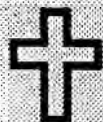
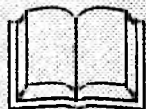


"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



# *The Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

APRIL, 1997

# JESUS

Fully God, Truly Man

*\*Our Loving Example*

*\*Our Heartbroken Teacher*

*\*Our High Priest*

*\*The King over all*

# Purple Aliens Spotted in Church Kitchen

Gene Shelburne

Generating excitement can be tough! I laughed at a cartoon I saw recently which pictured a perplexed church member reading the front page of a church bulletin entitled *The Stone Valley Church Enquirer*.

These were the headlines: **Purple Aliens Spotted in Church Kitchen. Is Church Elder Really Elvis? Church Records Say Yes! Lose 20 Lbs. by Playing in the Bell Choir!** The cartoon was captioned, "Attempts to make the church newsletter more exciting were getting out of hand." Indeed!

By the same token, a church growth "expert" was once asked what a struggling church could do to make its worship the sort of exciting event that would increase attendance and compete with the slickly-packaged TV services, sports events, recreational activities, etc., which conspire to draw away members. He replied that churches pretty much have to start their worship and programs with something that will generate the excitement of, say, a nuclear explosion and work their way up.

If he's right, most average-sized churches standing in the shadow of mega-churches have about as much chance as a Mom & Pop Five & Dime planted across the street from Walmart. We're in trouble because we can't afford much slick packaging, or too many nuclear events either, for that matter.

What we can do is the same thing "good" faithful churches of all sizes have been doing well for centuries. We can point people to God's grace in a very personal way as we walk together daily genuinely sharing His love and genuinely sharing our lives.

By the way, did I mention that we have it on good authority that **Space Aliens from Mars Will Beam Elvis Down to a Local Church Near You this Sunday?** It'd be a real shame to miss that!

I hope you'll be in worship this Sunday. The fact is that "where two or three are gathered together in His name," someone a lot more important than Elvis is in their midst.

But I'd still like to get a look at those purple aliens!

--*The Christian Chronicle*

# THE WORD AND WORK

*"Declare the whole counsel of God"*

**Alex V. Wilson, Editor**

**Dennis L. Allen, Missions**

**Jack Blaes, News**

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# THEME: Jesus, Man and God

## JESUS--Fully God, Truly Man

Alex V. Wilson

Christ is the delightful theme of four articles this month: Jesus the man and example. Jesus our teacher and lord. Jesus our great high priest in glory, now. Jesus the king--now, or course, but later to a fuller extent. (Now He overrules evil; then He will demolish it.)

My heart resonates every time I read the testimony of Charles Malik, formerly ambassador from Lebanon to the U. S. and also president of the U. N. General Assembly:

"I speak to you as a Christian. Jesus Christ is my Lord and God and Savior and Song day and night. I can live without food, without drink, without sleep, without air, but I cannot live without Jesus. Without Him I would have perished long ago. Without Him and His church reconciling man to God the world would have perished long ago. I live in the Bible for long hours every day. The Bible is the source of every good thought and impulse I have. In the Bible God Himself, the Creator of every thing from nothing, speaks to me and to the world directly, about Himself, about ourselves, and about His will for the course of events and for the consummation of history. And believe me, not a day passes without my crying from the bottom of my heart, 'Come, Lord Jesus!' I know He is coming with Glory to judge the living and the dead, but in my impatience I sometimes cannot wait, and I find myself in my infirmity crying with David, 'How long, Lord?' and I know His Kingdom shall have no end."

*What the Bible Teaches . . .*

### IV. About God The Son: Jesus The Christ, The God-Man

Alex V. Wilson

In our January article in this series, we examined Jesus of Nazareth's stupendous *claims* and the strong *evidence* He gave to support them. We also studied His *deity* for that was His boldest and loftiest claim. In that article, and last month's too, we looked at His *relationship both to the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit*. Though Jesus' **humanity** was mentioned in January, we took it for granted then. Now, having seen His deity, let's look more closely at His life as a human being.

In our time unbelievers usually admit Jesus' humanity--that He was a historical figure--but have trouble believing in His unique deity. ("New Agers" may say He was divine, but so are we all, according to them.) It may surprise you to learn that many folks in the first century could accept His deity more easily than His humanity! That was because

influential Greek philosophers called Gnostics believed that spirit was good but matter was evil. Thus if Jesus was divine He could not have had a real, material body. He probably just *seemed* to be a man. This is why John makes that statement which puzzles lots of Christians now: "Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come *in the flesh* is from God." (1 John 4:2, also 2 John 7). Of course, John believed in His deity too (1 John 5:20, etc.), but the main point at issue than was His true humanity.

Actually there are genuine Christians in our day who have some Gnostic attitudes mixed in with their orthodox beliefs. Such ideas are rather widespread; perhaps we ourselves are infected with them! For example: a poll of 4000 members of one Protestant denomination showed that 3/4 believed that Jesus never told jokes, 4/5 believed he felt no sexual attraction, and over 1/2 believed that He knew everything all of the time. But is humor sinful? And do our sexual desires come from the devil or from God? And how could Jesus "grow in wisdom" if He always knew everything? (Luke 2:52; also see Mark 5:31-2 and Matt. 24:36; though the latter passage certainly is not true *now* since Jesus at His ascension resumed the full exercise of His divine attributes.)

We lose a lot if we diminish Jesus' real humanity. He was not God-just-pretending to be a man, just putting on an act. He was not a Superman who merely looked like us (Clark Kent) while actually using his divine powers to breeze through life and its problems with no difficulties whatever. Bullets didn't bounce off Jesus' chest!--the whip, thorns and nails produced indescribable agony. And even when working as a carpenter, did He never miss the nail in His hand and smash the nail on His thumb instead?

Here are words Scripture uses to describe Jesus at various times: *thirsty . . . hungry . . . weary . . . sorrowful . . . wept . . . agony . . . tempted . . . indignation . . . marveled*. Is your view of Jesus' life and ministry broad enough to include those words? We must reject ideas like these found in a Christmas carol: "The cattle are lowing, the poor baby wakes, But little Lord Jesus, *No crying He makes!*" Humbug--all human babies cry. They are supposed to; it develops their lungs!

An apocryphal story made up in the early centuries of church history tells of the child Jesus playing with His friends. They formed make-believe birds out of mud; then he astonished them by making the birds come to life (they flew away)! The story is ridiculous: later, when He actually did perform miracles, He never did them just to dazzle people with His sensational powers. According to another such story, in the carpenter shop one day no board was the right length for a piece of furniture Jesus was making. So He just took a board that was

too short and stretched it out to the required length! Such nonsense is contradicted by John 2:11. An even more significant fact is this: When Christ's public ministry began and He first spoke in His *hometown* synagogue, the people there (among whom He had grown up) were amazed at Him. They stammered, "Where did this man get . . . these miraculous powers? Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers . . . [and] sisters with us?" (Matt. 13:54-57). This shows that no many of His townmates, the young Jesus seemed to be an ordinary fellow. (Oh, if they'd only known.)

### Picture Him in Your Mind

Try to imagine Him in His home. And playing with His buddies. Attending the synagogue services and meditating on the holy Scriptures (many of which were about *Him*). Walking in the fields communing with His Father. Studying in Nazareth's synagogue school. (Would you like to have been the rabbi there?) Working in the shop. (They made good products.)

Then imagine Him in *your* home and neighborhood. Working hard in the furniture factory (getting his instructions from the computer print-out). Attending your Bible class and prayer meeting. Comforting that newly bereaved family. Bowling with friends. Buying groceries carefully, due to a limited budget. In jeans and tee-shirt taking several boys on a campout. Trying to patch up a misunderstanding between some friends and Himself. Sitting in a room heavy with marijuana fumes, as He discusses with two prostitutes and three ex-cons the real meaning of life.

Wonder of wonders, life as Jesus experienced it was like life as you and I experience it: problems and joys, troubles and triumphs, ecstasies and agonies. Subtle temptations too. Yes, He had to struggle against the enticements of sin. (Don't you?) His trials and temptations were intensely real. He "has been *tempted in every way, just as we are* --yet was without sin." "He had to be *made like his brethren in every way* in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest . . . and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. *Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted* (Heb. 4:15; 2:17-18).

Yes, that's the point. He's "walked in our moccasins," so He **empathizes with us**. As the gospel song puts it, "Jesus knows all about our struggles": Obscurity and lack of recognition. Misunderstandings. Disappointments. The pressure of deadlines to meet. Pain. Loneliness. The daily routine with its nagging duties and bothersome details. He's been here, so in all our afflictions He is afflicted.

