

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



# *The Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

AUGUST, 1997

## A DELIGHTFUL MENU -- Something Good For Everyone!

- *1000 Filipinos every day complete this Bible Course!*
- *Did the missionary see an angel?*
- *Who now rules the nations--Satan or the Lord?*
- *Every generation must interpret the Bible anew, for itself.*
- *"My parents can do no wrong." "My parents are so dumb."*
- *Can small churches change, and grow?*
- *Rats live in the basement of your heart!*
- *A longtime warrior is now at rest.*

# **WHERE IS YOUR HOPE?**

## **LADIES RETREAT**

**SEPTEMBER 26TH AND 27TH  
CAMP KAVANAUGH  
CRESTWOOD, KY**

Mark your calendars to attend the Ladies Retreat at camp Kavanaugh in Crestwood, Ky. on Sept. 26th and 27th. The Friday night session begins at 6:30 p.m. The retreat is over at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday.

Our theme this years is **STRENGTH FOR TODAY AND BRIGHT HOPE FOR TOMORROW**. Vicki Schuler will lead singing for the weekend. There will be messages by Shirley Smith of Lagrange, Ragen Mullins, Joyce Lyons, Pam Wilson and Jackie Gill.

The fee this year is \$20.00 per person. This covers the cost of your overnight accommodations, (4 ladies to each room) breakfast and lunch on Saturday. Everyone is asked to bring a dish for the potluck on Friday evening. Linens and towels are provided by the camp.

For further information contact: Ruth Wilson (502) 897-2831, Sherry Marsh (606)744-3021, Gloria Oldfield (606) 744-7737, Jackie Gill (502) 459-4031 or Melanie Mitchell (812) 967-4861.

**Directions To Camp: From I-65, or I-64, or I-71, Take the Gene Snyder Freeway (I-265) to Exit 30. Turn East on Ky. 146; Travel 3 1/2 Miles; Turn Right on Kavanaugh Road; Follow Signs. 7505 Kavanaugh Rd. Crestwood, Ky. Ph. (502) 241-9091**

*Please Register with Jackie Gill before September 15.*

# 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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# A FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY!

By the Editor

What a thrill. A lady friend of Ruth's and mine, and my former student, leads an organization in the Philippines that distributes hundreds of thousands of New Testaments year after year. Linda Moldez was a student at Central Bible Institute (now College) in Manila. She was a dorm supervisor, and I taught her several subjects. Her husband is an excellent preacher, teacher and mentor of young Christian workers.

Recently we got a form letter from Linda as the national director of the Bible League in the Philippines. It was mailed out by the League's international office in the U.S. Here are some stirring excerpts:

*Our people are crying out for God. Even in areas where terrorists threaten to kill Christians, the spiritual hunger is so strong, people are willing to take the risk and read God's Holy Word.*

*We ask people who want New Testaments to take a Bible study class first. More than 30,000 people finish the request every month. They finish faster than we can keep up! We need 30,000 New Testaments immediately just to keep up with the demand.*

Along with Linda's letter was a letter from the Bible League's international director, Dennis Mulder. Here is some of the news, both gruesome and good, that he shared.

*Recently, a pastor in the Philippines walked out of his church. Two men walked up to him and shot him in the side of the head, then ran off. The pastor died instantly. The gunmen were probably militant Muslims. Or they might have been Communist rebels. Whoever they were, there are groups who make it their business to kill Christians.*

*And yet, so many people are asking--pleading--for God's Word. I've seen it myself. People are searching for meaning. They are eager to read and search the Scriptures. They know the important Truth that God speaks to us through His written Word. I wish more people in America could understand that!*

*The Bible League in the Philippines offers New Testaments to anyone willing to take a short Bible Study course [by correspondance, usually]. We want to make sure they're serious about their request. You might think this would cut down on the number of people who want New Testaments. But more than 1,000 people a day finish the course. Think of it. Every day more than 1,000 people do the work and deserve New Testaments . . . But we don't have enough New Testaments to give each*

*person one. Without your help, I'll have to say NO to thousands of people who are open to God's love.*

*Here's how big a difference you can make: I know a young man here in the Philippines named Herbie. He used to lead a violent street gang. One day, Herbie stole an English-language Bible. He wanted to use it to learn English so he could swindle visiting Americans. But as he read the Bible, its message penetrated his hard heart. Before long, Herbie gave his life to Christ. He left his gang. Today he's a pastor. He's helping people find the God they're searching for.*

If any individual, class or church wants to help provide Scriptures to the Philippines, you may send donations to The Bible League, 16801 Van Dam Road, South Holland, IL 60473. A N.T. costs 75 cents; \$7.50 buys 10, \$75 buys 100. And they need 1000 a day!

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## I, Too, Saw an Angel

Dr. V. Raymond Edman

The Bible has much to say about angels, who are "ministering spirits" (Heb. 1:14). However, it says very little about their appearance. The two angels who came to Abraham's camp and partook of his food, before announcing to him the impending destruction of Sodom, appeared like travelers in that area (Gen. 18:2). The angel that appeared to Manoah's wife to announce the promise of a son who should judge Israel appeared like a peasant from the neighborhood. Not until later when the angel disappeared in the flame of Manoah's sacrifice did husband and wife understand that they had been visited by a heavenly being.

The ministry of angels is written large in the Scriptures, Old Testament and New. The Psalmist sang of them in telling of God's providential care: "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Ps. 91: 11, 12). Again, the Psalmist declares in 103:20: "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word."

On life's pathway we today may meet angels. I mean that literally and not metaphorically. We know and love godly and gracious friends and relatives whom we sometime describe as "angels" and yet we know they are human beings whose kindness and graciousness reveal the indwelling Saviour. Beyond every human consideration, I am persuaded from the Scriptures that angels are present in this world. Usu-

ally they are unseen by human eyes, and yet their service can be very real to the Christian who is "an heir of salvation." Sometimes their service requires appearance in human form, and nothing about their dress or speech would make them different from others who are present. Only the discerning heart understands, and that usually long afterward, that the stranger who helped at a moment of great emergency was in reality one of God's angels.

Share with me an experience by way of illustration. A testimony of this kind is not given without reluctance because of the deep inward sense of reverence and worship towards God. Seldom over the years have I made even a passing reference to this experience, and yet at this time this word may be used by the Most High to be a source of strength and encouragement to you.

