where He called

Israel not "My Father's House" for it had become "your house." But, again, even there, the desolation was only "until."

So, we read in Hosea, "Until they admit their guilt." God is like the Scotch mother that story-tellers remind us of. Her daughter left, went to the city, and fell into degradation. She finally decided to return to her home. On arriving she was horrified to see a light on in the house in the middle of the night. That meant, she thought, her mother was dead or seriously ill. When she tried the door, it was unlocked. When she opened the door, her mother called out, "Janet, is that you?" She had never locked the door or turned out the light since Janet left. So now read 6:1-3 and see the grace of God acting for us if we return to Him.

TEACH THE BIBLE BETTER:

Sunday School Comes Home

Sunday school lasts an hour. Does what happen in those few short minutes really make any difference? When parents answered that question based on their observations, many give a resounding, "Yes!"

From Orlando, Florida: Reed learned the Easter story in nursery class, and on the way home, he retold it to me. He ending by saying: "It would be nice if you could come with me to Sunday school, Daddy, so you could get to know Jesus, too." I, the pastor, smiled and prayed that he would continue to be this excited about his special friend.
—Rod Carlson

From Littleton, Colorado: Our teenage daughter, who talks about some day being a lawyer, studied Revelation in Sunday school. She came home and worked us over about what we believed, and exactly how sure we were about what each symbol meant. She wanted everything settled right then! Great conversation for the whole family as we grappled with some of the issues that have challenged Christians through the centuries.—Naomi Gaede-Penner

From Plainfield, Indiana: Kelly was five. I listened as she explained the plan of salvation to a very uninterested playmate. On and on she talked. I was amazed at what she know, but still no responses from her little friend. I, a frustrated youth worker who had often felt I wasn't getting through to teens, empathized with her completely when she ended the conversation by stamping her foot and announcing in a loud, hurt voice, "Hey, I'm just trying to share the Word of God, and you won't even listen!"—Bob Spanton

From Oakland, California: Kathy is only 2½ and she is already familiar with many Bible stories. Her dad was reading the story of Esther to her, and she corrected his pronunciation of Esther's husband—King Ahasuerus!—Harriott Crosby

From LaVerne, California: I didn't know how to be a parent. I grew up in an abusive home and my parents were never around. At sixteen I was thrown out. I met Christ in college and married a Christian man.

When I became a parent, I was totally unprepared. I had never seen good parenting and was at a loss when it came to helping my daughter understand about Jesus. So when a friend suggested my two-year-old Kelsey should be in Sunday school, I enrolled her. If that was what good parents did, I wanted to do it.

One day I overheard Kelsey singing, "The wise man built his house upon a rock." She sang the line over and over because it was the only line she remembered. "Mommy, what comes after rock?" she asked me. I had no idea. To get the answer I called Kelsey's Sunday school teacher. That teacher cared—not only about Kelsey, but also about Kelsey's parents. She was instrumental in bringing me into the Sunday school program. God knew I had empty holes in my life that didn't prepare me for being a parent. He used that Sunday school teacher to show me how to fill them.—Sue Bunker.

—David C. Cook Publishing Co., 850 N. Grove, Elgin, IL 60120.

Your Daddy Must Be CRAZY

Rubel Shelly

What would you do if you were a high school football player and your coach sent in a play that called for you to run the ball to your *opponent's* goal line? It has happened!

With seven seconds left in the game, Tishimingo High School was leading Falkner High School, 18-14. At stake was a berth in Mississippi's 1988 state class 1A playoffs. Tishimingo had the ball on Falkner's 40-yard line. All they had to do was run out the clock on the next play, and they would win the game by two points.

Coach David Herbert, who has Lou Gehrig's disease and coaches from a seat in the back of a pickup truck, sent in a play to his son and the team's quarterback, Dave Herbert. The play called for a handoff to tailback Shane Hill who would run as fast as he could for Falkner's goal line.

"Your daddy must be crazy!" protested one of the tackles. So, while the argument went on in the team's huddle, a delay-of-game penalty was called on Tishimingo. Finally the team lined up, the ball was handed off to the tailback, and he ran 55 yards in the "wrong" direction. He lay down in the opponent's end zone and waited for the clock to expire—with practically everyone on the field and in the stadium bewildered. A two-point safety for Falkner. Score tied. Time expired.

Was the coach crazy? Like a fox, maybe. You see, in order for his team to reach the playoffs, Tishimingo had to beat Falkner by four or more points. After thinking about the chances of going 40 yards on one play or kicking a field goal from that distance, he decided overtime was his best bet. Thus the strategy which appeared so muddleheaded.

Had the tailback been chased and tackled, Falkner would have suffered a two-point loss—but would have gone to the playoffs. But not one of its players gave chase to the ball carrier.

What was the result of the maneuver? Tishimingo won in overtime, 22-16, on a third-down, two-yard run by Shane Hill. Hill finished the game with minus 29 yards for the night. But his team won and went to the pay-offs.

Sounds a bit like the cross to me. God became a man, was pushed around by his enemies, and was executed as a criminal by the Roman procurator of Palestine. Satan appeared to have won. Jesus of Nazareth was dead. His disciples were scattered. God had suffered defeat. Or had he?

Three days later, Jesus was alive from the dead. Over a period of 40 days, he showed himself alive to hundreds of people. Then, 51 days later, Pater explained that it had all been part of a divine strategy. He said, "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge" (Acts 2:23). He continued and cited Old Testament predictions which had been fulfilled by the resurrection. The crescendo came when he announced: "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36b).

There you have it! A game plan that looked to all the world like craziness. One which still confounds disciples in our church-huddles and observers in the world-stadium alike. But the Son executed his Father's call to perfection. He died on the cross to pay the sin debt of the human race.

