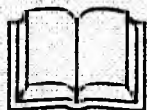


"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

July, 1997

GENESIS

*Learning From
The Bible's
Beginning*

THE RAGING CONFLICT WITH SATAN

William J. McRae

In London, Ontario, where I pastored a church for eight years, there is a Church of Satan. Two years ago, at the provincial conference of the Satanists the London church was honored for its distinguished achievements. That year, the Satanists had prayed to Satan for the elimination of a select list of London's evangelical leaders from the Christian ministry through immorality or marriage and family breakdowns! In one year, they succeeded in seeing five of our finest, five on their list, forced to leave the ministry! What a victory for Satan that was.

Never in my life have I sensed the reality of our spiritual warfare. The enemy has brought out his most destructive weapons and leveled them directly at marriage and families, God's style. Our country, churches and homes are devastated by divorce, homosexuality, abortion, common law unions, suicide, wife-beating, child abuse, runaway teenagers, etc. each bearing the trademark of the Evil One.

War has been declared. All around us scores are falling like flies. To fight back with carnal weapons is to invite defeat. It is a spiritual battle. It demands spiritual weapons.

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds." 2 Corinthians 10:4.

THE CONFLICT WITH SATAN

Recollect four things: (1) Do not magnify the enemy's power, for it is foolish. (2) Do not minimize it, for that is presumption. (3) Do not fear the enemy, for that is unbelief in the Victor. (4) Do not ignore the enemy--that is fatal.

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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INTRODUCTION TO THIS ISSUE

This month's issue is unusual. Our main theme centers on one book of the Bible--in fact, only its opening chapters. But they are chapters of deep significance, well worth such a study.

LEARNING FROM THE BIBLE'S BEGINNING

**Lessons About and From
the Early Chapters of Genesis**
Written or Compiled by the Editor

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

The book of Genesis got a great deal of attention during late 1996, especially in the secular media. This was due to Bill Moyers' 2-months series of programs about it on public TV. Many people, Christian and nonchristian alike, were amazed at the insights gleaned from God's Word by the groups who discussed it on the air, even though some of the opinions were off the wall. Surprise, surprise--its lessons are fresh and relevant even in the age of computers and space travel!

Since I wrote the above, a fine article in **Christian Standard** (6/15/97) by Rubel Shelly appeared. Here are his discerning comments about the TV series: "The series isn't an exploration of what the Bible says It is a pooling of ideas from a select group of intellectuals about how *they* view certain themes and issues raised in Genesis. It is a model exercise in much contemporary "Bible study"--a free-wheeling exploration of the students' feelings about biblical topics rather than the searching out of *divine revelation* on those issues." Shelly goes on to describe seven "recent confirmations of the historical accuracy of Genesis--around events long called 'mythical.'" His conclusion: "The myths that circulate in connection with Genesis are not *within* the book but are told *about* it."

Some months ago we preached through the early chapters of Genesis in a series planned before Moyers' programs were aired. May God use the following studies to increase our understanding, awe, faith, and devotion to Him.

The Opening Chapter of the Bible and of the Universe

Gen. 1: 1-2, NIV

- 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
2 Now the earth was formless and empty,
darkness was over the surface of the deep,
and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Notice verse 2:

Earth was...

1. **formless** - - - - -
2. **empty** - - - - -
3. **dark** - - - - -

Notice verses **3-27**,

showing how God...

1. **formed** it: formed the land & the seas;
2. **filled** it, with plants, animals & man/woman;
3. **enlightened** it: made light--sun, moon, stars.

Thus the very first verse tells of God's making His raw materials, like an artist gathering his oils, brushes, easel and paper. Then the rest of the chapter tells of His using His materials to produce His "very good" masterpiece--like the artist filling his paper with beauty and order.

DIFFERING VIEWS OF CREATION, HELD BY VARIOUS BIBLE BELIEVERS

In attempts to relate the Biblical account to what many scientists believe is the vast age of the earth, Christians have embraced differing theories. Here are 3 of the most common, which you should be familiar with so as to understand where other believers may be coming from. (Note: Though you may find it hard to see how, backers of each position support their belief with quotes or inferences from Scripture--accepting the Bible as God's Word. None of these views is "heretical" enough to justify Christians' dividing over them.)

1. **The Day-Age Theory, or Progressive Creation:** Those who hold this view think that each "day" of Gen. 1 symbolically represents a long period of time. Over millions of years God directly created higher forms of life. This view believes Gen.1:1 shows His creation of **non-conscious matter**, verse 21 shows His later creation of **non-human conscious life**, and verse 27 shows His later direct creation of **humanity**, distinct from the animals. (The Hebrew verb "create" is found only in those three verses.)

[An extreme form of this view, called Theistic Evolution, believes that during vast ages man's **body** evolved from lower forms, which

evolved from living matter originally created by God. But later on God made that pre-human animal into man by breathing into him the **spirit** which makes him uniquely in the image of God, setting him apart from animals.]

2. The "Gap" Theory: Those who take this view believe that **between verses 1 and 2**, vast ages occurred. During that time lived the dinosaurs and "cave-men," but the latter were some kind of pre-Adamic race rather than true humans made in God's image. Long ages passed (which explains the seeming age of the fossil record). Then the angel whom God had appointed as prince of Earth proudly rebelled against Him, becoming Satan the opposer. Therefore, to punish him, God destroyed his empire (i.e., Earth and all who then inhabited it)--resulting in the planet's becoming formless, empty and dark. (All this happened between verses 1 and 2, remember.) Thus Gen. 1:2-27 tells not of the original creation but the **RE-creation** or restoring of Earth and the making of its present inhabitants, during six 24-hour days.

3. The Young-Earth Theory believes in a "recent" creation, during six 24-hour days. Those who take this view believe that many scientists extravagantly overestimate the age of the cosmos. Slow, long processes of creation were not necessary, for **whatever processes occurred during creation week were as rapid as the miracles God's Son performed when on Earth**. For example, turning water into wine is not really unusual. God does it regularly by means of vines whose roots draw water from the ground into grapes as they grow, etc. What made Jesus' act supernatural was that the process normally requiring several months was condensed into a few moments of time. Also His healings were accomplished immediately rather than gradually over time as often happens naturally. At the creation God worked with similar "speed."

In this view, Earth's **seeming** oldness resulted because it was **created with the appearance of age**. If you had seen Adam right after he was created, you would think he was thirty or forty and had grown up from babyhood. You would also conclude that the trees were old and had grown from seeds, and that the mountains had formed gradually over eons of time. Evolutionists reject this idea, of course, since it doesn't fit into their theory. A 2nd reason many scientists believe Earth is much older than it is, is that they overlook the **results of the worldwide flood** in Noah's day--since they don't believe it occurred. Such an overwhelming catastrophe naturally resulted in phenomena unmatched before or since. But this fact is contrary to the underlying scientific principle of uni-formitarianism--that "everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (2 Pet.3:4). So it is rejected. 3rd, since most scientists **presume evolution is true** (they were taught that in school), they interpret the fossil record from that standpoint and make it fit into their presumed theory.

The secular magazine Arizona Highways told of a geologist and guide at Carlsbad Caverns. He said that formerly they had signs posted there saying those caves were **260 million** years old. In 1988 the signs were changed to read **7-10 million** years old. Then for a little while they said **2 million** years old. **Now the sign is gone.** "In short, geologists don't know how long cave development takes." While some believe that stalactites take years to form, "through photo-monitoring he has watched a stalactite grow several inches in a matter of days." So take everything you read or hear about the age of the universe with a grain of salt.

CREATION OR EVOLUTION?

Let Evolutionists Speak for Themselves

A. Textbooks Used in Many U.S. Schools:

1. "Darwin gave biology a sound scientific basis by attributing the diversity of life to natural causes rather than supernatural creation." -- Bio-logy, published by Addison-Wesley.

2. "Today, the evidence for evolution is overwhelming....Evolution is no longer merely a theory." "There have always been those who resisted the appeal of evolution and every now and then declare 'Darwin was wrong,' in the hope of some profitable publicity, usually revealing that they do not understand Darwinism." "You are an animal, and share a common heritage with earth-worms...." --Biology: Visualizing Life, pub. by Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

3. "Evolution is random and undirected...without either plan or purpose." --Biology, pub. by Prentice Hall.