A 2nd lesson for us is this: **He is our great Example**. Some people object to that idea. A Christian professor in college commented on

Thomas a Kempis' great book, *The Imitation of Christ*, "It's a classic, though of course the title is not suitable. That Jesus is our example is a major belief of the liberals. He's our Savior." But that response is unbiblical. Of course He is our Saviour in whom we must trust for salvation. But also--well, listen to Jesus: "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." Then listen to Peter: "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps." Third, listen to John: "He who says he abides in [Christ] ought also to walk even as He walked." Last, listen to Paul: "You imitate me, even as I imitate Christ." (John 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:21; 1 Jn. 2:6; 1 Cor. 11:1.)

Of course as the Son of God He was unique in some ways. Nonetheless, those four verses provide much food for thought. What kind of businessman would He be, here and now? What kind of teacher, truck-driver, student, lawyer, housewife? C. S. Lewis wrote, "There are lots of things which your conscience might not call definitely wrong, but which you will see at once you cannot go on doing if you are seriously trying to be like Christ." True. But we should ask ourselves not only what He would *not* do, but what He *would*.

### **He Didn't Teach Them about Electricity**

A 3rd lesson from His human life on earth is this: While here, Jesus never gave to men the secrets of electricity, or a cure for leprosy or cancer (though He healed many folks), nor training in democratic government! Think how much suffering He might have spared us all if He had. How much more progress we would've made.

No, the problem He dealt with was mainly the problem of sin, and separation from God. Once for all He revealed that a person's relationship with his Maker is far, far, *far* more important than anything else in life can ever be! Not for a moment do I imply that the Lord doesn't care about matters like science, health and government. He is concerned about all that concerns us. But He has left these matters for our work and study. They are part of our God-given duty to subdue the earth and rule over its creatures and forces (Gen. 1:28).

But back to Jesus' life on earth. Here is the lesson He taught by word of mouth many times, but also which His entire life screams out at us: "Health, wealth, convenience and comfort are NOTHING compared with eternal salvation!" Not only what He did but also what He did *not* do is a solemn warning: "Don't let **anything** interfere with your personal relationship with God. Don't let **anyone** keep you from your duty to God. Your spirit is more important than your body, and eternity is more important than this life. **PUT GOD FIRST!**"

# JESUS AND THE GOSPEL OF SUCCESS

C. Leonard Allen

One of my favorite cartoon characters is Will B. Dunn, a preacher serving in the mythical town of Bypass, North Carolina. Will B. Dunn is a dedicated and sincere minister, but he is prone to pretensions, shallowness and the allures of worldly success. And what makes it all so funny is that he seems blind to his self-serving motives. On one occasion, for example, Will B. announces to his young friend Kudzu that he has decided to begin a special ministry to the rich and powerful people of his community. He tells Kudzu that he has decided to focus his energies on the spiritual needs of corporate magnates like Big Bubba Tadsworth. Kudzu is impressed. "Brother Dunn," he says, "what a difficult decision that must have been! You must have spent long nights in prayer, agonizing about the will of God and weighing all the sacrifices you will have to make. Please tell me, how did you reach your decision?" "Well Kudzu," the preacher replies, "actually I made it while taking tea with the Tadsworths in their hot tub."

We can smile at Will B. Dunn's mixed motives, at his less than noble reasons. But it seems to me that we can see in him a disturbing reflection of Christianity in our time. We live in an affluent culture. And in this culture we are witnessing the emergence, all around us, of what has been called the "gospel of success." Its basic message is that if you want to climb the ladder to worldly success, to enjoy all the good things this life has to offer, then get Jesus on your team, and he will fulfill your fondest ambition and give you your heart's desire. He will help you live the American dream of happiness, prosperity, even wealth.

**We may be following a Jesus fashioned by American culture rather than the Jesus of Scripture. There is a wide gulf between the two.**

Nowhere is this message heard more clearly than from many of the television preachers. Their promises are glittering, their message appealing: "Come to Jesus and get rich! Come to Jesus and be healed of all your ills! Come to Jesus and discover your hidden sex appeal! Come to Jesus and have your every wish fulfilled!" With these promises they turn Jesus into the Candyman. They make God into a cosmic vending machine where you can drop in a coin and get a cure. They preach a religion of boundless rewards but little cost.



Such a message has an enormous appeal today. It fits nicely with the mood of our times. As a result, there is an immense temptation for us to recast the gospel of Christ in this mold. There is enormous pressure to turn the gospel of the crucified and lowly Christ into a technique to boost our careers, into a tool to help us reach whatever ambitions we might have, to give ourselves whatever comforts we might seek.

In view of these pressures, I wonder to what extent we have embraced this gospel of success? To what extent has our vision of Jesus' call been softened and distorted by the values of our culture? I see disturbing signs. I see us concerned more and more about what Jesus can do for us and less about what we can do for him. I hear us talking over and over about how to find our lives, but not so much about Jesus' call to lose our lives in his service. We talk a lot about salvation, but maybe not so much about sacrifice. We search eagerly for happiness, but maybe not so eagerly for holiness.

The danger, it seems to me, is that we may be following a Jesus fashioned by American culture rather than the Jesus of Scripture. There is a wide gulf between the two. The American-culture Jesus promises worldly success and asks only for minimal commitments. But the biblical Jesus promises us the cross and calls us to give everything that we are and have. Do you remember his words? "If any one would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it" (Luke 9:23-24). Have we listened to a different Jesus long enough that we miss the force of these words?

**Cross-bearing is the vulnerability we feel and the risks we take when we determine to work with Jesus in his servant ministry.**

What do they mean? What is this cross? It is *not* something that God puts on us to bear? It is *not* an accident or a disease or a tragedy beyond our control. A cross is something we embrace voluntarily when we decide to follow Jesus. Cross-bearing is the vulnerability we feel and the risks we take when we determine to work with Jesus in his servant ministry. It is the denial of personal ambition. It is the refusal to conform to the "success" image of whatever society we live in.

Cross-bearing means that when you lay your life down for Jesus Christ, one of the results will be that your heart will begin to be broken by the things that break the heart of Jesus. To bear the cross of Jesus is to begin to care about people like you have never cared for them before. It is to let their hurts become your hurts, their agonies become

your agonies. To bear the cross is to know not only the joy of Jesus but also some of the sorrow that Jesus knows. It is to be stirred up by the things that stir him up, to feel anger over the things that anger him. To bear the cross is to begin seeing our world as Jesus sees it and to take up the basin and towel with him to wash its wounds and refresh its weary people.

When we come to know Jesus this way, we will not be able to sit back and bask in a shallow "feel-good-about-yourself" religion. When we come to know Jesus this way, the gospel of success will appear shabby and self-serving, and we will not be content with the glittering celebration of the good life as our present culture defines it.

Where do we stand today? Can we hear the call of the biblical Jesus? Many of us have given a few dollars to African relief, and some of us have cried a few tears over the distressing pictures we have seen. But has that horrifying glimpse into the suffering and poverty of our world really made any difference in our lifestyle? Has it made much difference in the way we spend our money? Has it made any of us take a second look at the rampant consumerism that feeds our ever-increasing hungers? Has it caused very many of us to change our career plans? Have the images of human suffering that occasionally intrude into our very comfortable lives made much difference in our vision of what Christians are to be about in this world? Has it broken our hearts? Has it compelled us to bear *this cross* with Jesus?

Today, we must look beyond the beguiling world of suburban luxury, beyond store-bought sun tans, designer clothes, and \$25,000 sport cars--and whatever else our culture says we need to fit its standards. We must see with greater clarity that there is a vast world of need out there, a world of spiritual and material poverty. We must see that when Jesus looks out on it, He sees many things that break his heart. And we must let it break our hearts too.

The call of Jesus is to brokenness and cross-bearing. It is a call to let our hearts be softened and broken by the very things that break his heart. When we begin to experience that brokenness, we *will* find comfort and joy, to be sure, but it will not be the quick, easy comfort promised by many modern gospels. With Christ's gospel we will have to search deeper for comfort, but when we find it, we will ultimately know a more enduring peace.

*If any one would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*

From IMAGE, by permission.