More than thirty years ago Mrs. Edman and I were young missionaries in the Andean highlands of the lovely little republic of Ecuador in western South America. After our marriage in the capital city of Quito, we were given our first assignment to a city whose environs had thousands of Quichua-speaking Indians. We lived on the outskirts of that city where we could reach both the Spanish-speaking citizens on the streets and also the shy, suspicious Indians who passed our doorway on the way to market.

Our assignment was a difficult one. The people were quite unfriendly, and some were fanatical in their bitter opposition to our presence in their city. On occasion small crowds would gather to hurl insults, punctuated by stones both large and small. Now and then school children would parade in the dusty street before our home and repeat what they had been taught to say against us. The Indians from the countryside were especially timid about having any friendly contact with us because of intimidation by some of the townspeople. As a result it was often difficult to get the bare necessities of life--fruits and vegetables, or charcoal for the kitchen stove.

Added to these physical factors was an inward sense of human loneliness. There was never fear, but one was aware that there were very few who in the remotest sense were the least friendly. Spiritual opposition rested heavily on our hearts in the desire to reach the Indians who indeed "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death." Let me describe the little house we rented. Perhaps a brief sketch of its environs will help. Across the front of the lot was the usual high iron fence with its large gate of grillwork. Then there was a small garden with flowers and a little fountain. Then came the house about a half story higher than the garden. Behind the narrow porch were the sala (our living room) and two bedrooms. The kitchen and the little dining room were in the rear behind a little open-air patio.

Whenever we were not in the front part of the house we kept the gate locked with an iron chain and a great padlock. There was constant danger that some barefooted stranger would tiptoe into an unoccupied room and depart with more than that with which he had entered. The gate had to be locked securely at night, of course, and the same was true when we had our meals.

One noon as we were eating we heard a rattling on the gate as though someone were asking for admission. I excused myself from the table and went to the porch. Then I saw an Indian woman standing outside the gate. She had reached one hand inside though the bars and was knocking on the chain with the padlock. Quickly I went down to inquire what she might want. She was no one I had ever seen before and the small bundle she carried on her shoulder did not indicate that she had any vegetables to offer for sale.

As I approached the inside of the gate she began to speak softly, in the mixture of Spanish and Quichua that was typical of the Indians who lived fairly close to the town. Pointing to a Gospel verse we had put on our porch she inquired, "Are you the people who have come to tell us about the living God?"

Her question startled me. No one had ever made that query before. Therefore with surprise I answered, "Mamita (little mother, the customary term for a woman of her years), yes we are."

Then she raised the hand that was still inside the locked gate and began to pray. I can still see that hand and arm with its beads, in typical Indian style. She wore the white homespun waist with its primitive embroidery, and her dress was *balleta* (coarse woolen cloth) with a brightly colored homemade belt. Of course she was barefooted.

She prayed for the blessing of God upon the inhabitants of this home. She asked that we have courage for the service committed to us, that we have joy in doing God's bidding, and prayed that many would hear and obey the words of the Gospel. Then she pronounced a blessing from God upon me.

The prayer concluded, she withdrew her hand. Then she smiled at me through the gate with a final, *Dios le bendiga*, "God bless you." Her eyes fairly shone as she spoke those words, and then she bowed and turned to her left.

I was so astonished by all of this that for part of a minute I stood speechless and motionless. Quickly I remembered that it was the heat of the day, and that she should come in to eat with us. All the while I had held the key in my hand. In a matter of seconds I had unlocked the gate and stepped out to call her back. She could not have gone five or ten yards.

But she was not there! Where could she have gone so quickly! It was at least fifty yards from our gate to the corner of the street, and there was no gate along that stretch of wall, either on our side of the street or across the way.

I ran to the corner with the persuasion that if it had been possible for her to have reached that far then certainly she would be right there. Immediately I looked to the right but she was not there. As I ran to the corner I could look down our street for nearly half a mile, and there were no openings in the wall in that direction. On both sides were large corrals. The same was true of the street to my left.

Where could she be? The closest gate was to my right and that nearly a block away. There I ran (and my days on the track team in school stood me in good stead at the age of twenty-four) . I rushed inside the open gate and there two of my closest neighbors were repairing the spokes in a large wooden wheel. Hastily I inquired, "Did an Indian woman just come in here?"

Both men looked up from their work and replied, "No sir."

"I mean just now," I insisted.

"No sir, we have been right here in the gate for an hour or more, and nobody has entered or left during that time."

I thanked them, and hastened back to the corner. There was not a soul in sight. At the noon hour there would be few on the road since it was time for lunch and the siesta.

She must be somewhere; but where could she have gone? I waited there nearly ten minutes looking in all directions, but no one appeared on the street. Slowly I retraced my steps to my own gate, and after locking it again went back to the table.

"Where have you been so long?" inquired Friend Wife.

"There was an elderly woman knocking on the gate. She prayed for us and invoked God's blessing upon us and then started down the street. I unlocked the gate and stepped out to call her, but she was not along the wall as I had expected. So I ran to the corner and sought her, but in vain."

Strange!!

We spoke no more about the matter. However, for days afterward my own heart remained strangely moved. It burned within me as I recalled that Indian woman's prayer, and it was strengthened by the blessing she had pronounced upon me. There seemed to be an aroma



indescribably sweet and indefinable which certainly did not come from the flowers in the garden. Even now as I write down these words for you, there comes anew the witness of God's Spirit to the ministry of that stranger.

After some days, I began to reflect upon that word in Hebrews 13:2, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." I began to understand that the Almighty had none of His earthly servants at hand to encourage two young missionaries, so He was pleased to send an angel from heaven.

Not long after that heavenly visitation, I was stricken with typhus fever while visiting some Indians high in the mountains above the city. In the providence of God I was able to return home on horseback despite great pain and frequent periods of unconsciousness. From that same little home and gate I was carried by some Indians to the railroad station (because George P. Simmons of the American Bible Society found us in our desperate need). The rest of that story--how I was raised up to health and strength after being diagnosed as dying, in fact a coffin was bought and Friend Wife dyed her wedding dress black for the funeral service -- is well known to you, I'm sure.

Through all that deep testing, and over the many years since then, there has remained the glow of God's blessing pronounced by someone who looked exactly like a little old Quichua Indian woman.

I am persuaded that such experiences are more common than we think. It is not our province to contact angels or to manufacture circumstances in which we think they should appear for our help; rather, the Almighty has His own way of helping His people. He uses His word to that end, and on occasion He sends some servant of His, just as He sent George Simmons to us.