B. The Mass Media:

1. "I've been absolutely astounded when my kids have told me that so-and-so objected to teaching of evolution. I really don't see how, in this day and age, with all the evidence from fossils and animals, that anyone doesn't accept [evolution] as a fact." --A student's mother, quoted in an article in The Courier-Journal, 1994.

2. "Those who dislike the ideas of science and think they have had a malevolent effect on our spiritual life should realize that once one **rejects understanding and chooses dogma and ignorance**, not only science but democracy itself is threatened." --A professor of biology, quoted in the same C-J article; emphasis added.

But now consider these candid confessions by some staunch evolutionists regarding how "strong" the evidence is for this view:

C. Professors and Other Promoters of Evolution:

[In the following quotations we have added the emphasis.]

1. Professor D. M. S. Watson: "Evolution itself is accepted by zoologists not because it has been observed to occur or...can be proved by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible."

[Responding to this remark, C. S. Lewis wrote: "Has it come to that? Does the whole vast structure of modern naturalism depend not on positive evidence but simply on an *a priori* [i.e., presumed ahead of time] metaphysical prejudice? Was it devised not to get in facts but to keep out God?" Paul's accusation in Rom. 1:18-23 that men suppress the truth is shown to be painfully accurate.]

2. J. W. N. Sullivan in his book, The Limitations of Science, wrote:

The beginning of the evolutionary process raises a question which is as yet unanswerable. What was the origin of life on this planet?...Pasteur showed...that life never arises except from life. So far as actual evidence goes, this is still the only possible conclusion. But since it is a conclusion that seems to lead back to some supernatural creative act, it is a conclusion that scientific men find very difficult of acceptance. It carries with it what are felt to be, in the present mental climate, undesirable philosophic implications, and it is opposed to the scientific desire for continuity. It introduces an unaccountable break in the chain of causation, and therefore cannot be admitted as part of science unless it is quite impossible to reject. For that reason most scientific men prefer to believe that life arose, in some way not yet understood, from inorganic matter in accordance with the laws of physics and chemistry." (Reprint edition, 1949; pg. 94.)

[Read that again. And again! Ponder it well, and share it with every young person studying subjects in science. What does Sullivan's admission do to the idea that all scientists are objective, unprejudiced seekers-of-truth, whatever it may be! He admits that "most scientific men prefer to believe that life did not begin with "some supernatural creative act." Their unbelief is not based on evidence but on choice. They don't want to believe in a Creator-God. The next quotation states this fact even more blatantly.]

3. In the early decades of this century Aldous Huxley was well known in England as a champion of "science" and opponent of Christianity. At that time he had great confidence in education. But he later became pessimistic about this rationalistic approach, and by the 1960s and '70s he advocated drug experimentation for its mind-expanding

powers. Late in his life he wrote Ends and Means, containing the following sad confession:

I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently [I] assumed that it had not; and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. **The philosopher who finds no meaning for this world is...concerned to prove there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to....**For myself, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially **an instrument of liberation, sexual and political.**

4. Sir Julian Huxley (brother of Aldous): "I suppose the reason we leaped at The Origin of Species was because the **idea of God interfered with our sexual mores.**"

5. Sir Authur Keith: "Evolution is unproved and unprovable. We believe it because the only alternative is **special creation** and that is **unthinkable.**"

6. Dr. George Wald, 1967 Nobel Prize-winner in science: "**When it comes to the origin of life on this earth, there are only two possibilities:** creation or spontaneous generation [that is, living matter evolved from nonliving matter]. There is no third way. Spontaneous generation was disproved 100 years ago, but that leads us only to the one other conclusion: that of supernatural creation. We cannot accept that on philosophical grounds [that is, it goes against our chosen beliefs], therefore **we choose to believe the impossible: that life arose spontaneously by chance.**"

An Evolutionist Speaks Clearly on "What Difference Does It Make?"

A strong believer in evolution, Richard Bozarth, answered the above question in The American Atheist magazine. He wrote:

Christianity is--must be!--totally committed to special creation as described in Genesis, and Christianity must fight with its full might against the theory of evolution. And here is why:

In Romans we read that "sin entered the world through one man, and through sin--death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned." (5:12)

Even a high school student knows enough about evolution to know that nowhere in the evolutionary description of our origins does there appear an Adam or an Eve or an Eden or a forbidden fruit. Evolution means a development from one form to the next to meet the ever-changing challenges from an ever-changing nature. There is no fall from a previous state of sublime perfection.

Without Adam, without the original sin, Jesus Christ is reduced to a man with a mission on a wrong planet!

Tha atheist correctly understood that the Bible teaches man's spiritual and moral **FALL** (and that's why we need a savior); while evolu-

tion teaches man's RISE. Which is true? Among other things, history, the daily news, and our own experience tell us!

For Further Study, if you wish:

The School of Biblical Studies has a number of excellent videos on Creation vs. Evolution. The one I found most impressive was the testimony of Dr. Gary Parker, a biologist & paleontologist. He evolved (!) from believing in evolution to believing in divine creation, and gives his reasons for it. These videos take the young earth position, and give reasons that support it.

Churches near the Louisville area may borrow these videos from S.B.S. under certain conditions. They must be picked up and returned in person, not by mail. Write to 250 Portland Ave., Louisville KY 40212 for more information.

The cover story of the April 28, 1997 issue of Christianity Today is an important article on a growing movement among scientists. Sometimes called the "intelligent design movement," it strongly challenges Darwinism. Two of its leading spokesmen/authors are biochemist Michael Behe and law professor Phillip Johnson. The latter has shown the weakness of the evidence cited to support Darwinism. And Behe wrote a book which in less than a year is already in its eighth printing. Entitled Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution, it was chosen by C.T. as the outstanding book of 1996.

In The Origin of Species, Darwin wrote, "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down." But Behe demonstrates that "complex systems in the cell are dependent upon far too many interconnected parts to have been built up gradually, step by tiny step, over time." He explains this to nonscientific folks by the mousetrap illustration: "After pointing out the five parts necessary for mousetrap function, he [shows that] you need **all** the parts to catch a mouse. 'You can't catch a few mice with a platform, then add the spring and catch a few more, and then add the hammer and improve its function. All the parts must be there to have **any function at all.**'" And the same thing is true of each living cell, which in recent decades science has discovered to be amazingly complex. [See the article to get the whole story.]

D. It Makes a World of Difference

Contrast the following outlooks and their results:

Professor James Jeans was an outstanding astronomer of our era. Here's the dismay he felt as he beheld the cosmos: "We find our universe **terrifying** because of its vast, **meaningless** distances; its inconceivably long vistas of time which dwarf human history to the

twinkling of an eye; because of our **extreme loneliness**; and because of the material **insignificance** of our home in space--a millionth part of a grain of sand out of all the sea sand in the world." (Emphasis added.)

A believer in the God of the Bible looks, and exults:
"This is my Father's world, And to my list'ning ears
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world: I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;
His hand the wonders wrought.
This is my Father's world, The birds their carols raise,
The morning light, the lily white
Declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Father's world: He shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass.
He speaks to me ev'rywhere.

--Maltbie Babcock

WONDERFULLY MADE, AND PLACED IN PARADISE

Genesis Chapter 2

Gen. 2:7. Man was **made from "dust of the ground"**: a reminder of our lowly origin, lest we get the bighead. We have a physical body made of the same chemical elements as the bodies of animals. "Neatly arranged, you would be a 10-gallon keg of water, a basin of fat enough for 6 bars of soap, enough carbon for the lead in 9,000 pencils, phosphorus for 2,200 match-heads, iron enough for one 3-inch nail, lime enough to whitewash a doghouse, and an ashtray full of magnesium, sulphur and what-not," wrote E. M. Blaiklock.

Yet man is also Breath--or "spirit"--from God: what greatness and dignity are ours! "The Lord God...breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." Derek Kidner comments, "'Breathed' is warmly personal, with the face-to-face intimacy of a kiss and the significance that this was an act of giving -- self-giving -- as well as making."

Gen. 2:8-9, 15-17. Notice **God's loving provision** in the home where he placed man. There was abundance, variety and delight. Abundance--no meager supply, but plenty. Variety--"all kinds of trees." I love bananas, but I'm glad the Creator made numerous other species of trees too! Delight--"pleasing to the eye and good for food." Beautiful, delicious and nutritious.

Paul later wrote, "God richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy...Everything created by God is good and [to be] received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim.6:17, 4:4). Of course we should not be selfish, nor exploit others, nor neglect the needy, nor waste the earth's resources. But let's be constantly grateful to the Most High for all the gifts He gave us to enjoy.