# GOD'S THRONE, CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD

John R. W. Stott

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. --Hebrews 4:14-16 RSV

At the center of the universe, outside and independent of it, yet controlling all its affairs, is a throne, God's throne. And this throne is a "throne of grace." This is a remarkable expression, because it is a combination of apparent opposites. A throne is a symbol of sovereignty. It stands for absolute power and resplendent glory. It speaks of one who rules with authority, whose will no creature dare resist, whose word no man dare disobey. The throne of God inspires reverence and awe. "The Lord reigns; let the people tremble!" When Isaiah saw the Lord upon His throne high and lifted up, he immediately sensed his uncleanness and cried "Woe is me, for I am lost." When Ezekiel saw the throne of God, bright as sapphire, and the Occupant of the throne an indescribable figure of burning fire and light, he was utterly overcome and fell prostrate on his face. Nevertheless, God's throne of glory is also a throne of grace, of unmerited favor and kindness. The power of his throne is never arbitrary; it is always exercised in love.

To this throne of grace we are exhorted to draw near. Our King is not like an ancient despot of the Orient, remote and fearful, corrupted by power, unpredictable and often cruel in His judgments. Our King is not even like the revelation of Himself in the Old Testament days when the Temple stood, inaccessible in His purity, dwelling in the Holy of Holies behind the veil. No. He is seated on a throne of grace, inviting His people to draw near. Let us ask two questions: why should we draw near, and how dare we?

## 1. REASONS WHY WE SHOULD DRAW NEAR

The exhortation to us to come is "In order that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

First we are offered mercy to cover our past offenses. We have sinned, and incurred guilt, and need forgiveness. We can neither forgive our own sins, nor secure our forgiveness. Mercy alone can reach us. Every sinner whose eye had been opened to see and whose conscience has been awakened to feel the gravity of his sins, has recognized this simple truth. His language is like David's "Have mercy upon me, O God." It is at the throne of grace that we can obtain mercy.

Secondly, we are offered grace to help in time of need. Once we have received mercy, we still pass through many times of need. Only grace from God's throne can sustain and strengthen us--grace to resist temptation and to endure trials; grace to persevere when the going is hard. It is at the throne of grace that we can find grace to help in future need.

## **2. GROUNDS ON WHICH WE MAY DRAW NEAR**

How do we know that we shall be welcome and not turned away? How dare we come with boldness? What is the meaning of the *therefore* let us draw near? The answer is that God's throne is a throne of grace, and that Jesus Christ is there at the Father's right hand. There are three things about Jesus Christ which reveal the grace of God's throne.

### **a. He lived on earth**

"For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning" (verse 15). Although He is called the "Son of God" in verse 14. He took flesh, and in it shared our trials and temptations. He was tempted in all points as we are. This cannot be pressed literally, for he did not endure the precise temptations of a woman (since He was a man), or of an old person (since He died before the age of 35) or of a twentieth-century factory worker in London (since He lived in an agricultural community in first-century Palestine). Nevertheless, *in principle* He was tempted as we are. He endured the fierce onslaught of every kind of temptation. He was tempted to assert Himself, to doubt and disobey God, and every temptation is a variation on this theme.

So He is able to sympathize. He can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (AV). Or, as J. B. Phillips puts it, "We have no super-human high priest to whom our weaknesses are unintelligible. He Himself has shared fully in all our experiences of temptation, except that he never sinned."

### **b. He died on the cross**

That is why He is called our "high priest." "Priests" are people who offer sacrifices. The great function of the Old Testament priests was to administer the sacrificial system. Jesus Christ is called a priest because He offered Himself as our one sacrifice for sins forever. Because of this, if we repent and believe in Jesus, God remembers our sins no more.

### **c. He passed through the heavens**

"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (verse 14). He who lived and died on earth, was raised from death and exalted to heaven. The person who reigns at the right hand of God is the person who lived and died on the earth. He has carried with Him into heaven the benefits of His life and death, the sympathy which He gained by His

life and the salvation which He won by His death. He is able to sympathize now because He suffered then. He is able to save now because He died then. These are the grounds on which we may draw near with boldness.

**Why is it that people do not seek out a friend in time of need?** It is usually one of two reasons: either they say "he would not understand" or "he could not help." In other words, they question their friend's sympathy or ability. But Jesus Christ has both. His temptations on earth have given Him the deepest sympathy with us, while His sin-bearing death on the cross has given Him the absolute ability to save.

I urge you to come to the throne of grace, and to draw near. Christ Jesus is no hard, unfeeling, impotent ogre who would turn you away. He feels for you and with you in your infirmities. He knows, He understands, He cares. He can come so speedily to your aid. No stain is so indelible that He cannot erase it, no sin so black that He cannot wash it white. No temptation or trial is so fierce that He cannot sympathize, and no burden so heavy that He cannot bear it with you. Then why do we not come?

**Some people are indifferent.** It is an immense privilege to be invited to come to God's throne, but they despise and neglect it. Would you win a prize to visit Greece or Italy and never go? Would you receive an invitation to Buckingham Palace and turn it down? Then how is it that God can grant us access to His throne and we do not avail ourselves of it?

**Some of us are too proud.** We rule our own lives. We rather fancy ourselves as little kings, with a throne of our own to sit on, a crown to wear and a scepter to wave. We need to come down off our throne; there is another throne to which we must draw near.

**Some of us are too busy.** Our lives are cluttered up with lesser things. The cares, riches and pleasures of this life, or even good and noble works choke our Christian lives. But how can we do the work of God and neglect the throne of God?

**Some of us are too shy.** We have not the courage to come. This is not becoming modesty, however, it is rather sinful unbelief. Have we a high priest who sympathizes and a throne of grace, and still we hold back? We are told to come with boldness; our diffidence is an offense to God.

There is no need to wait for a summons, apply for an audience or book an interview. He bids us draw near; let us come and keep coming.

## THE MILLENNIUM

R. H. Boll

In undertaking to speak of the "Millennium" it is well to understand at the outset that the subject of our inquiry is a Bible theme. All light and information on this subject therefore must come from the Word of God. To the extent that that Word has anything to say about the Millennium we can know something about it; however, only so much as the Word reveals. But it should also be understood that whatever the Bible does say about it is to be relied upon, and is not to be accounted as worthless or superfluous, but, as all other scripture-teaching, profitable for doctrine or for reproof, or for correction, or for instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Otherwise, surely God would not have given it.

It has been said that the word "Millennium" is not in the Bible. True, the word is not in our English Bible. But this word "millennium" is simply a transliteration, direct from the Latin Bible, of the term for "a thousand years"--nothing else, and nothing more or less than that, just as the word "century" means a hundred years.

But although this time-measure, "a thousand years" is mentioned only in Revelation 20 (where it appears six times), we must not conclude that Revelation 20 is the only place in the Bible where the Millennium is spoken of.

A number of passages in the Old Testament, and also some in the New, speak concerning an age to come. Revelation 20, however, is the only passage from which we learn that the length of that period is a thousand years. \*

But the duration of that period is only a detail. The essential fact I wish to set forth is that the Scriptures speak of an "age to come" on this earth, following that age in which we now live; and that that age will be ushered in by the personal return from heaven of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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\* This I take to mean a thousand years, plain and simple, as stated. While always ready to recognize a figure of speech, or a symbolic expression, where such is fairly indicated, the faithful Bible student does not feel warranted to regard any statement as "figurative" or "symbolic" arbitrarily, that is, without valid reason, or merely to make that statement agree with some preconceived idea or scheme of things. We rightly think it unfair, for example, when certain teachers designate, the "water" in John 3:5 as "figurative." True, "water" is used figuratively elsewhere, as in John 4:10, 14, and where it is used figuratively it is right to recognize it so: but that does not prove that it is figurative there. In the absence of any compelling reason in text or context, we are justified in taking the term "water" in John 3:5 simply

1. In the second recorded sermon of Peter he speaks of "the times of the restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old." These times of restoration will not be until God sends the Christ, who is now in heaven, and who will remain in heaven until "the times of restoration of all things." The entire passage reads as follows:

"Repent ye therefore and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old." (Acts 3:19-21.)