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

Two thousand years this side of the event, we still proclaim that foolishness to be the wisdom and power of God.

—IMAGE magazine

NEWS AND NOTES, cont. from inside front cover

Manila, Philippines:

Please pray for 1) Revival. 2) Improvement of our economy: most of our churchmembers have no jobs, and for those who are in business, business is poor. 3) Love & unity among Christians. 4) Evangelistic outreaches in slum and squatter areas.

—Arsenio Eniego

Cramer & Hanover Church of Christ, Lexington, Kentucky

Our "75th" Anniversary has come and gone and we thank God for His Blessings! It was such a wonderful encouragement seeing the auditorium full with former members and friends of the Cramer Church.

There was special singing from the Cramer Chorus and the Male Quartet. Several former chorus members came and sang "Jesus Meek and Gentle" followed by "O Lord, Our Lord!" The light fixtures are still shaking! What a glorious rendition!

Brethren Julius Hovan and Bruce Chowning brought words of encouragement that were truly inspirational and strengthening. Later in the service, the three elders of Cramer spoke about her past, present, and future.

The morning was highlighted by the special offering toward our "Debt Retirement." It was such a joy and blessing to have our deacons come forward and burn the mortgage! We praise God for His faithfulness in touching the hearts of many who came prepared to give. —Bennie Hill

Belmont Church, Winchester, Ky.:

MAY 4, 5, 6; "Warriors of Righteousness" praise conference for youth and the young at heart. This is a follow-up by request of the participants in the fall praise conference, which was a real blessing to all who participated. Note this on your calendar. You won't want to miss it!

Continued inside back cover

OCTOBER 19-21: Missions Conference at Belmont. There will be a special emphasis on home missions. Pray! Plan! Participate!

Southeast Church of Christ:

Many are excited about beginning the Teacher Training Refresher Course. Joyce Zimpelmann will direct it.

Woodland Bible Camp 1990 Schedule

High School Weeks (entering 9-12) June 24-30, July 29 - August 4. **Jr. High Weeks** (entering grades 6-8) June 17-23, July 22-28. **Jr. Weeks** (entering grades 3-5) June 10-16, July 15-21.

Linton, Ind.: Memorial for the Oars

Bro. Waldo & Sis. Zelma Oar were used of God to minister to this congregation on two occasions for more than 20 years. They endeared themselves to multitudes of people, not only here, but throughout the brotherhood. It is our desire to remember them and our memory of them by refurbishing the baptistry that Bro. Oar helped to build back in the 1940's. Sis. Zelma helped to make and hang the baptistry drapes at that time.

Bro. Ermil Cooksey, who was won to the Lord by Bro. Oar, has already painted a most beautiful background scene for the baptistry. Bro. Cooksey is well known in this area for his artistic abilities.—Harry Coultas

TAPES of messages of the Tell City Lectureship back in Feb. are available from Jerry Carmichael, Tenth and Lafayette Streets, Tell City, IN 47586. See the Jan. W&W for topics and speakers.

FOCUS ON MISSIONS: If you are to pray effectively—learn about your missionary and his situation, take the initiative! Know their names, the country they are in, its geography, climate, history, and type of government. Use an encyclopedia and atlas. Listen to the news. It also helps to know something about the religion in which your missionary works.

Pray regularly! Note specific events on a calendar and pray before, not after the event that your missionary is involved with. Intercession should be regular and frequent. Use a creative approach—choose a landmark you pass often and develop a habit of praying for a specific missionary each time you pass by it.

Pray for the missionary as a person. Pray for tangible needs like physical strength, finances, health, safety, or skill in whatever he is doing. Also pray for the inner man. Pray for the missionary in the same struggles and joys that you have. Pray specifically about relationships that your missionary has and the home life among missionaries.

—Tell City Bulletin

Gallatin Church of Christ, Tenn.:

The main event taking place in our youth program is the search for a youth minister. Pray for those involved in this effort.

Borden Church of Christ, Ind.:

Let's talk adult Bible class. Our congregation has three opportunities each week to study the Bible together, twice on Sundays and once on Wednesday night. I look forward to these studies as much as I do the Sunday morning pulpit. That's why it troubles me that so many Christian adults miss these Bible times. You are missing out on a chance to dig into God's Word with others, and to grow as a result of it. These study times are not as formal as our Sunday morning worship. They offer you a chance to ask questions, to share some thoughts you may have, and to fellowship over God's Word—our spiritual meal. Do you have an appetite for it? On Sunday nights, we are in the middle of a series entitled, "The Nine Basic Doctrines" We have used handouts for these lessons, making it easier to keep up. During Sunday Sch., both senior & young adult classes are using the Word & Work study guides which are in the Book of John right now.

—Mike Abbott in bulletin

Henryville, Indiana

Congratulations!!

We add our belated congratulations to our Bro. Dale Hobbs for his 25 years of service to the people of Scott County for his 25 years of teaching and serving as principal of Vienna School. He was pleasantly surprised with a reception of January 28th. Our public school teachers and officials are to be held up in prayer as they serve in so vital a position. Can you believe that the students kept it a secret from their principal?!? We are very thankful for Dale & Rosie, not only for their work in the school system, but for their work in the church as well.



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The Standard Publishing Co.

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—The Sunday School Times

"I am enthusiastic over 'A New Creation.' It is a valuable publication and one that can be handed to a new convert without pointing out the things that are wrong with it. In fact, it is my desire to give a copy to every new convert here, and as possible to give copies to several of the young people who have been Christians for a while."

—Carl Kitzmiller

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