Work, Worship, and Woman

We don't live in Paradise any more, but in a fallen, chaotic world. Yet man still has **3 wonderful blessings God first gave Adam in Eden: work, worship, and woman!**

Work was not a curse; God gave it to us before sin was committed. There is **dignity in work**, for God has called us to subdue the earth. Gen. 1:28 is our ongoing "cultural commission" that accompanies our worldwide missionary "great commission."

Martin Luther wrote "that God has called men to labor because He labors, He works at common occupations. God is a tailor, who makes a coat for the deer which lasts for centuries. God is a shoemaker, who provides the deer with boots that will last his entire lifetime. God is also a butler who sets forth a feast for the sparrows. And if God does these things, then surely we can honor Him in these occupations also." Let's extend the list: God is a caring parent, also a wise teacher. He is the master physicist who thought out atomic physics, and the biologist who created genetics. "In our work we may work His work after Him, and in our studies we may think His thoughts after Him," concludes Michael Griffiths. Thank God for work. Sometimes it may become grinding toil. But if ever we become unemployed for a few months, we discover the intense boredom of having no work to do.

Verses 10-14 in particular show that the story of Adam and Eve is intended to be taken as **historical fact, not just allegory or symbolism**. These verses mention specific rivers, lands, locations and minerals. (Though we can identify only two of the four rivers today, that may be the result of the later flood.) The New Testament quotes or refers to people or incidents in Gen. 1-12 at least thirty-five times, always as fact, not legend. And the NT's teaching about the creation, racial headship, and fall of Adam and Eve requires us to consider them as two historical individuals, not mere mythical or fictional characters. (For instance, Rom.5:12ff.; 1 Cor.15:21-22; 1 Tim.2:12ff.)

However, there may be some symbolism here too. The book of Proverbs mentions "**the tree of life**" four times, always symbolically rather than as a tree whose fruit had physically lifegiving qualities. Thus it is possible that this literal tree was "a symbol of access to God Himself, since life eternal is to know Him," speculates John Stott. That

is, maybe it was where God met and communed with them (Gen. 3:8). They were permitted to eat from this tree.

Temptations and Opportunities

But the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was forbidden them. Why? "It is probable that [that tree] merely served the purpose of a test. The tree of knowledge was itself good and its fruit was good, for God made it; it was not the tree but the disobedience which had death in it. That is, God set before man two good things, not one good thing and one bad thing. He forbade the partaking of one tree, not because it was bad, but because He wanted to make a simple test of man's obedience to His will." (Thiessen's Systematic Theology, rev. ed.) Francis Schaeffer agrees: "Without choice, love is meaningless. God confronted man with a choice. God could just as well have said, 'Don't cross this stream,' or 'Don't climb that mountain.' He is saying, 'Believe Me and stand in your place as a creature, not as one who is independent. Believe Me and love Me and all will be well. This is the place for which I have made you.'"

Notice that in Eden there was abundant provision: many "yesses"! And there was merely a single prohibition: only one "no," to test them. **A maximum was allowed and a minimum was forbidden.** Every time they ate fruit from the many trees, they had a reminder of God's love and care. And every time they passed by the one forbidden tree, they were reminded of God's lordship over them, and their duty to their Creator. Every time they were hungry but passed by without taking its fruit was an act of honoring God--**an act of worship.** Unless that tree had been there, they could not have demonstrated their worship and obedience.

For us, too, **temptations give opportunities.** Don't seek temptations; indeed, flee them. But even when we flee, we can't escape all enticements to sin. So view them positively, advised T. E. Hegre, and that will help to resist them. **Every temptation we face gives us a chance to show God we love Him!** View each one as a chance to present a love-gift to our Savior. Tell Him, "Lord, I feel the allure and appeal of this enticement, but You tell me it's wrong, and **I love You more than I love it.** For Your sake I turn it down." That is worship that pleases His heart.

The First Married Couple

Gen.2:18-23. Adam's wife. "The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected and near his heart to be loved." (Matthew Henry, the puritan commentator.)

The story is told of Adam conversing with God not long after He made Eve. "Lord, You made Eve so lovely, soft and beautiful. Why did You make her so attractive and nice?" "So you would love her," replied the Creator. "But Lord," continued the man, "You made her so unreasonable and illogical. How come?" The Lord responded, "So she would love you!"

Verses 24-25. Sexual union in itself, within marriage, has nothing dirty or shameful about it. God, not the Devil, invented it! It is His sacred gift--intended to be beautiful, ennobling and enjoyable. We know this, but too often we give young people the opposite kind of vibes on this topic, or don't provide them any clear teaching on it at all. That's crazy, especially when there are many excellent, wholesome, godly materials available now. See your Christian bookstore, and share appropriate materials with all your youth.

But sex before marriage or outside of marriage is tragic. Sexual intimacy is for those who **leave**--setting up their own family unit, publicly--and **cleave** or are united. The word "cleave" contains the idea of being glued together!--like two papers glued to each other so that to pull them apart will ruin them both. They're intended to stick together.

John Stott summarizes and applies the teaching of these verses: "Sex belongs within marriage....A man who insists on sex union with a woman to whom he is not married is committing an act of disobedience to God and of irresponsible cruelty to her (even if she consents). He is arousing within her strong desires for the security of a husband and home and for children of her own--desires which he has no intention of satisfying. He seeks the privilege of marriage without its obligations, and that is selfish irresponsibility." Amen!

A psychologist said, "**Everybody needs someone to love, some work to do, and something to hope for.**" If you think about it, God provided all that and more when He made Adam and Eve.

For the beauty of the earth,
For the beauty of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies:
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
Hill and vale, and tree and flow'r,
Sun and moon, and stars of light:
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of human love--
Brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth, and friends above,
For all gentle thoughts and mild:
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

(W. C. Dix)

DIGNITY, FREEDOM, LOVE, AND SIN

(Emphasis added by the editor)

"On the sixth day of creation, man and woman came into being, two creatures unlike all others. God designed them in his own image, desiring to recognize something of himself in them. They were like a mirror, reflecting back his own likeness.

"But Adam and Eve had another distinction as well: alone of all God's creatures they had a moral capacity to rebel against their creator. **The sculptures could spit at the sculptor; the characters in the play could rewrite the lines.** They were, in a word, free." --Philip Yancey, in Disappointment with God

Some Imagined Pondering by God before Creation:

"If I create a perfect world, I know how it will turn out. In its absolute perfection, it will revolve like a perfect machine, never deviating from My absolute will." Since God's imagination is perfect, there is no need for Him to create such a universe: it is enough for Him to imagine it to see it in all its details. Such a universe would not be very interesting to man or God, so we can assume that the Divinity continued His meditations.

"But what if I create a universe that is free, free even of me? What if I veil My Divinity so that the creatures are free to pursue their individual lives without being overwhelmed by My overpowering Presence? Will the creatures love Me? Can I be loved by creatures whom I have not programmed to adore me forever? Can love arise out of freedom?...But if I introduce freedom into this universe, I take the risk of introducing Evil into it as well, for if they are free, then they are free to deviate from My will. Hmmm. But what if I continue to interact with this dynamic universe, what if I and the creatures become the creators together of a great cosmic play? What if out of every occasion of evil, I respond with an unimaginable good...? Will these new creatures of freedom...join with Me in creating Good out of Evil...? What if I join with them in the world of limitation...? Do even I dare to take that risk for love?" --William I. Thompson

Is Evil Part of God's Will?

"Anyone who has been in authority knows how a thing can be in accordance with your will in one way and not in another. It may be quite sensible for a mother to say to the children, 'I'm not going to go and make you tidy the schoolroom every night. You've got to learn to keep it tidy on your own.' Then she goes up one night and finds the Teddy bear and the ink and the French grammar all lying in the grate. That is against her will. She would prefer the children to be tidy. But

on the other hand, it is her will which has left the children free to be untidy. The same thing arises in any regiment, or trade union, or school. You make a thing voluntary and then half the people do not do it. That is not what you willed, but your will has made it possible.

"It is probably the same in the universe. God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go either wrong or right.... Free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having.... The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other.... And for that they must be free. Of course God knew what would happen if they used their freedom the wrong way: apparently He thought it worth the risk.