We learn from this (1) that there are to be times of restoration (which term obviously means a return to original state of all that was lost and marred by man's sin); (2) that God had foretold these times of restoration by the mouth of his holy prophets; (3) that these times of restoration await the return of our Lord Jesus from heaven. In the words of the venerable David Lipscomb (*Queries and Answers*, page 360):

"Jesus had been to earth and returned to heaven. Heaven must receive him until 'the times of restoration of all things.' Then the "times of restoration of all things' must be when Jesus returns again to earth--the restoration of all things to their original relation to God. The relation which the world originally sustained to God was broken when man, the ruler, rebelled against God. That destruction of the world's relation to God was more far-reaching and destructive than we realize. The whole material creation shared in the evil. Briers, thistles, thorns grew in the material world as in the spiritual. Sickness, death, mortality, afflicted the material world. When man rebelled against His maker the under creation rebelled against man. The laws of the natural world were disordered. The germs of vegetation put forth: biting frosts or burning heat destroys them. Disorder in the laws of the material world came as the result of man's sin against his Maker. When Jesus comes again the will of God will be done on earth as it is done in heaven, and

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at its literal meaning. Similarly, it is not denied that in Revelation there is a good deal of symbolic language. But that does not justify us in taking everything in it as symbolical, and still less in proceeding therefrom to make of it whatever we please--a mode of treatment not rarely meted out to that part of God's word. Again, it does not follow that because a figurative or symbolic expression is used in a portion of scripture, that it is therefore all figurative or symbolical. Frequently we find the most literal statements in close connection with a figure of speech; or a simple fact side-by-side with a symbol. Such things are not to be settled by general assumptions, but by particular, careful, conscientious examinations.

all things in the world will be restored to harmonious relations with God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe."

With a view to the same theme, Paul, in his letter to the Romans (8:18-25) shows that the whole creation groans and travails in pain (even as God's children themselves) and that its deliverance cannot come until "the revealing of the sons of God," by which is meant "our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body"; that is, our resurrection, which (as all concede) takes place at the return of Christ from heaven, when the dead in Christ shall be raised incorruptible and the living ones changed, and thus, in glory, shall the sons of God be revealed. For that event, therefore, all creation waits in expectancy.

There comes therefore a time for this earth when its ancient curse will be lifted, when thorns and thistles shall cease, when enmity shall be no more, and the very beasts of field and forest shall dwell together in peace;\* when the wilderness shall blossom as the rose, when neither burning desert nor miasmatic swamp shall longer disfigure God's earth. This is the "restoration," and it is synchronous with the "Millennium," the age to come, which is to be ushered in by the return from heaven of our Lord Jesus Christ.† That God has spoken before of this time and of these things by the mouth of his holy prophets can be seen by such passages as Isa. 55:13, 11:6-9; 35:1-7; 65:25.

2. In the next place this age to come will be the time when Christ and His saints will exercise the government of the earth. Satan, the "prince of the world," in whose hands until yet is the authority of the kingdoms of the earth (Luke 4:5-7) will then be bound; and not only bound, but removed from the world and safely incarcerated in the abyss during the whole period. (The "abyss" is the prison-house of evil spirits, Luke 8:31; and those who are remanded to that place are thereby removed from the world of mankind, Mark 5:10). Instead of Satan, Christ will then take supreme control. At the sounding of the seventh trumpet the announcement is heard: "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ." (Rev. 11:15). No nation or kingdom (as such) is now consciously and intentionally obedient to Christ, nor will be till then. But then He will take over what is His ("Thou hast taken thy great power and didst reign." Rev. 11:17); and, as the Old Testament prophecy declares, "The king-

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\* "The lion and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, once lived on terms of friendship, and they will do so again; a time will come when the lion shall eat straw like the ox."--Alexander Campbell, *Millennial Harbinger*, 1833, p. 177.

† Some have contended that the Millennium will transpire before Christ's coming. Strange "Millennium" that would be--for until Christ comes and His saints are resurrected, both they and all creation groan and travail together: a "Millennium" therefore that would be filled with the groanings of God's people and of all creation!



doms and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. (Dan. 7:27.) So also in the New Testament. The parable of "the pounds" (Luke 19:11-27) sets this forth; the direct statement of Rev. 20:6--they "shall reign with Him a thousand years"; the promise to the faithful church in Thyatira: "And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers: as I also have received of my Father." (Rev. 2:26-27.) Some, thinking that such passages as Matt. 25:31ff; II Thess. 1, et. al., would leave no possibility of surviving nations on earth, have disputed the plain meaning of these passages on that ground. But I believe that a careful and thoughtful consideration of those scriptures will show that there is plenty of room left for the survival of such nations. However, that does not matter one way or another -- that difficulty is the Lord's, not ours. If He says that His saints will reign over nations in the age to come, then the nations will be there to be ruled over, we may be sure.

Under that just, benevolent reign "the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace till the moon be no more." (Ps. 72:7.) It is then that they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and the nations shall learn war no more; then "the meek shall inherit the earth"; then, too, shall the earth be "full of the knowledge of Jehovah as waters that cover the sea." (Is. 2:4, 11:9.) Whatever application may so far have been made of those scriptures, their real fulfillment will take place then.

3. Distinctly does the word of God speak of the supremacy of Christ in the age to come, as well as in this present age. The clearness of the statement is somewhat affected by our English translation which often uses the word "world" to represent the Greek word "aion," (age). In Eph. 1:21 it is declared that God, when He raised Christ from the dead, made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places: "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world (Greek, age) but also in that which is to come." Thayer (Greek Lexicon of the N.T.) defines the Greek phrase, "ho nun aion" (the present age) mentioned in I Tim. 6:17; 2 Tim. 4:10; Tit. 2:12, as the "time before the appointed return or truly Messianic advent of Christ (i.e. the parousia, q.v.) the period of instability, weakness, impiety, wickedness, calamity, misery"; and "aion mellon" (the age to come) under which head he cites Eph. 1:21, "the age after the return of Christ in majesty, the period of the consummate establishment of the Divine Kingdom and all its blessings." However anyone may question Thayer's phraseology, we must concede that this is not the effusion of some wild dreamer, but the sober dictum of a recognized scholar and a lexicographer of highest rank. And though we may disregard his comment as of only human authority, yet the state-

ment of Eph. 1:21 speaks for itself, according to which there is an age to come in which Christ's name and dominion will still be supreme. He will not, therefore, when He comes again, "deliver up the kingdom" as yet, to God the Father (according to the mistaken exegesis of I Cor. 15:24, which disregards the difference between the word "then" (Greek, tote) meaning "at that time"; and the "then" which means "afterward," or "next in order (Greek eita) which is used in I Cor. 15:24) but will reign supreme, until, at last, all things are completely subdued to Him. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death; and that is at the close of the Millennium. (I Cor. 15:26; Rev. 20:14).

It may be that some, having framed their view of the future upon 2 Pet. 3, may contend that there will never be a Millennium, or any age to come for this earth. Here, as elsewhere, it is necessary to take the whole testimony of the word of God. It may be freely granted that if only 2 Pet. 3, and nothing else, had been given us, no one would have thought of any millennium to come. Peter simply passes over everything and speaks of the final destruction of the world and the new heaven and new earth. Just so, for example, does Enoch, "the seventh from Adam" pass over every intervening dispensation and circumstance to foretell the second coming of Christ (Jude 14). Peter is speaking concerning certain scoffers who seem to bank upon the stability of the universe and the unvarying constancy of natural law. (See 2 Pet. 3:4). To them he explains that God has broken into the natural course of things in times past, and will do so again, even to the destruction of things that now are. John in Revelation tells us the same (Rev. 20:11; 21:1) -- but John also speaks of a preceding Millennium. We have always interpreted passages of smaller content by those of a larger content, never vice-versa. When in Mark 16:16, for instance, we read that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," we do not hesitate to insert repentance, which is taught elsewhere; or when in Luke 26:47 we read of "repentance and remission of sins" we supplement faith and baptism from other passages. Just so, we properly read the teaching of John and Paul and the O.T. when we let God have His whole say. We believe that God will do all He has promised and foretold. Many questions may arise in our minds which cannot be answered; but as to the simple facts in the case, as set forth in the Bible, we need have no doubt.

# Senior Saints--Worth Their Weight in Gold

Tom Kelton

During the Middle Ages, people were married at thirteen; were warriors and leaders in their teens; and senile at thirty-five or forty. The Black Prince was sixteen when he won fame at the Battle of Crecy. Joan of Arc was seventeen when she took Orleans from the English. Montaigne tells us he hardly ever met a man as old as fifty. When the dramatists in Spain's great age (from 1550-1650) designated a man as old, they meant him to be about forty, yellowed, wrinkled, and toothless.

Times have changed. Recently a study was made of four hundred outstanding achievers. The names were chosen from a wide variety of vocations and activities. Experts were asked to review, evaluate, and amend the selections.