There are times and circumstances, however, when God is pleased to send help directly from heaven, and that assistance always takes us unawares. Perhaps not until long afterwards, perhaps never in this life, will we understand who was the stranger who helped us--and he looked just like a citizen of the place in which we were then situated.

[From the **Wheaton College Bulletin**, Dec. 1959; condensed.  
Dr. Edman was president of Wheaton College for many years.]

# SATAN RULES, GOD OVERRULES

J. R. Clark

The Bible teaches that Satan now rules in the kingdom of earth. That fact explains the lawlessness which is rampant in the world today. Soon after the Lord Jesus was baptized by John, the Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. In one of these temptations the devil took Him into an exceedingly high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. What a picture this must have been! This was calculated to sweep Him off His feet. And the devil said unto Him, "To thee will I give all this authority and the glory of them; for it has been delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship before me it shall all be thine." If this temptation had been successful it would have wrecked the plan of salvation!

The Lord was to gain these kingdoms, but by the way of the cross. The devil was proposing a short-cut whereby the Lord could bypass the cross. The "father of liars" was speaking truth this time when he said that the kingdoms of earth had been delivered unto him; otherwise it would not have been a temptation. The Lord would have known if Satan were lying.

Other passages support the fact that **Satan now rules in the kingdoms of this earth.** In 2 Corinthians 4:4, he is called "the god of this world." In John 14:20, he is the "prince of the world." In Ephesians 2:2, he is the "prince of the powers of the air." To cap it all John says, "The whole world lieth in the evil one." **But who delivered the kingdoms to Satan? Only God would have had the authority to do that.**

Satan rules, but God overrules. **Satan's power is limited by the One Who delivered the kingdoms unto him.** God is still in command. Satan had to clear the matter with God before he could tempt Job. And in the New Testament he had to ask God before he could sift Peter as wheat. One day Nebuchadnezzar was walking upon the roof of his royal palace in Babylon, congratulating himself for building such a wonderful dwelling place. While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven saying, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: The kingdom is departed from thee; and thou shalt be driven from men . . . until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." In Romans 13:1 Paul puts it this way, "the powers that be are ordained of God." Satan rules, but God overrules. "Jehovah sitteth as King for ever" (Ps.

9:7). "Jehovah is king for ever and ever" (Ps. 10:16). "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever" (1 Tim. 1:17). Yea, "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" (Ps. 24:1). He is King of kings and Lord of lords!

There is another chapter in this story of the rulership of this earth, Satan's dominion over the kingdom shall be wrested from him and given to the Son and His saints. The Lord will have ultimate victory.

In Daniel 7 the Son of man is seen coming with the clouds of heaven "... and there was given unto him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Further down in this chapter we learn that this kingdom shall be "under the whole heaven," and shared with the saints. In the section of the Book of Revelation that records the "things that shall come to pass hereafter" we find this statement, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). In Psalm 2 God says to His Son, "Ask of me and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; And thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." In Rev. 2:26, 27 Christ repeats this promise. In Rev. 3:21 He says, "He that overcometh, I will give to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in His throne." Again, "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8). The judgements pictured in the Book of Revelation are, among other things, a clean-up exercise, for "He will destroy them that destroy the earth," preparatory for the reign of the Son and His own. The zeal of Jehovah shall perform this.

What does all of this have to do with us today? It is helpful to know that Satan rules, to the end that we be watchful, that we put on the whole armor of God, that we may stand against the wiles of the devil. Also we can rest in the knowledge that God overrules, that He has everything under control, including Satan. We can take courage from the fact the devil ultimately shall be deposed from his dominion, and the kingdom under the whole heavens will be given to the Son and His saints.

[J. R. Clark was a former editor of **Word and Work**.]

# HERMENEUTICS

## A Never-Finished Calling

Mike Armour

As I made my way through the serving line, she slipped up beside me, "Are you planning to eat with someone in particular?" she asked. "No.," I answered. "Then would you mind if I joined you?" she inquired. "There's a question I've always wanted to ask you."

I had seen her several times in audiences all along the West Coast. She was a lovely lady, quite pleasant, probably in her mid-seventies. "Sure," I said. "Let's find a table away from the crowd so we can talk."

I led the way as we weaved through the throng of people blanketing the church yard. In the shade of a massive evergreen, we spied a table that promised a place for quiet conversation. Slipping onto the bench, I wondered what her question would be. Probably nothing of major import, I mused.

Leaning forward and peering intently at me, she laid out her question. "This is what I want to know," she explained, jabbing her upturned fork in the air to punctuate her words. "How should we interpret the New Testament? Should we interpret the New Testament the way it interprets the Old Testament? And if not, why not?"

Her question caught me totally off guard. Swallowing hard, I almost choked on a bite of food. "So much for trivial conversation," I thought as I cleared my throat. Then, to have a moment to regain my composure, I encouraged her to elaborate on what she meant.

"Well, take the synagogue," she began. "As far as I can see, there is nothing in the Old Testament that authorizes it, either by command, example, or necessary inference. Yet by New Testament times, the synagogue was apparently the primary center for Jewish worship, especially outside Judea. nor any of his apostles ever spoke out against the synagogues as a violation of God's law. In fact, they worked within the synagogues whenever they could. Why did they do that if there was no biblical warrant for a synagogue in the first place?"

Pausing to take a sip of tea, she, added, "Some people have told me that the synagogue was just an expediency. But if that's the case, it was sure one whopper of an expediency! Just how far can we go

with creating alternate organizations to do God's work in the name of expediency?"

By now I knew this was going to be no ordinary lunch. What followed for the next hour and a half was one of the most intriguing discussions in my thirty years of ministry. She was not one to settle for superficial answers nor did she hesitate to point out the places where she thought my responses weak.

Moreover, in her own inimitable way, she had raised one of the most profound issues for any believer. Namely, how do we establish rules for interpreting the Bible? An appeal to biblical authority requires such rules. Without them, we cannot distinguish what Scripture sanctions from what it forbids. Yet the Bible never sets out a comprehensive guide for interpreting its pages. Instead, it presumes that we, as readers, are able to develop those guidelines ourselves. That forces all of us to practice hermeneutics. The task is inescapable.