"Someone once asked me: 'Why did God make a creature of such rotten stuff that it went wrong?' How silly a question. The better stuff a creature is made of--the cleverer and stronger and freer it is--then the better it will be if it goes right, but also the worse it will be if it goes wrong. A cow cannot be very good or very bad; a dog can be both better and worse; a child better and worse still; an ordinary man, still more so; a man of genius, still more; a superhuman spirit best--or worst--of all." --C. S. Lewis in Mere Christianity

MORE BASIC LESSONS FROM GENESIS

As the book of "beginnings," the teaching in Genesis is fundamental in many areas. Here are just a few points.

1. Respect for Life: Since God created Adam and Eve, and gave to them the ability to reproduce, we should respect life as His good gift and a divinely bestowed responsibility. This rules out abortion except in those extremely rare cases where a clear choice must be made between saving the mother's life or the baby's. (Partial-birth abortion is not one of those cases.) It also rules out so-called "mercy killing" (where life is taken), though not necessarily the rejection of "heroic measures" (which merely prolong the death process; such a rejection does not take life but merely accepts death).

2. Lifelong Marriage to One Partner of the Opposite Sex: God gave Adam one spouse, of the opposite gender, and expected them to cleave to each other in a permanent relationship. In other words, He established a one-to-one relation--monogamy, not bigamy. And He established heterosexual marriage, not homosexual practice. (As someone said, God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve!) And His plan

was for faithfulness rather than adultery, and permanence rather than divorce (though sometimes the latter is unavoidable).

3. Modesty in Dress: After Adam and Eve sinned, and felt shame due to their nakedness, the Lord made garments and clothed them. And many times since then He has told us in the Bible to dress modestly. That means our clothes (or lack of them) should not arouse lust in others or focus attention on sexiness. That's important to remember, especially in summertime! Society urges us to "be as bare as you dare," but that is not God's way. Overly tight or revealing clothes, short shorts, skimpy swim-suits, etc. may create impure thoughts in others even if that is not the wearer's intention. Modesty is important. But don't draw wrong conclusions from this fact. Remember, the Bible's attitude toward sex is not "NO--because it's bad," but "WAIT--because it can be so good, within marriage to your Christian partner when or if he or she comes along." God, not Satan, invented sex. As its manufacturer He knows how it should be used. Follow His direction-book!

4. Sin Offerings: God clothed Adam and Eve with "garments of skin." Obviously He killed some animal in order to do that. Though the text does not mention it, perhaps that animal was also the first sin offering. We do know that Cain and Abel, later on, knew something about such sacrifices. And as time went on the teaching became clearer. When a man sinned and thus deserved God's judgment, he could bring an innocent animal as his substitute. The animal's death was accepted instead of his own. There were 2 main lessons: **1)Sin is Serious:** sinners deserve to die. **2)God is Gracious:** He allows the repentant sinner to live, through the substitute's death. This pointed forward to the time when God's Son Himself would die for us, as the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) Are you trusting in Him and what He did for you?

5. It DOES Matter What You Believe & How You Worship: The experiences of Cain and Abel make this clear. Dick Dowsett writes, "What really counts with us is sincerity. With God, what matters is truth and obedience....Sincerity is not enough. One may be sincerely wrong. And the results can be fatal.

"It might be easy to look at God's intolerance of other religions and picture Him as a sort of vindictive old man in the sky who says, 'You do it my way, or you're damned!'....But God's intolerance is rooted in His compassion. He is fundamentally opposed to other religions **Because They Do Not Work.**

"I always used to be rather embarrassed at the way that Paul told the Galatians to condemn anyone who came preaching a different message from his own. He even said that if he came back with a changed

message they should kick him out too! The reason was not one of pig-headed bigotry, though. It is simply that there is no other Good News.

"And this is the trouble. From Cain onwards, wrong religion has not worked. Cain had no answer to the jealousy and murder that lurked in his heart. His religion did not ease his conscience, did not encourage him in his relationships with others, and did nothing to reconcile him to God. It may have begun as sincere religion. But because it was wrong, it didn't work.

"This is the big thrust of the sarcastic arguments that Isaiah brings against other religions....As far as Isaiah was concerned the gods that people made could neither interpret the past nor be prepared for the future. They could not do anything good or help people.... [And here's a contemporary example:] A friend of mine told me that it is arguable that Thailand could be set on its feet economically if people were not to spend so much money on spirit offerings and merit-making sacrifices.

"This is why God is so intolerant. If you want folk to take the remedy that works, then you will warn them of cheap imitations that only do harm." (From the book, *God, That's Not Fair!*)

6. The Equality of All Races: The Bible clearly teaches us to respect all people, whatever their race or nationality. For all of us come from a common set of ancestors. Every individual's ancestry traces back to Noah and his wife, and of course finally goes back to Adam and Eve. Paul said it this way: "From one man, [God] made every nation of men" (Acts 17:26). That means we are all brothers and sisters--or at least cousins!--by descent from the same original parents. This should strongly motivate us to stand up for equal opportunities and against discrimination based on race or nationality.

White supremacists through the centuries used Gen. 9:20-27 (the curse Noah pronounced against his grandson Canaan) to justify the enslavement of blacks. Even today some people refer to this passage to "prove" that blacks are inferior. But that is a totally absurd interpretation, for it does not mean that at all! A full discussion of what this passage does and does not mean is given in the July 1996 Word and Work, pages 197-8. We briefly summarize the evidence with this quote from The NIV Study Bible's notes: "Noah's prophecy cannot be used to justify the enslavement of blacks, since those cursed here were **Canaanites, who were caucasian.**" End of discussion!

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS About HUMAN NATURE

1. Some Results of Humanity's "Fall"--that is, Adam & Eve's Rebellion against God, and the Plunge that Resulted:

Cursed is the ground because of you," God told Adam after he disobeyed. "It will produce thorns and thistles." Because man rebelled against his King, God made man's kingdom rebel against him. "Man in his own disorder would never now subdue the earth. Leaderless, the choir of creation can only grind on in discord," writes Derek Kidner.

Not only man's **environment**, but his very **nature**--his inner attitudes and instincts--became polluted by his rebellion. After they sinned, Adam and Eve for the first time tried to hide from their good Creator-God. Shame and fear replaced their former love and confidence toward Him. And they resorted to excuse-making, and blaming others, etc. How sad. **Due to sin, "thorns and thistles" began growing not only in the garden but in their very hearts!**

And their twisted attitudes passed on to their children too...throughout history. For we inherit from our parents and grandparents not only physical features like height, build, and color of hair, but also moral features like impatience, hot temper, and laziness. As David realized, so each of us must realize, "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psa.51:5). This does not mean that children are **held guilty** for sins their parents commit (Ezek.18, especially v.20)--though children often **suffer** in this life because of the evil done by their ancestors (Ex.20:5). What David referred to was surely the **evil tendencies and inclinations** which we inherit from our parents. These do not excuse our sins but do explain our temptations. (See Jan.'96 W&W, re: temperaments.)

Now notice Gen.5:1 & 3. "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God.... [Later] Adam had a son in his own likeness." But in between those events occurred the fall. Thus Seth was born in the likeness of sinful Adam, an Adam very different in nature from the good, upright man God had created. Take a few minutes and try to imagine what human history would have been like had our first parents never disobeyed the Lord! But they did; and so have we. And only if we blindfold our eyes will we disagree with Jeremiah's sigh, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (17:9) Also Jesus' verdict, "From within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts" and many other sins which He enumerates (Mk.7:20-23).

Contrary to the above, some psychologists and philosophers have believed in the basic goodness of human nature. But not all of them by

any means. Sir Sidney Smith, Dean of the Medical School at the University of Edinburgh, said: "A child enters the world aggressive, acquisitive, and in all ways a potential criminal." And the Minnesota Crime Commission, analyzing causes of a rising crime rate, declared: "Every baby starts life as a little savage...completely selfish and self-centered....All children, not just certain children, are born delinquent. If permitted to continue in the self-centered world of his infancy, given free rein to his impulsive actions, to satisfy his wants, every child would grow up a criminal, a thief, a killer, a rapist." Wow!--not even the Bible puts it any stronger than that.

2. Yet we humans still retain much of the NOBILITY that God gave us by making us in His own image and likeness. After all, "original righteousness" preceded "original sin"! God said His creation was "very good," and Ecclesiastes says God made man "upright."