It was found that persons between the ages of sixty and seventy produced thirty-five percent of the world's greatest achievements. Twenty-three percent were produced by persons between seventy and eighty years of age. The most outstanding finding of this study was that sixty-four percent of the great achievements were made by persons who had passed their sixtieth birthday.

Today, brethren over sixty-five comprise one of the greatest potential work forces for Christ. It is to these senior saints that I address this article.

You have been released from an oppressive work schedule. There is no longer a ringing alarm, no hectic rush to punch the time clock, and no imposed regimen of activity. You are free to do what you want to do, when you want to do it.

You can achieve more for Christ in the future than you ever have in the past. There are still many things for you to do.

Get involved in the work of the Lord in every way possible. Establish goals for yourself. You will not achieve any more for Christ in your future than the goals you establish. No matter how many birthdays lie behind you, it is the time that is ahead that counts. Make that time count for Christ!

--From *Pulpit Helps*

# Inherited Religion

Leroy Garrett

*I am the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. --Ex. 3:6*

All three of the original fathers of the children of Israel had their problems, and of the three those of Jacob were the most serious. One scholar describes Jacob as "an avaricious cheat," noting that he was born that way, for even when he was delivered he was clutching his brother's heel, as though trying to outdo him. After reviewing Jacob's stormy life, in which he finds little real commitment to God in spite of some awe-inspiring experiences, this scholar concludes that Jacob's problem was that his was an inherited religion. He was the son of Isaac, the grandson of Abraham. In our parlance he was a third-generation "Christian."

We have to concede that most of us are Christians because our parents were before us, and perhaps our grandparents and even great-grandparents. An even more brutal fact is that we are Christians because we were born into a "Christian" culture. We are Christians for the same reason that we are Americans.

What concerns me in this piece is whether we Christians in the Western world are not what we are more from cultural influence than by a personal encounter with God. Or to put it another way, whether ours, like Jacob's, is an inherited religion more than one based on our own experience and commitment.

It was not the case with the earliest Christians, for they came out of Judaism, paganism, atheism. Their parents and grandparents were not Christians before them. That ours is an inherited religion gives the modern church a different character. We have accepted our religion--without question?--from our ancestry. I am not implying that there is anything wrong in our Christian faith being inherited. It can indeed, and often is, a beautiful thing to see faith passed along from one generation to another. It is obviously what God intended. But still there is a problem. We must see to it that our religion is more than inherited. Somewhere along the way from childhood--and it may be gradual--we must make our faith our own through personal encounters with God. This appears to have been Jacob's need.

An inherited religion, or what David Hume called "faith engendered by custom," has at least three serious weaknesses. First, it does not take the gravity of sin seriously. We are not really sinners, it is easy for us to conclude, and never have been since we've been religious all our lives--"taken to church when I was a baby" we sometimes

say. Paul could say of the earliest Christians, "We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, etc." (Tit. 3:3), but we do not feel that way about it, for we've been Christians all our lives. We did not come out of sin, we suppose, and so we do not know sin like Paul and Augustine did.

Second, those with an inherited religion tend to take it for granted, just as we are inclined to take the blessings of democracy for granted. We've never known anything else. This is why church is often humdrum. It is old hat to us. We get tired of preaching and the services are monotonous. To keep the sacred from becoming commonplace is a real problem. There is no easy solution. In the same way our kids, saturated by plenty, soon tire of their expensive toys, while a child in the Third World revels in a shoe box or an old tire. We are often finicky about the food set before us, while the destitute relish potato peelings.

Third, we do not usually make good witnesses to our faith when it is inherited. Paul urged the Roman believers to serve righteousness as they had served sin (Rom. 6:19). It is an effective argument for people who have sinned abundantly. Now they can serve God with the same enthusiasm. Such ones will have missionary zeal. But when we are insensitive to the effect of sin in our own lives, we are not likely to feel a sense of urgency about the sins of others. Dr. Menninger's book of a decade ago, which he appropriately titled "Whatever Became of Sin?", applies to the modern church as well as the modern world.

The only way to rise above these weaknesses in our inherited religion is a personal encounter with the Lord. There is a private door through which God enters into every person's life. It is the picture we have in Rev. 3:20 where Jesus stands knocking at the door. The faith of our fathers would lead us to open the door and invite Jesus into our hearts. When that happens faith is no longer only inherited, for it is now our own.

This is what happened to Jacob, sort of, for it can be questioned whether he ever had more than an inherited faith, which did little for his selfish, conniving way of life. But there was clearly the knock at the door. We are sometimes hesitant to open the door, for when the Lord enters selfish pride has to leave. This was Jacob's problem. He was never quite ready to forget Jacob.

That night at Bethel when a stone served as his pillow he had a "knock at the door" dream. A ladder was set up on the earth and it reached into heaven. He saw angels scurrying up and down the ladder! That was almost too much for mortal man to behold, but that was not all. God Himself stood above the ladder and spoke to Jacob, telling him that He was Yahweh, the God of his fathers. The Lord renewed both the land and the seed promises that he had made to Abraham and

**Isaac.** The Lord told Jacob he would be with him and protect him wherever he went.

Jacob's response to all this was less than heroic. He did say, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it," which figures, for he had not been seeking the Lord all that much anyway. There is no evidence of his ever seeking God or praying to Him up to this time, and even here he continues with his bargaining ways. He makes an altar of his stone pillow and makes a vow that if God does for him all that He promised, and "will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear," then "the Lord shall be my God."

Even if some commentators would have it so, there is hardly a conversion experience here on the part of Jacob. No repentance of his deceptive way of life. God could have had a better subject for one of the most dramatic moments in biblical history! But therein may be the lesson of the story. Jacob was chosen because of God's grace, not because of his goodness or his suitability. And God was faithful all the way to the covenant of grace he made with Abraham and Isaac. No matter if Jacob was a scoundrel. It was all God's grace--the ladder, the angels, the theophany. Even to a cheat who never quite overcame being one.

Even if Jacob was not repentant, he was awed, and that, too, is part of its meaning to us. It is a crucial step in overcoming an inherited religion. "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Gen. 28:17). Jacob had never talked that way before. It was an encounter with God. He named the place Bethel, the house of God.

In an unmistakable reference to this story in Jn. 1:51, Jesus gives the meaning of Jacob's ladder to us. And it would be in reference to one of his disciples, Nathaniel, "an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile," who was opposite in character to Jacob. When Nathaniel was awed that Jesus had seen him in his mind's eye before they had seen each other face to face, the Lord said to him, "You will see greater things than these."

Then Jesus made this astounding statement to Nathaniel: "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Jesus is Jacob's ladder! He is the gate of heaven. Wherever the presence of Christ is there is the ladder that reaches to heaven. Nathaniel was to see what Jacob saw: an open heaven, angels, the whole show with one super added attraction. The Son of Man would be the ladder. Did our Lord select Nathaniel for this special blessing

because he was a searching, sincere man who hungered for righteousness, traits lacking in Jacob?

Would not such an encounter with God transform our inherited religion, more than it did Jacob's? We can see the "ladder" in our fervent prayers for more Christlikeness, when we invite Jesus into our hearts, over and over again. We see it when we reach out to our suffering world, for where suffering is there is the Son of Man. We can see the "ladder" in our corporate worship with our sisters and brothers, loving each other even as Christ loves us. We see it as we become one with all God's people the world over, united in one Spirit.

For our inherited religion to become a vital relationship with God through Christ we must become sincere seekers after truth. We must face the fact that it is an uphill struggle. Most people in the church have only an inherited religion and they don't want to be bothered with change. If it is in our hearts to see heaven open and to experience deeper and deeper encounters with God, his grace will be there to make it so. -- From *Restoration Review*; condensed. Original title: "*Climbing Jacob's Ladder*."

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## The Sandwich Generation

Billie Silvey

A Texas couple has his 89-year-old mother and a teenage granddaughter living in their home.

A Tennessee couple makes the nine-and-a-half hour drive home from visiting her 97-year-old father, fearing to be called immediately back to his bedside.

After caring for her and her husband's mothers in her home for extended periods of time, a California woman finds that five young grandchildren, the youngest a baby, need to move in.

What happens to a piece of meat that gets slapped between two pieces of bread? It's eaten up. Something similar happens to a middle-aged couple--and even more to a single person--who is trying to launch 20-something children while helping support aged parents on a fixed income.