### **Hermeneutics -- A continuing Task**

The purpose of hermeneutics is to identify, critique, and improve the rules we use to interpret the Bible. To the degree we ever interpret Scripture, each of us has a personal hermeneutic. We may not have articulated it precisely. We may not have even thought it through fully. But we draw on it every time we appeal to the biblical commands or examples to justify what we do. We draw on it again when we differ with someone on how a specific passage applies to modern life.

In the past we have seen renewed interest in hermeneutics. Many have greeted this development with enthusiasm. Others have greeted it with alarm. They see no point in rethinking the principles we use to interpret the Bible. Indeed, they view the entire enterprise as fraught with danger. They fear it is a subtle effort to undermine faith. I often sense that fear when someone says, "Why all this talk about reexamining our hermeneutic? Why rework questions that we answered fully generations ago?"

How I wish I could help people assuage that fear. It is altogether unnecessary. I personally have been teaching workshops on hermeneutics since the mid-1970's, never once with the intention of undermining faith. My goal has always been to establish faith on a surer foundation of biblical interpretation. And I can say the same for dozens of others who teach on this subject.

The truth is, the study of hermeneutics is timely in every generation, especially ours. Why? Because the hermeneutic task is never totally finished, never completely done. A variety of reasons make this the case. I want to touch on just three of them here. I am not necessarily grouping these reasons in order of importance, but rather in a

sequence that conforms most naturally with the space I have to develop them

## **1. Each Generation Brings New Questions To The Text**

First, the task of hermeneutics is never finished because each generation brings new questions to the biblical text. In that regard we can compare hermeneutics to the writing of history. History, like hermeneutics, is not so much a recounting of the past as it is a dialogue between the present and the past. The problems and issues of the present set the tone for that dialogue.

For instance, until we developed broad sensitivity to racism, historians did not generally look at the past in terms of racial tension. Nor did they usually pursue the subject of class warfare before Marxist ideology gained prominence. Because racial warfare were not driving concerns, historians did not explore them.

This explains why we keep publishing new works of history. It is not because the historians of an earlier day were incompetent. They were often brilliant scholars. But we have questions about the past that they never entertained.

The same thing occurs with hermeneutics. No matter how towering the intellect of an earlier age, our forefathers in the faith focused on the questions of their own day, not ours. They did not work out rules of interpretation in a vacuum or in an omniscient anticipation of every question we would ever bring to the text. Those great men and women of faith sought a hermeneutic that was adequate for the issues they faced personally.

And they did an admirable job of it. Where their methods of interpretation still serve us adequately today, we have no need to toss their contributions aside. But we also have the right to ask if their methods are indeed still adequate for the realities with which we currently struggle.

Just to cite a single example, look at the profound ethical issues that medical technology and genetic engineering have thrust upon us. We could not have anticipated those questions a generation ago, and much less a hundred years ago. And for guidance on those issues, we increasingly find ourselves going to the Old Testament. (Think how often you hear the Old Testament quoted in debates on abortion alone.) This happens because the Old Testament says much more about the nature of human life than does the New.

To turn to the Old Testament, however, compels us to re-think how we interpret its principles. The American Restoration

Movement has historically stressed a sharp discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. As we make more frequent recourse to the Old Testament, it seems appropriate to ask, "Have we sometimes overstated the discontinuity between Moses and Jesus?" Or to ask anew, "What factors govern whether Old Testament values carry over to twentieth century living?" But when we ask such questions, we have opened our hermeneutic for fresh examination.

## 2. Each Generation Brings New Urgency To Old Questions

Second, the task of hermeneutics is never finished because each generation presses certain previously asked questions with a new sense of urgency. To cite a single example., what would happen if your church announced a weeklong series of lessons on the subject of Christian attitudes toward slavery? How many people would you expect to show up? Not very many, I imagine. Why? Because slavery is not a pressing question for us.

A hundred and fifty years ago, things were altogether different. A debate or discussion on slavery was bound to draw an enthusiastic crowd. On the other hand, there would have been far less enthusiasm in 1850 about a weeklong study on the role of women. After all, women had no right to vote. They could not hold public office. They could not sit on juries. In many locales they could not own property in their own right. No one -- not even women themselves, for the most part -- were asking serious questions about the role of women in the church.

What a contrast to the world we know. Women's issues are as pressing today as slavery was then. Now take this one step further. If you and I were asked to develop an adequate hermeneutic for resolving the slavery issue:, how much of our best thinking would we give the effort? Probably not very much. The subject would excite no passion in us. We would find it unengaging.

Similarly, the question of the role of women did not strike the same resonant chord in earlier generations that it does in us. Should we expect those earlier generations to have thought through the role of women any more rigorously than we have thought through the issues of slavery? Should we be surprised if they probed no texts on male-female relationships than we have on texts regarding slaves?

This does not mean that we summarily dismiss everything that our forebears have said about male and female roles in the church. But it does suggest that we should not simply parrot their conclusions without first rethinking those conclusions for ourselves. When old questions press themselves with a new intensity, we'll need to examine them with a fresh vigor.

### 3. Time Reveals Problems With Past Suppositions

Third, the task of hermeneutics is never finished because, with time, we see previously unnoticed (and sometimes, unworkable) implications of our hermeneutics presuppositions. One of the most striking examples of this in our own history is the shift in perspectives on millennial issues. Like many evangelical thinkers of his day, Alexander Campbell was a postmillennialist. The title of his renowned journal *The Millennial Harbinger* bespoke his undying confidence that a Messianic millennium on earth lay just over the horizon. Because of Campbell's influence, post-millennial views were commonplace in restorationist circles. The postmillennialism of the nineteenth century grew out of an underlying optimism about mankind. It was a century of amazing advances. Within the lifespan of one generation, we wiped out slavery, discovered how microbes cause disease, harnessed the power of steam, and learned to beam messages across the continent at the speed of light. Technical and scientific advances were proceeding at breakneck speed. It was easy to believe that the world was becoming a better and more morally sensitive place, where, one by one, we were eradicating all the world's ills.

That presupposition became a filter through which people read the Bible. Postmillennial optimism fit naturally with the mood of the day. That all came to an end with the dawning of the twentieth century. The horrors of the First World War, the rise of Leninism, and the near triumph of Naziism shattered the optimism that undergirded postmillennialism. Within a hundred years of Campbell's death, post-millennialists were all but unknown in the Restoration Movement.