Francis Schaeffer observes, "In wanting to be what man as a creature could not be, man lost what he could be....But man still stands in the image of God--twisted, broken, abnormal, but **still the image-bearer of God.** As we [see] in Gen. 9:6 and in James 3:9, even after the fall men are still in the image of God. Modern man does not see man as fallen but he can find no significance for man. **In the Bible's teaching man is fallen but significant.**"

For an example of the modern view that man has no significance, listen to Oliver Wendall Holmes: "I see no reason for attributing to man a significance different in kind from that which belongs to a baboon or a grain of sand." This idea is spreading today among some (but not all by any means) environmentalists, who deny any distinct value to humanity. To them we are on the same level as "any and all other animals--no better and no worse," as they might put it. This of course contradicts Scripture, though it is true that we should oppose irresponsible depletion of our environment and callous treatment of animals. There is a Biblical environ-mentalism.

3. We must Understand our Mixed Condition: "To argue for total **self-expression** of our desires is to forget the doctrine of the fall. To argue for total **self-suppression** is to forget the doctrine of creation.

"Because of creation we must accept what we are. We are made in the image of God, endowed by God with unique capacities--for love, moral indignation, sympathy and compassion, joy and sorrow, imagination and artistic creativity. God made us like that and we are not to deny these capacities. That is the doctrine of creation.

"But because of the fall, we cannot accept everything we have become, because our mind, emotions and will are all corrupted. The good

capacities God gave us easily degenerate: love into lust, joy into frivolity, indignation into malice, sorrow into self-pity.

"See then our paradoxical position. We must not reject or suppress ourselves totally, because we are creatures of God. But we must not accept and express ourselves totally either, because we are fallen creatures of God." --John R. W. Stott

FLOOD STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Can we really believe the story of Noah, the ark, and a worldwide flood? As Christians we have strong reasons to accept the truthfulness of the Bible--most of all because of a risen Lord who vouches for it; but also because of its historic accuracy, lofty moral teachings, fulfilled prophecies, and lifechanging power. So for us it is sufficient that Scripture says the worldwide flood and Noah's preservation occurred. We don't really need additional verification.

But for unbelievers and recent converts and also for Christians who are having a hard time answering the attacks of scoffers, the following facts can bolster faith:

Not just scores but **hundreds of traditions of a worldwide flood have been discovered** by anthropologists. Tribes and peoples from all over the world have preserved stories of such a destructive flood, which is what you would expect if the Biblical story is true. A book written in Germany in 1891 and another written in England in 1918 described over one hundred traditions. Since then further explorations and studies have added to the number. For example, professor Rehwinkel did extensive research in this field, as well as others. A video entitled "The World That Perished" gives the following list of flood stories and their general locations:

In the **Middle East** 17 different stories have been found; in **Asia**, 23; in the **South Sea Islands**, 37; in **Europe**, 31; **North America**, 59; **South America**, 46. For some reason only a few have been found in **Africa**. The video gives excerpts from versions found in Syria (recorded by the Greek writer, Lucian), Babylon, Persia, and a quotation from the Latin poet Ovid. But it also includes excerpts from more distant areas of the world: Indians in Cuba, and the Aztecs, and Hawaii, and the Fiji Islands of the Pacific.

Of course with the passing of time and the spread of peoples worldwide, such stories took on various embellishments. Professor Rehwinkel comments, "Among all traditions there is none so general, so widespread

on earth, and so apt to show what may develop from the same material according to the varying spiritual character of as, taken from his book.

1. "According to a **Mexican Flood** tradition, Tezpi saved himself, his wife, his children, some animals, and some grain, from a great flood by embarking in a boat or raft. When the Great Spirit ordered the water to withdraw, Tezpi sent out from his ship a vulture...[who] did not return be-cause of the great number of carcasses strewn all over the earth. Tezpi sent out other birds, of which the hummingbird alone returned, bringing with it a branch covered with leaves."

2. "The natives of **Alaska** have the follow Flood traditions: ...The father of the Indian tribe,...warned in a dream that a deluge would desolate the earth, built a raft, on which he saved himself and his family and all the animals. He floated for several months on the water. The animals, who could then talk, complained and murmured against him. A new earth at length appeared. The animals lost the gift of speech as a punishment for their complaining."

3. "The natives of **Sudan** call Lake Chad in **Bomu Bahar 'el Nuh,** i.e., the lake of Noah, and they believe that a flood submerging the whole earth had its origin in this lake."

Despite the variety in such stories, there are three points found in almost every one: destruction by a vast flood; preservation of human life; some sort of boat being the means of safety. A number of them add that the boat landed on a mountain.

As Christians we can say, **What further evidence do you want to prove the Biblical story of Noah?** There are over 200 stories of a worldwide flood, found in every part of the globe. Despite many variations, distortions, and sometimes fantastic embellishments--which are to be expected in such cases--the traditions contain basic similarities. Thus who can doubt that such a universal deluge took place?

The answer to that question is, Quite a few folks. Unbelieving scientists brush all this aside by saying that Genesis merely borrowed from the Assyrian story, The Gilgamesh Epic (which has some strikingly similar details), and corrupted it! One writer comments, "Flood myths are told by probably the majority of human nations. Formerly this wide distribution was thought to prove the actuality of the Biblical Flood, or to be evidence of the descent of all mankind from a single nation that had once exper-ienced it. **Refutation is hardly necessary.**" Notice that conclusion. What an evasion! Please give us your reasoned refutation, sir. We do find it necessary before we'll be convinced. We further ask, **What kind of evidence would you consider convincing?** If Genesis were the only flood story you would say, "Can't be true--there's no external corroboration." If there were several other stories you would say, "Can't be true--there are only a few such stories." But

in the face of over 200 similar traditions you still brush it all off. **Excuse me, sir, but your prejudices are showing.**

Many scientists deny the flood because of the principle of **uniformitarianism** (the idea of strict cause-and-effect, and that processes now taking place have always taken place, without outside interruption--at least by God). They believe that to deny this principle undercuts the entire basis of science. On this matter, Francis Schaeffer has wise words for us: "We must remember that the Christian position does not deny cause and effect. Rather, as I have stressed in my other books, it was the Christian base that gave a reason to expect cause and effect, orderly procedure. It is the concept of cause and effect **in a closed system** which is at issue. **God has not made himself a prisoner to the machine of the universe.** He can act into it. And consequently, a Christian, whether he is considering a great catastrophe such as the flood or something less dramatic, does **not have to choose between a random universe without cause and effect and a universe of cause and effect in a closed system.** God is a living God and can work into the machine at any time he wants to." (Genesis in Space and Time, p. 138)

Regarding Time and Dates in Genesis

"In the beginning": Scripture nowhere reveals the specific time of earth's creation. Evolutionists confidently claim that the universe is millions or billions of years old. But their "proofs" of this are based on their **presumption** that evolution is true. Even so, recently some of their guesses have shrunk somewhat. (See the earlier section, "Differing Views of Creation.") More and more evidence has been amassed (some of it from the eruption of Mount St. Helen in 1981) for a much younger earth. And more and more Christians (though not all, by any means) have come to believe that the "days" of Gen. 1 are actual 24-hour days. At any rate we are not told exactly when the human race began (for there are gaps in the recorded genealogies), nor the exact date of the flood. Only when we get to Abraham do we become quite sure and definite about dates. He lived around 2000 B.C. (Schaeffer's book, Genesis in Space and Time, has helpful sections on the entire topic of early chronology and dates.)

Chapters 1-11 of Genesis only survey a few highlights of a long period of time. People lived much longer then, and numerous events occurred which are not recorded. For instance, **the period of time from Adam to Abraham was longer than the period from Abraham to Jesus!** That is, Gen. 1-11 (from Adam to Abraham)--which is from page 1-10 in my Bible--covers more time than Genesis 12 through the end of the period of the apostles--which is from page 11 to page 1,155. But the Lord tells us all we need to know at present about those earliest ages. "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever" (Deut.29:29).

VII. OCCULTISM

Alex V. Wilson

Last month we studied angels, and mentioned both valuable and absurd aspects of the current boom of interest in them. Now let's consider occultism. It was important to teach about this subject when we were missionaries, for Filipino culture in general (like that in many other lands) was riddled with it. But in 1960 few would have guessed that it would soon flood even the rationalistic U.S.A.