It is a drain on their resources--emotional as well as financial--as they encourage Junior, who's going through a divorce, while looking for a suitable home for Mom, who no longer can keep up the old home place.

These pressures are occurring today, and they'll occur increasingly in the future. According to Russell Chandler, in his book *Racing toward 2001*, "Nearly one-third of boomer women in their late 60's will still have a living parent. As the mediators between, and sometimes caretakers of, several generations, they will bind themselves at the center of family relationships."

Many, in fact, are part of what I call "double-decker sandwiches." trying to meet needs of parents, children, and grandchildren.

There are great rewards to this "meat and cheese" position in the family. It is a privilege many in the past never knew--to draw on the wisdom and experience of parents and the energy and enthusiasm of children and grandchildren at the same time.

Intergenerational involvement gives a rich dimension to life. It can keep you young at heart. However, it also can be consuming and emotionally draining.

Middle-aged children may find caring for older parents a physical challenge, especially if they are in poor health themselves.

It may strain their physical facilities if they are all sandwiched into a small area. Access to washing machines and cars can be a source of friction.

It can strain their marriage. One couple kept her mother in their home for more than 14 years, then his mother moved in. They only had four months as a couple between live-in mothers. Hours may be a problem, especially when young people expect to sleep in late and stay up late.

Those sandwiched in the middle often face difficult choices. Do limited financial resources, time and energy go to parents or to children?

Middle-agers, who have reared their families and saved for retirement, may find their plans put on hold for extended periods of time. As one man put it: "We used to ask, 'When is it going to be our turn?' But our generation may have missed out on both ends."

Several sociological forces have converged to create the situation. One is what's been called the graying of America, the fact that the average population is growing older, and will be for some time to come.

According to Chandler, "Half of all Americans who have lived past the age of 65 are alive now. And population experts estimate that the 12 percent of our population currently aged 65 and older will escalate to 23 percent by the 21st century."

For this reason, it's not unusual to see a 75-year-old woman taking care of her 90-year-old mother.

On the other side of the sandwich, the younger generation is having trouble gaining and maintaining independence. Rising divorce rates exacerbate the problem.

According to *Newsweek* religion editor Ken Woodward, young people in America "are taking longer to grow up. As the 20th century winds down, more young Americans are enrolled in college, but fewer are



graduating. They are taking longer to get their degrees. They take longer to establish careers, too, and longer yet to marry. Many, unable or unwilling to pay for housing, return to the nest or are slow to leave it."

Young adults moving back in with parents or grandparents present a special challenge. One grandmother said she tried to set a good example, but felt frustrated because "young people today feel like they know what it's all about."

How can we cope with the pressures of intergenerational relationships? Here are some suggestions based on interviews with people across the country:

Accept reality. This is the way life is going to be for a while. It may not get better, but it will end. Have faith that God will get you through. Don't make unrealistic promises.

Practice patience, tolerance, and a lot of prayer. A low tolerance for frustration can lead to abuse of both children and elders.

Make time for yourself. A husband and wife need time together. Check churches and agencies on aging for people who can come in for a weekend. Even a short break helps. Go for a ride, get a coke or just sit in the mall and watch people pass. Even a trip to the grocery store can be a change. You'll come home refreshed and ready to face the challenges again.

Lay down ground rules regarding finances, utilities and maintenance. To avoid resentment, there must be some structure in a multigenerational household. At times, you may need to be firm. Those who are able should help. Cooperation and consideration are essential. Discuss mutual expectations.

Recognize and accept similarities between child-likeness of young children and childishness that may characterize older parents. Both may fail to express gratitude, be short and curt, be self-centered and be preoccupied with routine. Remember, your parents wouldn't want to behave that way if they were in their right minds.

Keep elderly parents in their own home as long as possible. Most older people don't like to move. Many resist living in groupcare facilities. Nursing and cleaning services can prolong their time at home. Visit more often, cook and freeze food and help with household upkeep. When parents need to be closer, a guest house might be an ideal solution.

Develop a good sense of humor. You've got to laugh. Find a good listening ear. Release bottled-up frustrations.

Avoid guilt. Be sure you have nothing to feel guilty about. Have you honestly considered what's best for them? Are you doing your best to be kind and gentle and tend to their needs? Don't let responses of others bother you. They can't know the situation.

Communicate with other family members. Don't dwell on resentments. Replace them with positive thoughts. Self-talk can help. Anticipate problems before they arise. Sit down with someone who understands family systems theory. If you live near a Christian college, professional help may be available. Otherwise, a mature, level-headed third party can facilitate discussion.

Remember, you were once young and your parents and grandparents cared for you. You may grow old and eventually need help from your children and grandchildren. How do you want to be treated when they're in the middle of the sandwich? What can churches do to help this situation?

Many churches sponsor group homes or apartments with varied levels of care for the elderly. Some have flexible fees based on ability to pay. These homes often sponsor special activities and provide transportation.

Other churches help relieve the primary caregivers for brief periods of time. One Texas church picks up older people and takes them to lunch and to sing in a nursing home one day a week. Another day they host a luncheon followed by a program. This frees caregivers a couple of hours a week to shop, rest, and accomplish other needed tasks.

Many churches minister to the elderly in their own homes. Both youth and adult groups help with clean-up and repairs. However, many elderly people complain that they have more visitors after they move to a nursing home than they did when they were home alone.

Churches can pray for their elderly members--and their young people. Make the elderly feel part of the group, whether or not they can still come to worship. Call and send cards. Bake a cake and have a surprise party for their birthday.

Involve children and older people in joint activities. Encourage older Christians' involvement in such ministries as prayer and correspondence with missionaries. Teach young people consideration and respect for the elderly.

[Billie Silvey is associate editor of *21st Century Christian Magazine* and author of books on Ephesians, Matthew and Hebrews. This article is from *Christian Chronicle*, 2/93, by permission.]

# Bro. Vernon Lawyer --Our DAD

(Compiled by his children)

Vernon was born July 17, 1924, in McKensie, North Dakota, and passed away early Friday morning, February 21, 1997 at his home in Tell City, Indiana, at the age of 72.

He was the fifth child (a twin) of Stephen Alec Lawyer and Francis Olive Lawyer. Vernon had eight brothers and three sisters, three of whom preceded him in death. He was married August, 1949 to Grace Wiggell, who also preceded him in death in 1969. He is survived by his second wife of 23 years, the former Pauline Huston, three sons, Paul, Lawrence, and Timothy, two daughters, Linda Cook and Beverly Bradshaw, two step-daughters, Judy Pledger and Jenny Mason. He was Pappaw to 23 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Vernon was raised and worked the farms with his father (who was also a preacher) in Missouri during the Depression until the family moved to Searcy, Arkansas where the children could attend Harding Christian College. It was there that Vernon prepared for his lifelong goal to become a missionary to Africa, having been inspired by his Uncle Ray Lawyer.

After many family hardships and recouping from a serious injury, Vernon left for Africa aboard a ship in November, 1947, with the support of many Christian friends and church congregations. The Lord led him to work at Nhowe Mission in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) until 1952 when it was decided to start a new mission at Umvuma. He labored here for ten years, built schools and started churches with the Shona in many of the surrounding tribal areas.

In 1963 a move was made to the city of Salisbury, Rhodesia, where he worked with several families to develop a congregation in the neighborhood of Highlands. A fellowship center was started in downtown Salisbury to meet the people off the street with the Gospel. Vernon also had the opportunity to teach Bible in the public schools there. In early 1967, with Rhodesia facing the threat of civil war, it was decided to return the family to the United States.

The family came to Florida where Vernon preached at the Carington Drive church and taught at the Howey Academy until he was called to teach at Portland Christian School in Louisville, Ky. He also preached at that time at the Rowan Street church. In later years Vernon worked with the congregations at Parksville (near Danville, Ky.), Salem (in Cynthiana, Ky), Dugger (in Ind), and Fern Creek (Jefferson-town, Ky). In 1994, due to extreme health conditions, he moved to be

close to his family in Tell City, where he attended and encouraged the work at the Agape Center in Cannelton, Indiana.

Vernon loved to be with the Lord's people, visiting with the sick, sharing the message of salvation, talking about Heaven, and reading and teaching prophecy. He was a constant, earnest and faithful supporter of missionaries and spent much time in prayer and writing to encourage other Christians worldwide. In later years he enjoyed mission trips to the Philippines and Northern Africa with the Words of Life Radio Ministry. He loved all people who were hungry for the Word of God. Vernon lived his life to reflect what Jesus instructed us in the Great Commission of Matthew 28: 19,20.