What occurred with millennial issues on a larger scale occurs commonly with other hermeneutic issues on a smaller scale. There are positions I once held staunchly that I no longer advocate. I eventually came upon situations (many of them in counselling) where those positions were simply too inflexible or too untenable. When things like that happen, we end up in revisiting the hermeneutic presuppositions that led us to a faulty conclusion. Only by examining those presuppositions vigorously do we reduce the likelihood of similar mistakes in the future.

We need never apologize, therefore, for rethinking our hermeneutic. It is neither a sign of disrespect for the past nor for the scholarship of the past. It is instead a reflection of our commitment to integrity is the way we treat God's Word. Honesty with the truth with ourselves compels us at times to question conclusions we have long held. But there is nothing wrong with honest questioning. Jesus never ducked an honest question (although he ducked some dishonest ones), and neither should we.

--From *Image*, 9/10/95, by permission.



# Three Stages of (Spiritual) Life

Mike Cope

Stage One of child/parent relationships: "*My parents can do no wrong.*" Ah, those were the days, weren't they? The adoring eyes, the confident look, the trusting hand. I have a three year old, and what a joy to be in the "if the whole world thinks one thing and my daddy thinks another thing the whole world is wrong" stage! When my first son was at the same early stage, he asked me if Michael Jordan could jump as high as I can. "Why yes, he can," I smiled, not bothering to add, "at least that high."

Stage Two of child/parent relationships: "*My parents are so dumb.*" Did I mention that I also have a fourteen year old? This is the stage where we can see our parents' faults as if they were projected on a jumbotron. The problem is that we parents can't help it. Our parents were dumb. And so were their parents. We come from a long line of dumb parents.

Stage Three of child/parent relationships: "*My parents have both strengths and weaknesses, and I'm thankful for their love.*" This is the mature view that we parents of adolescents long for, hope for, pray for! (If it doesn't really exist, please don't tell us!)

Aren't these the same three stages many of us have experienced as we've come to terms with our heritage in Churches of Christ?

For many years I blindly defended my religious heritage: it could do no wrong. It was the fully restored first century church (a scary thought, if you've read the New Testament!). I believed that we and we alone were God's people. By my early twenties, I was speaking on radio and television to "defend us." (I hope none of those tapes have survived in some dusty archive.) I published an article in *Contending for the Faith*.

I'm so glad God wouldn't let me remain in this stage of underdevelopment. It's childish. And yet all over I hear people who go ballistic any time our heritage is challenged and prodded. Are we that fragile? Are we really so afraid of rethinking something? Are we alone God's people?

Then I flip-flopped into the second stage: my religious heritage could do no right. It was small-minded, prideful, and guilty of questionable biblical study methods. I understood those who thought they had to leave Churches of Christ in order to faithfully follow Jesus Christ.

I'm so glad God wouldn't let me remain in this stage, either. He convicted me of my own selfabsorbed, adolescent attitude in many ways. But he especially used a Tennessee minister I'd never met. A little pamphlet he'd written came across my desk in North Carolina, and I consumed it. Here was a

man who knew our faults, yet didn't hate us. He also knew our strengths and our healthy roots.<sup>1</sup> He loved this heritage despite its short-comings.

I made a blind call to him, assuming I probably wouldn't be able to speak with him because of his busy schedule. But even though he'd never heard my name, Rubel Shelly answered. In our brief conversation, he said that he understood my frustrations but encouraged me to reexamine our strengths.

Very slowly since then, God has brought me to the third stage. I now can see our weaknesses without despising our heritage. I now understand that every religious group, no matter how wonderful it may look from the outside, as its failings. Until Jesus returns, no one will fully arrive! We are imperfect people whose reading and obeying of Scripture is imperfect. Future generations who may look back on my sermons and writings will find themselves asking, "How could he have said THAT?" just as I've wondered about men and women before me. We are all limited in our understanding.

Now I've also been able to see again the strengths of our heritage:

- We have encouraged people to go back again and again to Scripture, believing that it is authoritative;

- We have focused on the gospel-proclaiming events of baptism and communion;

- We have called for Christians to be united, claiming to be "Christians only, but not the only Christians";

- We have taught the priesthood of all believers, exhorting all Christ-followers to minister in Jesus' name.

Which stage are you in? Are you childishly stuck in the first stage where you can't stand to hear anyone challenge us or mention the "c-word" (change)? Or are you caught in the adolescent stage where all you can see is how "dumb" we are?

Get over it! Then ask God to help you mature. Churches of Christ have a heritage that is a mixed bag (like all groups). But haven't people--maybe someone like YOU!--learned about our Lord in this heritage? Haven't some been immersed into him? Haven't some been encouraged to read Scripture? Haven't some been called to holy living?

May God himself teach us to love our brothers and sisters--living and dead--who share this heritage. And may He guide us to keep growing and to keep being transformed into the image of Jesus.

--From **Wineskins**, Vol II, #12, by permission.

# To Change Or Not To Change

Denny Boultinghouse

Amid all the confusion and talk about "change agents" and "change in the church," let us make a few observations.

*Of course, the church must not change.* Everyone understands and believes this. The church must continue to accept the New Testament as the Word of God. For without the Word of God, we have no faith. The church must always recognize that it is blood bought. We must not take the blood out of the equation. Without the blood of Jesus there is no church. The church must always affirm the miracles of Jesus: he either walked on water or he didn't. He was either raised from the dead or he wasn't. And the church must always center its faith on the resurrection of Christ. Without the resurrection, we have no system of belief. We would have no Christ to trust. Certain things about the church must never change.

*Of course, the church must change.* Everyone understands and believes this. How can the church not change? Is it to be trapped in a specific time frame? Must we really do everything just like the early church did? Do we think the apostle Paul would recognize what takes place in our assemblies? Most of what we do would be quite foreign to him. He wouldn't be familiar with Sunday school, song leaders, evening services, a four-point sermon (illustrated with appropriate jokes), or pews with everyone facing toward the pulpit; and he certainly wouldn't know to stand during the invitation song -- that is a recent addition.

It would be absurd to take the position that we cannot change. The Bible demands change. God is a God of change. Yes, "Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow" -- he does not change in nature and character; but he does want us to change. Growth, repentance, maturation, and study all demand change; thus change will always be present in the church.

It is clear that the church must change; it is equally clear that the church must not change. Really, everyone believes and practices this dichotomy. The real problem comes when we have to decide what cannot change and what can. This is where people begin to disagree. There are certain matters of faith that most would agree cannot change. Most would agree that doctrine concerning God and his nature, and teachings that relate to redemption are matters of faith. But beyond these basics and their implications, there is much variation.