Yet recent decades have seen occultism run wild here. Some of it is gross: Satanism, and ritual sacrifices, of animals and even babies, to demons. Other forms are mild, and most people consider them harmless fun or acceptable religion: Astrology. Ouija boards. "Dungeons & Dragons," and other games with occult themes. New Age Movement groups and "churches," which practice channeling (contacting the dead, they believe). By the 1980s over 7,900,000 Americans purchased occult books, magazines, charms, voodoo pendants, and other types of paraphernalia. No doubt those numbers have greatly increased by now, as the boom continues.

In the Louisville area, a book-&-music store set aside a whole area for people to play "Magic: The Gathering," the latest rage in New Age games. (This card game includes characters like "demonic hordes, ogres, vampires, giant spiders, hypnotic specters, zombies and ghouls." It also includes "weapons"-cards titled "unholy strength, sorcery, dark ritual, mind-twist, and psychic venom." How does Phil.4:8 apply to "harmless games" like these?) Also in the greater Louisville region, channeling conventions and "mataphysical and psychic fairs" are held. And there are regular classes in "exploring past incarnations" and "how to heal through the aura." A newsletter published by a New Age "church" contains statements like these: "There's no such thing as evil or sin." "Each of us is the Christ.... There is no Savior outside of your self.... I am responsible for consciously attaining my own divinity."

So, amid all this, what does God's Word say about occultism?

Definitions, and Scripture References

"Occult" comes from a word meaning "secret; hidden." **Occultism is "the belief in hidden, mysterious powers, and the attempt to control and use them."** Of course those powers usually are demonic, though they often hide that fact. But if we seek to control even the true God--wanting Him to be our servant--rather than surrendering to Him so He can control us, that's an occultic form of Christianity! Beware

lest we slip into that mindset, which the health/wealth "gospel" has popularized.

Some folks confuse "occult" with "cult," but they differ. We've just defined the former. The latter is a definitely unorthodox religious group, such as the Mormons ("Latter-Day Saints"). It's true that some cults are also occult: for instance, "Spiritualist Churches" practice contacting spirits of the dead (so they think) in their meetings. But many cults are non-occultic. The Jehovah's Witnesses are an example. They deny Jesus' deity, and salvation by grace, but avoid occult practices.

Here are a few of the Scriptures which refer to various demon activities related to occultism. Acts 16:16-19, *fortune-telling*. Acts 19: 13-19, *demon-possession, and magic*. 1 Cor.10:14,18-21, *idolatry*. 1 Tim. 4:1-3, *false teachings* "taught by demons." Rev.9:21, *magic arts or sorceries or witchcraft*, according to various translations. Actually the Greek word in this passage is the word from which we derive the term "pharmacy"; it is related to *drugs* used by sorcerers when seeking occult power! Other passages are mentioned throughout the rest of this article.

3 Major Forms of Occultism

There are three main types of occultism (though they overlap some-what): magic, divination, and spiritism/channeling.

1. MAGIC: Seeking POWER from supernatural agents apart from the Biblical God. Some people distinguish between black and white magic, and between black and white witchcraft (the latter is called wicca, an old form of nature-worship). But both kinds fit into our definition just given, and are forbidden by God. (Of course we are not referring to slight-of-hand tricks, however.)

There are two main kinds of such magic: a) **sorcery or witchcraft** --the power to inflict harm through curses, spells, etc. b) **charms**--with power to protect from harm, or to heal, or to influence others (to fall in love with someone, for instance).

Here are several **examples of this in Scripture**: The magicians at Pharaoh's court who resisted Moses and seemed to duplicate some of his miracles. Nebuchadnezzar's magicians, enchanters and sorcerers. In the book of Acts, Simon the sorcerer, and also Elymas the Jewish sorcerer and false prophet.

2. DIVINATION or FORTUNE-TELLING: Seeking KNOWLEDGE of secrets or the future from supernatural agents or forces apart from the Biblical God. Fortune-tellers through the ages have used various methods, many of which are still in use: Crystal balls. Ouija boards. Tarot cards. Palmreading. And horoscopes.

Which brings up astrology. "Astrology is a system of rules for discovering future events by studying the position of the heavenly bodies, which was received for ages as a science, but **now has lost all credit in civilized nations.**" Oh yeah, wanna bet? That statement was generally true when it was written in the Encyclopedia Americana around 1900. How the U.S. has regressed! It has been estimated that our country has as many as 10,000 fulltime and over 100,000 part-time astrologers! As the old song says, "When will they ever learn?"

Jean Dixon and other psychics and "prophets" from time to time have made specific forecasts which came true in incredible ways. But overall their batting average stinks. For example the Jan. 1977 National Enquirer and National Star carried these predictions for that year: Pope Paul would negotiate a peace settlement in North Ireland. Grace Kelly would quit her marriage, return to the movies and win an Oscar. Archeologists in Egypt would find a spaceship that crashed in ancient times. Well, no hits, no runs, five errors. Again, this fact was discovered at the start of 1986: "Of 550 specific predictions made by the nation's leading psychics and astrologers at the beginning of 1985, only 24 of them (less than 5%) actually happened as the psychics said they would, and 526 (more than 95%) failed to come to pass." (Pulpit Helps)

A **Biblical example** of divination is the "slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling" (Acts 16:16). When Paul expelled the spirit from her, she lost her power.

3. SPIRITISM or CHANNELING: seeking to Communicate with the Dead, for comfort, advice, assurance of life after death, etc. Seances are held by New Age groups, spiritist mediums and even by spiritist churches, as we mentioned above. (They usually prefer to be called spiritualists.) While in college I twice heard the testimony of an ex-spiritist named Helen Bockman. From girlhood till she was thirty years old, she served as a medium at numerous seances. She described various ways in which spirits manifested themselves on such occasions, and some of their revelations. She received Christ as lord and savior at thirty, and renounced all her occult practices. She now believes (as I do) that the spirits who frequented her seances were not those of deceased humans, as they claimed, but were demons--probably that type called "familiar spirits" in Scripture.

Many people think all seances are just fraudulent humbug. Mrs. Bockman's view was that much of it is indeed fake, with no supernatural element at all. People are fooled by the use of clever electronic gadgets (sometimes supplemented by research into their personal and family history). Yet an unknown percentage of seances, including her own, really contact spirits (demons, as just mentioned). Careful inves-

tigation has demonstrated (no pun intended) that such spirits frequently reveal technical knowledge and/or intimate private events to which the medium had no possible access. How can they do that? Only by communication with spirits who are familiar with such matters.

A **Biblical example** of contacting the dead is when King Saul asked the witch of Endor to put him in touch with the dead prophet Samuel. In *that* case Samuel himself did actually appear. But the witch's amazed terror shows this was no ordinary happening.

God Strongly Forbids All Occultism

Several passages demonstrate this. But the main one is **Deut. 18:9-14**. It shows God's hatred for all three types just mentioned. In part it reads, "Let no one be found among you who...practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord." This list of eight practices includes much repetition and overlapping, for emphasis. The 2nd, 4th and 5th items are aspects of magic. The 1st and 3rd are forms of occult fortune-telling. The 6th, 7th and 8th are various terms related to channeling.

Note that God hates and prohibits them all. Not, I think, because He only considered them fanciful superstitions or hocus-pocus illusions, with no basis in fact. But for the opposite reason. At least some of these practices are real, activated by Satan and his forces of deception.

Various Attitudes towards Occultism

1. Some people believe too much, and live in dread. Many lands and cultures have always been rife with superstitions. But even countries where such ideas were rather rare in former times are now swamped with them, as noted in our 2nd and 3rd paragraphs. We should avoid believing foolishness like chain letters, horoscopes, the magic power of crystals, and that demons lurk behind every tree.

Don't believe too much.

2. **Some people believe too little, and scoff.** One reason the New Age movement has become so popular is because secular humanism tried to explain away all supernatural forces. Science was enthroned, and seemed to disprove miracles, angels, demons, Satan, the human spirit, and even God. But people knew there is more to life than matter and energy. They knew we are more than machines with no purpose or destiny beyond this life. So the pendulum swung as usual from one extreme to the other.

Yet we must not think secular materialism has vanished like the dodo. There are still numbers of people who idolize the scientific method and deny anything that can't be measured in a testtube. That outlook still competes with occultism, especially in much of the educational world. Don't be sucked into that whirlpool. Don't believe too little.