He always trusted God for everything, was always content in knowing that God would supply all his needs, and was an example to his family and friends in his faith and trust in God. When his health and strength were leaving him, he struggled to be in attendance at the church meetings. He knew that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

In his last prayer he glorified and praised God, thanked Him for the joy of eternity, and was thankful for all whom God had given him a chance to know and who had supported him and cared for him. As always, he ended his prayer "Oh, come, Lord Jesus, come!"

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# GO!

## "Who, ME, Lord?"

Paul Kitzmiller

How very strange it seems to Virginia and me that we are suddenly in the midst of preparing to do missionary work in the land of Russia! Just a few short months ago, such a thought had never even entered our minds. We were quite content with our present ministry and had never seriously considered doing mission work on foreign soil. Yet, in less than a year from now, Lord willing, we expect to be presenting the Bible message where only a few years ago such was strictly forbidden.

It all started at a meeting last August. The lengthy Friday morning session of the Goin' Fishing Missions Seminar was winding down and I was ready to be on my way to tend to that afternoon's obligations. Before closing, though, Brother Mullins made known a tentative proposal that had come from the head of the educational system in Kineshma, Russia. Earlier in the morning, we had already learned of the growing spiritual hunger that existed in this place, but now an offer was being made for someone to come for the school year and teach

English using the Bible. Such an opportunity was almost too wonderful to be believed.

Immediately, I was deeply touched by this announcement. I reflected on the two to three generations of Russians that had been denied access to the Word of God and its message; then I thought of the opportunity, coming through *their* invitation, that was being placed right before us to take the Bread of Life to these who had known famine for so long. From within the land that had once been the stronghold of atheistic communism, now issued a plea from a local authority for God's Word to be taught in the public schools. This interest in the Bible stood in stark contrast to that of our own nation, including even that of some Christians. Surely *someone* had to respond to this cry for help.

In the days that followed, the matter continued to weigh heavily on my mind. Was it possible that God was directing *us* to answer this request? No matter how many obstacles and hindrances that came to mind suggesting the impossibility of our going to Russia, I was unable to dismiss the idea completely. After several restless days and nights I mentioned my thoughts to my wife. If she ever thought of them as too outrageous to consider, she never told me. Within a day it was clear she was contemplating the idea as seriously as I had been. Finally, I placed a call to Brother Mullins to find out if we even "qualified" for such a task. That call only confirmed the need for us to continue our consideration of the issue. In time, we shared the whole matter with our family and our church elders asking them to join with us in prayer.

At last, after much prayer and deliberation, we concluded that we should commit ourselves to pursuing this opportunity. In some ways it was a very easy decision; in other ways, very difficult, but we believe it is the right one. Currently, we are planning to depart in January, 1998, for a four-month stay (spring semester) and then return to the U.S. for the summer. Decisions about a return visit to Russia in the fall, 1998, must necessarily be made at a later date. We realize that these doors may close quickly, even before we are able to go, but we believe that the leading of God to this commitment is not without purpose. The story we are writing is unfinished, but we are looking forward to seeing what God will do next. Will you watch with us? We solicit your prayers and your support in this endeavor.

[Gifts to support the Kitzmillers may be sent to:

Hamburg Church of Christ--Russian Mission  
P. O. Box 3  
Sellersburg IN 47172 ]

# VOICES from the FIELDS

**Martin Brooks**

**Maputo, Mozambique**

Following are some excerpts from e-mail recently received from the Brooks family. If you have access to e-mail and would like to correspond with them personally, you may contact them at:

**brooks@zebra.uem.mz**

Saturday night I showed the "Jesus Film" to the orphans and many children from the area. I wanted to show it in Shangaan (the primary native language) but the video would not work properly. We switched to a Portuguese version of the film. The children sat attentively through most of the video. I counted 98 in the room at one point, but some were wandering in and out. It is safe to say more than 100 watched the film. At the ascension scene, most felt the movie was over and left the room. About 30 stayed behind to listen to the appeal to accept the Lord. It is hard to know what seed is being planted and what fruit will eventually come from the labor. We also showed a cute little cartoon produced by UNICEF showing some benefits of staying in school. The kids liked it so much, they wanted to see it again.

. . . . It has been fun to watch the kids. They are attending the school at our center and seem to be liking it. Please pray about the possibilities of my becoming more involved in the local school. It may be that I can establish a Christian high school here at the center to help raise a godly generation of young people. The challenge will be to find the right Mozambican to help administrate the school. There is also a continual problem with government officials wanting to benefit financially from any possible source. It is common for them to twist the laws or actually invent laws that put money in their pockets and hurt the people of the country.

. . . . I ran across some interesting statistics a few days past. Only 2% of the people in Mozambique are native Portuguese speakers. 24% are considered functional in Portuguese. This means that 76% are considered non-functional in Portuguese language. The numbers are higher here in Maputo but lower throughout the rural areas. Also, during the 20 years Marxist regime, government leaders were not permitted to attend church. To be a government leader, Portuguese is necessary. These bits of information probably indicate that those old enough to be considered rural church leaders, are not generally proficient in Portuguese. I am considering working more on Shangaan, believing this will allow me to reach more men and women for Christ.

Susan has started working on Shangaan practicing with the workers at the center and the orphans. As she speaks the people laugh. It

tends to make one selfconscious. She asked our language helper. "Why do they laugh? Is my pronunciation that bad?" He said it was partly her pronunciation but mostly they are happy that we would take the time to learn their heart language. The people seem genuinely delighted when they hear us greet them using Shangaan. It has a few new elements including whistling some letters. This is another item for prayer . . .the Good News for Africa team is having a meeting to discuss the best ways to reach Mozambique for Christ. Please remember this in your prayers as well. We would love to hear from all of your. Write us when you can.

**Joy Garrett**

**Ruwa, Zimbabwe**

**March 12, 1997**

Listening to Words of Life tapes that have been sent to us through the 37 years we've been in Africa has been such a pleasure. Sometimes I'll play a song over and over to learn it, then teach it to the women. When we've had a tape recorder in the truck we'll listen to them on journeys. We lend them out too. It's a bit of home and the Lord's word that we really enjoy.

This past week we were at Kadoma, 2 hours journey west. The potholes on the major roads have in the main been repaired, but secondary roads are still in a sad shape from the heavy rains.

One of the leaders there has long been very ill, but he was at church on his crutches with a big smile on his face. In the morning the church was full to hear Bob's sermon on the family. Two women came forward and were baptized.

Malaria has been increasing around the country. There were over 102,000 cases already in 1997 and 201 deaths from it.

**Tim and Dawn Yates**

**1st Quarter '97**

**P.O. Box 2500, Blantyre, Malawi, Africa**

In past newsletters, we have expressed our concerns over security. We have asked on numerous occasions that you pray for our safety.

On New Year's Eve, we had a little get-together here at the house with some of our American friends. Most everybody was gone by 12:00 midnight. By 2:00 a.m. we were sound asleep when we heard someone breaking into our bedroom window.

When it was obvious that they were going to get in, we hurried to our neighbors house for help.

When we finally got the police to the house (we had to go and get them because they don't have cars), we found a sharp knife about 3

feet long and a reinforcement bar that had been sharpened at one end. It was obvious that they had come prepared for any resistance. There were some things stolen, but there was no physical injury, only the injury of emotions and nerves.

Since the time of the break-in, there have been a series of seemingly endless discouragements. The vehicle that we just got in December was damaged in a small accident. No one was hurt and the damage was mostly cosmetic. Fortunately, the other driver was at fault and his insurance is supposed to take care of it, though we may be retirement age before we see it.

Shortly after our accident, one of our good friends had their truck stolen at gun point, right outside of their home as they were entering their driveway. Shortly after that, another of our friends was in a serious accident and she had to be flown to South Africa for treatment. The car was totaled. Another friend was involved in a head-on collision where she was not seriously injured, but the car was totaled.

During this spell of chaos, Dawn began to have some medical problems. We were quite concerned and went to the clinic for some tests. While we were waiting and waiting for the results, her condition continued to deteriorate.

We went back to the clinic to see why we had not gotten any results from the first time and to inform them of the latest problems. They admitted that they had lost all of the results and the whole family medical file! They did all the tests again and couldn't find anything wrong.

After thinking and praying about it for some time, we decided that it would be best to get to the doctors in South Africa for a thorough test. After lots more blood work and a full physical, they determined that Dawn was in excellent health.