As necessary as change sometimes is, it often causes hurt among honest, God-loving believers. Long-time members sometimes feel compelled to leave churches they have invested their lives in because of changes they feel are inappropriate. When this occurs, we must realize that these people experience real pain and struggle as they make their decisions. We must take their hurts and concerns very seriously. We must honestly hurt for those who resist change.

But the solution to this problem cannot be to avoid all change in order to avoid their hurt. Such a "solution" is neither biblical nor realistic. To bring a little perspective to their pain, let's remember that pain and hurt also occur on the other side of the change fence. Some suffer when they hear the claim that the Bible is our only authority and then see us honor tradition over Scripture. Others hurt when they see the young people of our congregations leaving because we refuse to be relevant (in a biblical sense, of course!). Hurt and discomfort cannot be the major determiners of acceptance or rejection of change.

So how do we handle this tension between those who resist change and those who pursue change? While there are no simple answers, there are a few simple principles that can guide us. Pray, pray, pray; and pray some more. Remember that every Christian is a child of God. Remind folks that the Bible is the authority--not culture, not tradition, not personal preference, and not the way we've always done it. Love everyone--even those who feel compelled to leave. Jesus loves people on both sides of these issues, and so should we. Respect the viewpoints of all, even if they appear silly to you. Treat others with the same kindness, courtesy, and fairness you desire.

Teach carefully and wisely. Communicate changes in the best possible way. Be wise and prayerful about the timing of change. Challenge each other constantly with Scripture. Remind your brothers and sisters that Scripture always demands change: growth is change; learning is change. Be clear about what can and cannot change--the Gospel message never changes. Invest in efforts to get to know one another. Encourage interaction and relationship-building. Remind each other that since we have been set free, we must allow and respect the freedom of others--on both sides.

As we face the dilemma of what to change and what not to change, we must constantly remind our selves that our ultimate desire is that the will of God be done. Let us face all such choices with humility, kindness, acceptance, and respect.

--From November/December 1996 **IMAGE** by permission

# Growth and Change in the Small Church

Gary Pearson

Evangelist, Westminster (Maryland) Church of Christ  
*[This church has grown in 14 years from 41 to 171, in an area where church growth is not common.]*

Church growth is not the most important subject but it is important. Far too many Churches of Christ are either declining or staying at about the same size year after year and even decade after decade.

One of my favorite church publications of all time was the "old" **Firm Foundation** when Reuel Lemmons was the editor.

A preacher friend of mine gave me a big stack of **Firm Foundations** from the 1970's a couple of years ago. I enjoy going through them. I even like to skim the classified section. I came across a church in a northeastern state which was advertising for a preacher's in the 1970's. They were a congregation of 50 and claimed that they had great growth potential. It just so happened that the day before the latest edition of our regional church directory had come in the mail. It occurred to me how interesting it would be to look this church up in the new directory and see how much it's grown over the last two decades. That church of 50 with great growth potential in the 1970's is now a church of ...50.

I wish that were an isolated case but it's not. In Westminster we're a part of the Greater Baltimore metropolitan area. Most of the dozen or so congregations we have in metropolitan Baltimore are smaller today than they were when I moved to Maryland in 1983.

We are by far in Churches of Christ a fellowship of small churches. According to Dr. Mac Lynn in 1994 the average mainline Church of Christ has a membership of 113. Out of 13,000 congregations, over 11,400 have memberships less than 200. The continued stagnation and decline of our small churches is one of the greatest threats to our viability in the next century as a brotherhood.

The good news is that it doesn't have to be this way. The small church can grow. Growth is almost never quick or easy but there are things that we can do that will allow the church to grow. I use that wording intentionally. Most of the time churches are their own worst enemy when it comes to growth. Occasionally some negative external factors may be overwhelming but usually the obstacles to our growth

are internal. That's sad but it does mean that we have the option of dismantling those obstacles.

My basic philosophy of church growth is quite simple: **If we work with God to build a better church, then the church will grow naturally by attracting and retaining more people.** This is the opposite of our traditional approach which was: If we reach more people then the church will grow. That approach is reflected in our emphasis on personal evangelism.

Now don't get me wrong. Many people have been brought to Christ through personal evangelism. I'm for it and I've done it and will continue to do it whenever I have opportunity. But personal evangelism in and of itself will rarely cause a church to experience long-term sustained growth. In the first place, we talk about personal evangelism a lot more than we actually do it. In the second place, our churches often do not hold on to the people we do reach.

I know of a church of a few hundred that baptized over fifty people into Christ in one year by emphasizing personal evangelism. Five years later, you would have been hard-pressed to find more than a few of those folks around. No, the church is more than just the recipient of growth. The church is itself the greatest human factor determining whether it will grow and, if so, whether it will hold on to the folks who make up the growth. That's why I'm basing everything else on this foundation principle that if we work with God to build a better church then the church will grow naturally by attracting and retaining more people.

With that in mind, I want to share with you five recommendations for growth and change in the smaller church. I link growth and change because they are generally inseparable.

First, **maximize your base.** What is our base? Our base, in terms of the segment of the population from which we are most likely to draw our members, is people who have some background in what we usually call the Restoration Movement. I'm not saying this is the limit of our outreach but this is where we begin. If we neglect our base, we're probably not reaching many other folks anyway.

This base is a bigger group of people than we might first think. It goes well beyond the card-carrying member of the Church of Christ who moves to town on Friday and places membership on Sunday. It goes so far as to include the unchurched parson whose only background in religion was to be taken to church or Vacation Bible School a few times as a child in one of our congregations. Sometimes that is all the background it takes for someone to turn first to us when he or she reaches a point in life where they are searching for the Lord. That

childhood experience may have left them with a warm feeling toward the Church of Christ that resurfaces later in life. Practically any background at all in our movement increases the likelihood significantly that we can reach and keep these people.

Specifically, how do we maximize our base? We maximize our base by being open to people from all parts of our movement. We are such a diverse movement. In Westminster over the years we have had members from pre-millennial, mutual edification, one cup, charismatic, noninstitutional and instrumental backgrounds as well as, of course, from plain old vanilla mainline Churches of Christ. That diversity has enriched the quality of our congregational life immeasurably. The thought of being in a congregation in which everyone has the same opinions on all these matters now sounds so bland to me.