In Manila, Victor Broaddus knew some twin brothers who at first knew too little and then believed too much. These teenage members of the Chinese church were at a party when someone brought out a ouija board. They had always believed that this was a harmless game in which people manipulated the glass pointer to various letters to spell out any message they wanted. But this time the leader asked all the participants to say the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer before they began playing. As the "game" progressed, the players' hands were led to spell out a message claiming to be from the spirit-world. As best I can recall, the spirit claimed he was a Greek some time before, and had been an Egyptian even earlier than that! He told details of his life, and answered their questions. The twins told brother Broaddus, "We were amazed. We knew it could not be a demonic spirit deceiving the group, because we'd all prayed the Lord's Prayer before we began!" Such confusion is widespread.

3. Some people believe accurately but act contrary to their knowledge! Years ago a young man studied at Portland Christian High School. He also was exposed to some Biblical teaching in his family and church. Yet, despite knowing better, he dabbled in occult magic, and became deeply involved in hard rock (was member of a combo) and Satanist music and drugs. He told me later about an experience he had when he tried to break away from such activities. One night he came under the influence of some kind of spell. He displayed extraordinary physical strength, and the voice speaking through his mouth was definitely not his own! These are classic characteristics of demon-possession. Apparently he knew that, for he became scared and sought the Lord. Sadly, his seeking lasted only for a while. He did not make a full repentance, and later got into trouble of other kinds.

4. Some people know and follow the truth. Knowing we have a cunning enemy, they avoid all occult practices. Knowing we have a victorious Savior and Leader, they trust Him and reject fear. This is the Biblical stance. We should heed the warnings and commands of Deut. 18:9-14. But we can also rejoice in verses such as these: "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." "Having disarmed the powers and authorities, [Christ] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 3:8b; Col.2:15; 1 John 4:4b.)

This testimony appeared in a letter to a Christian magazine some years ago: "We've been praying for a friend who has had contact with the Satan worshipers at the University of California-San Diego. Through this friend we learned of these Satan worshipers' Halloween plans. One girl felt called to maim some male student. She was going to wander about with a knife to cut a limb off the body of this person. Christian students in various places prayed. All was quiet Halloween. The girl fell asleep at 7 p.m. on the 31st, and mysteriously didn't wake up until 11 a.m. on the 1st. She can't understand it."

Jesus is victor!

VOICES from the FIELDS

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P.O.Box 30, Ruwa Zimbabwe

April, 1997

Easter Camp

How shall the young secure their heart,
And guard their lives from sin?
Thy word the choicest rules imparts
To keep the conscience clean.

It was truly a wonderful group of young people; 86 boys and girls ages 18 and over made this one of the best Easter camps ever. Four days of Bible study in the morning and time for games and other activities in the afternoon filled their young lives with good things.

Women's Camp

Thy word is everlasting truth;
How pure is every page!
That holy book shall guide our youth
And well support our age.

The largest number we have ever had--198 women--came to this year's women's meeting April 18-20. A goodly number (13) came from one rural congregation where a misguided leadership starves their members of the word. One old grandmother expressed her happiness. She said that she had heard some wonderful things from the word of God which she had never heard before--it only she could have been taught these things when she was young how different her life would have been!

Junior Camp

Today as I write, it's Friday the last full day of Junior camp. We will take the children back to their homes early Saturday morning. 62 children ages 9 through 12 have been having a glorious time. A week is never long enough--they want their days extended! But that is not possible. We will have a week's respite and then May 4 begins the Senior Camp for those 13 through 17.

QUESTIONS ASKED OF US

Carl Kitzmiller

Would you please discuss the matter of carrying the Lord's Supper to those who have not been at the services?

This question has been asked by a Christian man who has been active in the work of the church and who has run into some problems in trying to carry the Lord's Supper to various ones. He wishes to be fair and impartial as to who will receive his attention, yet he finds that some do not appreciate such ministrations, that some situations seem to do more harm than good, and that in some cases the people involved could have been in the church services.

Our initial reaction to this matter of carrying the Lord's Supper to absentees is probably, "How nice!" Here are those invalids, or people confined to the hospital, etc., who like to participate in the communion, but they are hindered by circumstances from being in the regular services. Moreover, this is excellent activity (so it would seem) for young people--visiting these and having a brief service. It provides an opportunity for spiritual growth for such ones as well as ministering to those in affliction. Surely no one but an old sore-head, some will reason, could object to such a wonderful work.

But let's take a look at some of the problems. Aside from any question whether this is a good solid scriptural activity, there are complications that begin to arise. To whom shall we carry this?

Brother A is in the hospital. He has always been careful to attend the services and to participate in the communion, so he will certainly appreciate an opportunity of partaking. This may even provide a testimony to a roommate or to visiting friends and relatives. But what if Brother A had surgery only yesterday and is under sedation so heavily that he hardly knows what is happening? Or maybe he shares not feel inclined to turn the TV off or whose company continues to laugh and talk while you try to have the service? Maybe Brother B is visiting in the hospital at Brother A's bedside and, having slept late and been lazy about getting off to church that morning, he decides he will also partake. He had thought he would come that night, but the wife has a birthday supper planned for some of the family.

Sister C and Brother D are in a nursing home. They, too, have long been active and have rejoiced in remembering the Lord's death. At the same home is Sister E, who some years ago fell out with the church and ceased to attend. But, to show that we are of a broader mind and do not want to be guilty of favoritism, we will go by and offer her the opportunity to partake. Caught off guard and in front of oth-

ers, she mumbles a “yes” to our inquiry and very likely eats and drinks further condemnation to her soul.

Now it is nowhere said that this should be limited to the hospitals and nursing homes. Sister F and G are invalids at home, both confined to wheel chairs. Sister F manages to visit the relatives, was carried to the fair, but “of course” cannot attend the service. But she enjoys attention and delights in having people in to see her, to the extent that it’s hard to get her to quit talking and joking long enough to partake of the bread and fruit of the vine. Sister G is of different nature, really is handicapped, appreciates the observance and her conduct is blameless. But we cannot carry the Supper to Sister G and omit Sister F!

Brother H is elderly, has quit going anywhere. There is not all that much wrong with him, but he has “retired.” One of the children thought it would be nice if “the church” would carry the communion to him. It was more the daughter’s idea than it was Dad’s, and he’d just as soon not be bothered. Once they arrived before he had time to get the bread and fruit of the vine past a full quota of tobacco.

Brother J has been under the weather for a few weeks, and it n to him, even though it is eight miles one way to where he lives. He seemed glad enough to have it, but last week there was no one at home. He was feeling better and decided to visit some friends. There was no call by phone to alert those who came.

Now I don’t want to imply that there is nothing but problems nor that none of those who are thus served take the Supper with understanding and devotion. Some are very earnest and a person can feel good about thus helping them worship. Those who get involved in this type of work and who are very discerning soon discover, however, that it takes a lot of wisdom to know who to serve and how to keep from playing favorites.

There are some other reasons why I have reservations about a wholesale distribution of the Lord’s Supper to absentees. There is no mention of it in the New Testament. The emphasis seems to be that they came together for this purpose (cf. Acts 20:7). This is an act of worship by the church as a body, waiting one for the other (1 Cor. 11:33). Is the communion only with God, or do we not also commune one with another? Moreover, it is an important act of worship and one we should never miss lightly, but it is not the only act of worship that we miss when we are absent. Why not rather insist on a complete miniature service with the absentee--giving, praying, singing, preaching, etc.? The same reason that allowed us to be absent justifiably from the meeting of the saints will, no doubt, excuse us from His table. And if the reason was not good enough to excuse us from His table, maybe it did not excuse us from the rest of the service!

Again, certainly we would not want to encourage any disregard for the proper performance of this act. It is not too difficult, however, to observe that some Christians tend to make the Supper a sort of "rabbit's foot"--"I have had the communion and am safe now for another week" and I suspect the carrying of the communion to absentees is more influenced by Catholicism, with its necessaryest, than most people realize. While abuse can happen in corporate worship, it is given an added boost by the private or individual observance. Don't forget, either, the person who has not missed in X years and who does not want to spoil his record and miss his "brownie points."

I personally have been greatly blessed of the Lord in that during my entire Christian life I could probably count on one hand the number of times I have had to miss the Lord's Table. I have attended in bad weather, when I did not feel so great, when it required making some arrangements as to sick ones, etc., but when I could not attend I did not arrange for a private communion service. I have believed that if I was faithful to attend and participate when I could, I was not responsible for those occasions when I could not. I believe the same thing that excused me from the rest of the service excused me from His table. Now I do not want these statements to sound sanctimonious, nor do I want to fail in compassion for those who have become more restricted than I have been. I can understand the person who has faithfully attended services and then finds activity severely limited wanting still to have such a tie as this with the church and in worship.