The doctor explained that the trauma caused by the break-in, along with all of the other stressful things that had happened since, was causing something called "delayed stress syndrome". He explained that while it was not a physical condition, it should still be taken very seriously.

So, that is where we are now. Just back from South Africa and ready to take on the world again, though this time a little more to the wise. We have never been discouraged by the people or the work that we are doing here. Only with the sin and the snares that Satan throws our way. If we weren't doing something significant for the Lord and His Kingdom, the Devil wouldn't work so hard to discourage us.

We thank you all so much for your prayers and concerns and can honestly say that the Lord has heard you and has strengthened us. Please





# Unusual Place, Unusual People

Don McGee

Week before last I spent four days with the student body at Portland Christian School in Louisville, Ky. Seldom have I had such a distinct pleasure. Most of you have never visited PCS, but you have opened your homes to her students on several occasions, and they have never forgotten it. You would not believe the impression you left upon those kids. Some of them now are in college, but some are still at PCS and they always talk about their experiences with us while on their choir trips.

Folks, I wish you could visit those kids in their own domain. You will never forget their hospitality, but even more than that you will never forget the aura and character of PCS and the students. A perfect place? By no means, but far from what most of us are used to. It reminds me of what a learning environment used to be like when America could still humbly yet firmly say, One nation under God . . .

It's a place where realistic expectations are placed upon students, and where the faculty assists them in realizing those expectations . . . from the board and administrator down to the newest staff member. It's a place where the godly stature and convictions of teachers leave an indelible mark upon their students . . . where every child is greeted with a smile on someone's face which demonstrates the love they have in their hearts for the kids.

Love, you might be thinking? Do I mean a school where the custodian, coach and cooks portray a daily love and concern for the kids? Yep! Love just like the teachers and secretaries have for those same students. That is exactly what I mean. Time and space would fail me if I were to list the evidences of this kind of commitment, but there are a couple of things which bear mentioning. The school is small, about 255 students or so (K-12). Tuition pays only a small part of the expenses which means the staff works for small salaries, like starting at \$10,000 a year. This means PCS does not offer many sports programs compared to some schools. It also means they need a new bus. But PCS's teachers (a number of whom have been there many years!) have a calling, and that calling is to touch young and impressionable lives with the love of Jesus Christ and to offer a practical demonstration of selfless dedication to what is good and right and holy and wholesome.

I want you to think about a couple of matters. Should your travel plans ever take you through Louisville, give J.R. Satterfield or Christy Witten or Rita Smallwood a call and let them know you are coming for a visit. They would be glad to show you around. And while you are walking, looking and listening to what is happening in those hallowed

halls remember you are observing a school which has been serving God by educating kids since 1924. Second, if you are looking for another good work to support financially PCS might be what you are looking for. And when your check is received you can believe a genuine prayer of thanksgiving will be spoken to God for your generosity.

--From Amite, LA. church bulletin, March 9, 1997

# NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaes

## Some Quotes Related to this Month's Articles

Regarding older and younger people, Samuel Johnson wrote, "He that would pass the latter part of his life with honor and decency, must, when he is young, consider that he shall one day be old; and remember, when he is old, that he has once been young."

Regarding various views of the Millennium: A leading preacher among the Southern Baptists some years ago used to tell the younger preachers, "When the doctor asks you to open your mouth and say 'Ah,' don't do it. Say 'PRE' instead!"

More about Christ's return: In Christianity Today, Timothy George admits that at times some believers have abused Biblical prophecy, resulting in escapism and irresponsibility. But he adds, "The greater temptation faced by Christians today is that we will become so cozy in . . . the world that we lose any prophetic distance from it. We become so 'earthly minded that we are of no earthly good.' For it is only one who engages the world from the perspective of God's . . . ultimate triumph in Jesus Christ who will be able to live and work with joy and purpose in an era marked by death and destruction."

## E-mail from Japan

A message from Bro. Moto Nomura mentions that he has eye problems. He is getting cataracts in both eyes, and will eventually need surgery. He also mentions that Bro. Michiya Nakahara is doing a fine job in his ministry in Shizuoka City.

## Gallatin Church of Christ

Easter Sunday, "Christ in Passover" was presented by Vlad Leibovsky, a Russian Jew. The presentation (which was an abbreviated form of Seder, the Passover Feast) enhanced our Christian understanding of the New Testament by showing the Jewish background for the communion celebration. It described ancient and modern Jewish customs with an emphasis on the redemption accomplished by Christ through His death.

## Wanting To Preach

Cullen Istre is eager to preach fulltime this summer and parttime next fall. Cullen will graduate in May from Cincinnati Bible College with a B. A. in Ministry. He is available for preaching fulltime during the summer. When fall comes he'll start work at Cin. Bib. Seminary on his M.A. in practical ministries with emphasis on church growth. During that time he'll be available for weekend ministry only, within driving distance of Cincinnati.

Cullen is a graduate of Portland Christian High School. During the past 2 summers he served as an "intern" at Jennings and Amite, La. For more information you may write his weekend home: 733 W. Utica, Sellersburg IN 47172. You may phone him at (513) 244-8208 during the week (you may get an answering machine), or at (812) 246-9261 on weekend.

## Locust Street Church of Christ

On Easter Sunday the Locust Street Church of Christ began a program called 50 Day Spiritual Adven-

ture. The theme of this program is "The Church You've Always Longed For: What You Can Do To Make It Happen." Each week during the "adventure" will set forth a Biblical principle.

**Week 1**--The church works at being a caring family.

**Week 2**--It captures the heart of the community.

**Week 3**--It welcomes all people.

**Week 4**--It empowers each individual.

**Week 5**--It models integrity.

**Week 6**--It serves a broken world.

**Week 7**--It encounters the living God.

**Week 8**--It anticipates a great future.

### **Woodland Bible Camp**

Senior Citizen's Week of 1996 was a great week with 134 senior citizens present from Tx, Ca, La, Tenn, Ky, Illinois and Indiana. Eugene Pound presented to a camp meeting on September 8th that WBC had a gift of \$2,000 as a matching fund for the kitchen area. Immediately there was great interest shown from this group of seniors. So, from September 9th thru October 17th, \$9705 was given by individuals from California, Texas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Kentucky and Indiana. During this week of camp we not only matched the \$2,000 gift but when others of younger age heard and joined in we had another \$2,000 gift, two \$1,000 gifts, many \$100 gifts and several smaller gifts. We praise God for this and hope the camp year 1997 will be a great one!

1997 Camp Dates to Remember:

May 1-June 6 . . . Spring Preparation

June 15-21 . . . . . Junior Week #1

June 22-28 . . .Intermediate Week #1

July 6-12 . . . . . Junior Week #2

July 13-19 . . . Intermediate Week #2

July 20-26 . . . . . Senior Week

Aug.29-Sept.1. Friends & Family Ret.

Sept. 7-12 . . . . .Sr. Citizen's Week

Sept 19-21. . . . .Senior Retreat

Oct. 25. . . . .Annual Meeting

### **School of Biblical Studies Alumni**

#### **Update**

Mike Abbott will begin his ninth year of ministry with the Borden, IN Church of Christ this spring. He and his wife Sherry have four children: Joshua, Andrew, Wesley, and Brit-tany.

Randy Coultas is beginning his sixth year of ministry with the Oak Grove Church of Christ in Louisiana. He and his wife Jill have three children: Joseph, Audrey, and Tyler.

David Johnson accepted the position as minister of the Tell City, Indiana Church of Christ in July 1996. He had previously ministered at the Jennings and Alexandria Churches of Christ in Louisiana. He and his wife Karen have two children: Joshua and Benjamin.

Nick Marsh has begun his eighth year of ministry with the Cherry Street Church of Christ in New Albany, IN. He and his wife Ramona have two children: Cory and Jessica.

Sam Marsh has begun his eighth year of ministry with the Lilly Dale Church of Christ near Tell City, IN. He and his wife Joan have three children: Benji, Adam and Gina.

### **The Lord Added To The Church**

Tell City Church of Christ - We rejoice over Beth Fischer's decision to be baptized into Christ. Pray for her as our newest Christian.

Hayden Grove, Amite, La. - Give glory to God for Daniel Goldsby's profession of faith and baptism.

Locust Street Church of Christ, TN - We want to rejoice with Dustin Whistine in his decision to come forward and be baptized. Please continue to pray for Dustin as he walks with the Lord.