Has our diversity caused problems? Only rarely. In fourteen years we've lost two families due to doctrinal disagreements and one other family moved to our town and would not darken our door because of our doctrinal diversity. We've gained far more people than we've lost by genuinely welcoming people from all parts of our movement. We don't treat them as second-class members. We encourage them to be just as involved as they're willing to be.

We also maximize our base by actively seeking to help newcomers with backgrounds in our movement become connected to our church as soon as possible after they first visit our services. I especially treat this as one of my high priority duties. Do not take it for granted that Christians whose backgrounds are in our movement will automatically place membership in our churches when they move into our communities. If we take that for granted then we'll see many of them once, twice or a few times and then they'll disappear. We may discover later that they're now members in a congregation farther from their home than we are. Why? Because they found it easier to connect with that congregation.

I do whatever it takes to make this connection with new people who surface. If they let me, I'll visit them or go out to eat with them or have them over to eat. In some way I try to quickly establish some degree of rapport with them. A modest amount of effort in the beginning can secure a family for our congregation who will be a blessing to us for years to come. If we neglect that early window of opportunity, we're not likely to get another one.

The second recommendation is: **Encourage long-term ministry by being good to your preacher.** Now a long-term ministry in and of itself is, of course, no guarantee that a church will grow. You may know of a church that has plateaued or even declined with a long-term minister. I doubt seriously, however, if any of us knows of even one

congregation that has experienced significant and sustained long-term growth without a long-term minister.

When you think of our churches that have made a great impact on their community and within our brotherhood, they almost always have a preacher who has been with them so long that his name has become synonymous with the congregation. Churches which change preachers every three to six years will not grow -- at least for very long. Even when much growth takes place in a short-term ministry (which is less than seven years), go back to that church five or ten years later and that growth is likely to have dissipated.

The best way to encourage long-term ministry is by making sure your preacher is so happy where he is that he doesn't even want to think about going anywhere else. There's nothing like feeling appreciated. One of the reasons we're still in Westminster after fourteen years is because Becki and I cannot imagine being anywhere where we would be treated better than our brethren in Westminster treat us.

They have always been as generous financially with us as finances have allowed. Even in tight budget years they find a way usually to give me some kind of a raise.

For about a decade now they have given me four weeks vacation a year and another five weeks a year for continuing education and/or speaking at other churches. I rarely ever take all that time but I sure feel appreciated knowing that it's there if I want it. They pray for me. They encourage me. They make me feel special. A death in the extended family or some kind of crisis, they have been there for us so powerfully. They have become family to us.

None of us knows what the future holds but I could happily spend the rest of my life doing the work of an evangelist with Westminster Church of Christ. Now when a church treats its preacher like that, he's going to be staying a long time.

[To be concluded next month]



## VIII. SIN

Alex V. Wilson

Let's start with a **review of this series of articles** on what God's word teaches regarding various important subjects. (Actually we are studying "doctrines," but don't tell anyone that--for it's a dirty word to many people!)

We began by seeing what **the Bible** claimed to be--God's inspired message delivered through His picked servants--and the many evidences supporting that stupendous claim. That gave us a foundation for the rest of our studies, for all of them are based on the Bible. The next four studies were on **our Most High God, Creator and Lord of all**. We saw His mysterious **One-in-Threeness**, and then turned the eyes of our hearts upon each of the Three He has revealed Himself to be: **Father** (His majesty and mercy), **Son** (His full deity and yet true manhood), and **Holy Spirit** (His earlier self-limited work and His present unleashed ministries). Then we studied God's servants **the angels**, who are spirits sent to serve us who will inherit salvation. We followed that with last month's examination of **occult activities in which demonic forces are engaged** as they try to lure us from God and holiness.

This brings us to the study of **humanity and sin**. Sadly those two subjects are so intertwined that we cannot study one without the other. However, Word and Work's themes for both Jan. and Feb. 1996 were on the subject of human nature. The former issue was on "Why you are What you are, and How you got that way." It dealt primarily with the influences that shape us. It also reflected on the relation between our temperament and our character. The following issue was entitled, "Understanding Mankind, Understanding Myself." It examined questions like "Who are we, anyway?" and, "What is true human nature?" It answered: we are small and puny, great and Godlike, sinful and spoiled--all of the above, together! (Copies of the 2nd issue, but not the 1st, are still available.)

Since the subject of human nature was dealt with in some depth last year, at this time we shall focus only on sin. It's a sad topic but urgently important to understand.

### Various Aspects of Sin

The N.T. uses 5 words to express different aspects of sin. But to simplify matters somewhat, we'll consider the 3 main words used in the O.T. Ponder the following verses:

**Exodus 34:6-7, RSV**, "The Lord passed before [Moses], and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin....'" (the NIV renders the last phrase, "forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.")

**Psalms 32:1-2 & 5, RSV**, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity....I acknowledged my sin to thee, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'...."

**Psalms 51:1-2 & 5, RSV**, "Have mercy on me, O God...blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!...Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

The repetition is obvious. The following facts emerge: (1) There is **TRANSGRESSION**, containing the ideas of rebellion, lawlessness, willful defiance. It involves **committing wrong**.

(2) There is **SIN**. This is the most common of the three O.T. words. It means failure; shortcoming; to miss the target. It often involves **omitting right** (see James 4:17).

(3) There is **INIQUITY**. This contains the idea of wickedness, or evil as a principle more than an action. In the N.T., 1 John 1:8-9 brings out this distinction (though it uses "sin" and "sins" rather than iniquity). John writes, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves....If we confess our sins, [God]...will forgive us our sins...." In this case, **sin** is the root and **sins** are its fruits. **Sin** is the evil disposition which produces sins or wrong acts, says the N.T. The O.T. agrees but uses different terminology: Iniquity is the evil nature which produces transgressions. Iniquity then is the condition of being twisted, crooked or perverted. An old creed defines it as the "infection of our nature." Richard Dowsett observes, "Nobody [except Jesus] born since Adam has come unprogrammed into the world. We all start bent, with plenty to urge and encourage us in a sinful direction."

*Which is the worst?* At first **transgression** seems to be the most serious, for it involves deliberate defiance. But Christians, who by definition are people who've repented and surrendered to the Lord, are probably least harassed by this aspect of evil. Someone observed that we disciples are less likely to commit wrong *actions* than wrong *reactions*. Think about it.