My judgment is that the New Testament is not so absolutely clear in this matter as to forbid my participation in carrying the Supper to those who request it, but at the same time I do not encourage the practice. I try to be careful that it does not become a sacramental or priestly act. To avoid some (even this is not foolproof) of the earlier mentioned problems I have for a number of years insisted on performing this ministry only for those who specifically requested it. I certainly do not believe that I should bind my convictions in these matters on others, but at the same time we should know that we are dealing with holy things and should not simply do what might be popular or pleasing to people. Surely we want our observance of the Lord's Supper to be a blessing, not a condemnation!

RICHARD RAMSEY GOES TO HEAVEN

Alex V. Wilson

On July 8 the Lord called Richard Ramsey to his heavenly rest. As most of our readers know, he fought a long battle against cancer, going into remission for some time. Our love and prayers go to his wife, Virginia, and son, David.

Richard was a man of faith, vision and zeal. He taught at Portland Christian School briefly in the mid-1940's. For decades in Louisiana he preached, sometimes as a pioneer church-planter, sometimes as a located minister. He mentored several "Timothys." He founded and led the Bible Chair which continued for quite a few years. He tried to promote missionary work into Mexico.

He published books and Sunday School material, many of which he wrote himself. He was one of the few among us who wrote commentaries on various books of the Bible. He founded and for years edited **The Exhorter**, to spread news among the churches and promote a deeper sense of unity, cooperation and encouragement. Before cancer stopped him, he was the speaker for several years on Words of Life radio broadcast--a worldwide outreach. And when he went into remission he wrote a few articles for **W&W**. The first one, "Dead Man Walking," stimulated more response than anything else he'd ever written, he wrote me.

Truly he did many good works. Richard was not a yes-man. He thought for himself, and I doubt if anyone agreed with him on everything. (But that's true of us all, isn't it?) He was frank, sometimes to the point of bluntness. But though he held deep convictions and was outspoken about them, you knew his main motive was to please God by doing His will. For 20 years he quit reading **W&W**, feeling it had become too "broad." (He re-subscribed about a year ago.) Yet he and I enjoyed several pleasant conversations and sweet fellowship in Christ during those rare times our paths crossed (which I wish had been oftener). He was an inimitable brother. May God raise up many others with his vision and zeal.

Other articles regarding Bro. Ramsey are welcome. And by the way, we need to express appreciation for folks before they pass on, not just afterward. I'm glad that when we learned our brother had cancer, I wrote a letter thanking him for the many works of faith and labors of love he had done, listed above. Are there folks that maybe you ought to write?

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaas

Startling Revelation: W&W Not Infallible!

In our may issue we ran a fine article by Tim Stafford entitled "Getting Serious About Lust." What we forgot to do, somehow, was credit **Christianity Today** as the source. The article ran in the 1/10/94 issue of **Christianity Today**, & is copyright. **Christianity Today** kindly gave us the right to reprint it, & we regret our oversight.

Southeast Church of Christ

We are happy to report on the Prayer Seminar which was held June 13-14, and was a great blessing with Keith Roberts who preaches for the Calhoun Church of Christ, Calhoun, Louisiana. This is the second of three seminars the Southeast church is planning to bring to the Louisville area this year.

Keith was instrumental in establishing the Prayer Ministry of the Calhoun church, and also with the Whites Ferry Church of Christ in West Monroe, Louisiana. The ministry with Whites Ferry church is the 24-hour Hope Line for the television and radio programs of their nationally syndicated Crossview Ministries. This prayer line is a free 800 phone number that is manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They are averaging close to two thousand calls per week now! They receive calls from all over

the country from people who are seeking God's direction in prayer. The counselors pray with the caller right over the lines, and follow up by referring the callers' names and addresses to local congregations of the Lord's church in the area of the caller.

Keith is a prayer warrior who conducts seminars yearly and also directs the Calhoun church's annual Prayer Workshop held yearly in October in West Monroe. Keith is also Dean of the Crossview College of Prayer (a new ministry of Whites Ferry church), which offers the only undergraduate and graduate degrees on Prayer Ministry among the churches of Christ. — Bruce DeMoss, Minister Southeast Church of Christ

What Better Way To Prepare For A Revival?

Between April 20 and June 22 Mackville Church celebrated two baptisms; one family coming to Jesus in repentance with renewed dedication and assuming membership with the congregation; and another individual responding to God's grace with repentance and rededication of life and service.

The revival began June 30 ending July 6, Bro. Sonny Childs evangelist.

You vigilant reporter and wife, responding to a gracious in-

vation, visited July 6 for the A.M. service, and without reluctance remained for fellowship in the love feast that afternoon. If you ask me, there just are not enough days like we enjoyed July 6 with brothers and sisters at Mackville. *Gracias* for the invitation!

Woodland Bible Camp

Sixty-eight juniors attended camp June 15-21 where four accepted God's offer of salvation through His Son, Jesus and were baptized according to Matt. 28:19,20.

CYE Has Good Week

Junior week of camp was a lot of hard work, but a very successful effort. Some 85 campers registered. Thanks to Greg Trahan and all his staff for a great job. Also, thanks to all who prayed daily for this outreach.

The Church At Jennings, La.

More congratulations due: Matt Myers, son of Martin and Betty Myers, just graduated from medical school and begins his residency in anesthesiology in Birmingham, Alabama. Shawn Demeritt, who graduated from Millsap College in Jackson, Mississippi. Shu Wei Chung has all A's for the school year. Jozette Dupont made all A's this year in school. Aaron Trahan has all A's and B's for the school year. Great job!

Praise God for a good week of Vacation Bible School. Average attendance each day was 58 students and 33 adults. Thanks to all who gave so much time to teach, craft, or lead in other ways. Only Eternity will tell about the seeds that were sown.

THE 50th ANNUAL LOUISVILLE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP WEEK

August 4-7, 1997

THEME: "JUBILEE"

MONDAY, AUGUST 4

7:25 "Joys of Jubilee" --Antoine Valdetero

TUESDAY, AUGUST 5

9:00 "Stepping Out In Faith" --Don McGee
 9:45 Prayer Time
 10:20 "In Step With Each Other " --Orell Overman
 11:20 "In Step With Others" --Alex Wilson
 1:15 Voices From The Past
 1:30 "In Step With The God Of The Nations" --Dr. Bill Brown
 7:25 Singing
 8:10 "Celebrating Conquering Faith" --Don McGee

(Continued on Back Cover)

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6

9:00	"A Biblical World View"	--Dr. Bill Brown
9:45	Prayer Time	
10:20	"The Believer's Stand"	--Don McGee
11:20	"Together We Stand"	--Orell Overman
1:15	Voices From The Past	
1:30	"Uniting Our Forces"	--Doug Broyles
7:25	Singing	
8:10	"Contemporary Challenges To Our Faith"	--Dr. Bill Brown

THURSDAY, AUGUST 7

9:00	"For The Overcomer"	--Don McGee
9:45	Prayer Time	
10:20	"Return For The Bride"	--Dr. Bill Brown
11:20	"Changed, Caught Up And Ever To Be With The Lord"	--Orell Overman
1:15	Voices From The Past	
1:30	"Life After 50"	--Mike Abbott
7:25	Singing	
8:10	"Future Of The Faithful"	--Hall Crowder

**DAY SESSIONS: Portland Church of Christ,
2500 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212**

**NIGHT SESSIONS: Sellersburg Church of Christ
211 South New Albany St., Sellersburg IN 47172**

Lunch daily at 12:05.

Brother John Fulda will lead the singing each evening and will also direct several choral presentations. Choir practices will be at Sellersburg, 5:30 p.m. Mon-Thurs. During the day and evening sessions, a special segment entitled "Voices From The Past" will be presented. This segment will review the lives of some of the gifted leaders with which God has blessed this fellowship.

Special events hosted by various ministries will be Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evening as well as all day on Friday, August 8. The School of Biblical Studies will host an evening meal on Tuesday, August 5th; Maple Manor Christian Homes will host an evening meal on Wednesday, August 6th; and Going Fishin' ministries will host a meal on Thursday evening August 7th. Going Fishin' will host its annual missions seminar on Friday morning August 8th. Specifics will be announced later.