**Iniquity** is very apt to drag us down. It always lurks near, seeking a chance to regain the throne of our hearts. Other terms for it are "the flesh" or "sinful nature" which our May '97 issue explored in some

depth. We need to clarify our definition above, however. Spoken of in the singular, iniquity means the evil disposition which produces sins-- as we stated. But the plural, "iniquities," means wrong acts committed due to that evil disposition. Either way, our *nature* is emphasized. We must be concerned not only with what we *do*, but what we *are*. More on that at the end.

The thought of sin scares me the most, though. It is easy to feel smug over the yukky stuff I don't do, but be blind about the good I should do but don't. The following quote hits the nail right on the head. Speaking of an 18th-century archbishop in Franch, Voltaire said, "*That man is guilty of all the good he did not do!*" Ouch! He was merely echoing James who said, "Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." In Matt. 25 our Lord Jesus gives an extended three-point sermon based on that truth. Nobody in those three parables is condemned for committing evil, but many are condemned for the good they never did. See for yourself.

### "Original Sin"

Sometimes you'll hear or read the term "original sin." What does that mean, and what is its source? It is not from the Bible but a term coined by theologians as a sort of shorthand. Since it is not found in Scripture, we must be careful if or when we use such an expression, and not jump to unwarranted conclusions.

Here is one teacher's explanation: "The Bible explains the universal presence of sinfulness in terms of the solidarity of mankind in Adam (1 Cor.15:22 & Rom.5:12ff.). Adam, by sinning, became a sinner by nature; Adam's descendents are born sinners, and so sin by nature. (Gen.5:1-3) The traditional name for the INBORN DISPOSITION OF OPPOSITION TO GOD AND HIS LAW [Rom.8:7] WHICH WE INHERIT FROM ADAM is 'original sin.' The term is not found in Scripture, but is appropriate, whether we take it as showing that this disposition comes to us from the original man, or that it is in us from the moment of our own origin [Psa.51:5], or that all our acts of sin originate from it. The Bible calls this disposition 'the flesh' or the 'mind of the flesh' (Rom.8:7) or simply 'sin that dwells in me' (Rom.7:20). This attitude controls the conduct of every person who is not in Christ. Where Christ does not rule, sin does." (From God's Words, by James Packer; emphasis added.)

Did you notice what he said? 1st, "The term [original sin] is not found in Scripture...." 2nd, "The Bible calls this disposition 'the flesh'...." The former is a theological term: handle with care. Is it used to convey correct meaning that agrees with God's truth? The latter is a Bib-lical word, but even then make sure you don't misdefine it. Study

it in context. (In some passages "flesh" has no sinful connotation at all: "The word became flesh and dwelt among us.")

The less we use theological terms not found in Scripture, and confine ourselves to Biblical vocabulary, the safer we are. Yet when such theological words are widely used, we may need to discuss them and point out the correct and/or incorrect ideas people have about them. And in some cases such terms do serve as helpful shorthand or abbreviation. Look over that quotation from Packer again. Did he use "original sin" accurately and helpfully, or did he bring in unbiblical concepts?

### Rats in the Basement

In conclusion, here's an excerpt from C. S. Lewis' Mere Christianity. It elaborates much of what this article has said about iniquity and original sin. Lewis wrote:

As time passes, we notice, besides our particular sinful acts, our sinfulness. We begin to be alarmed not only about what we do but about what we are.

I will try to make this clear from my own case. When I come to my evening prayers and review my sins of the day, nine times

out of ten the most obvious one is some sin against love: I have sulked or snapped or sneered or snubbed or stormed. And the excuse that immediately springs to my mind is that the temptation was so sudden and unexpected: I was caught off my guard.

I had no time to collect myself. Now that may be a good excuse regarding those particular acts: they would obviously be worse if I had done them deliberately and in a premeditated way.

On the other hand, surely what a man does when he is caught off guard is the best evidence for what sort of a man he is! Surely what pops out before the man has time to put on a disguise

is the truth. If there are rats in the cellar you are most likely to see them if you go in very suddenly. But the suddenness does not

create the rats: it only prevents their hiding. In the same way the suddenness of the circumstance that provoked me does not make me an ill-tempered man; it only shows me what an ill-tempered

man I am. The rats are always there in the cellar, but if you go in shouting and noisily they take cover before you turn on the

light. Apparently the rats of resentment and meanness are always there in the cellar of my soul.

Now that cellar is out of reach of my conscious will. I can to some extent control my acts, but I have no direct control over my nature. And if what we are matters even more than what we do.

then it is clear that the change which I most need to undergo is a change that my own direct, voluntary efforts cannot bring about. After the first few steps in the Christian life we realize that everything which really needs to be done in our souls can be done only by God. We, at the most, allow Him to do it in us.

Yes, the Bible reveals the rats in our basement. But praise God, He is a wonderful exterminator. Call Him and see.

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# Richard Ramsey

Virginia Ramsey

Longtime minister and business leader Richard Dean Ramsey, 77, died Tuesday, July 8, 1997 in Hammond, La.

Survivors include his wife of 51 years, Virginia Harris Ramsey; son, Richard Davis Ramsey of Hammond; and two grandchildren, Carl and Anna Ramsey, all of Hammond; a sister, Ruth Ramsey Grant, and a brother, Ambrose Knox Ramsey, Jr., both of Baton Rouge.

A native of Forest Hill, La., he was best known in the North Shore area as minister of several churches of Christ after 1952 and as owner/manager of the Bible Shop in Hammond after 1967.

In 1956, he founded the Church of Christ Student Center at Southeastern Louisiana University, the first such student outreach among Churches of Christ in Louisiana. He taught Bible classes and he taught Greek to Southeastern faculty members.

He began his full-time ministerial career in 1947 with the Seventh & Camp Church of Christ in New Orleans.

He was the publisher of *The Exhorter* which was a newspaper for Churches of Christ. He later turned this over to the elders of the Denham Springs, La., church and concentrated his efforts on the Hayden Grove Church of Christ near Amite, La.

For over four years he was the speaker for Words of Life, an international gospel ministry. He had to discontinue this when he became ill late in 1995.

He always began the day on his knees in prayer. On one occasion a visiting neighbor child, friend of David, saw him on his knees by the bed so early in the morning, and came into the kitchen and asked, "Mrs. Ramsey, does Bro. Ramsey always sleep like that?" Now he sleeps in the realm of the God to whom he prayed.

# **SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS NEVER DIE: JESUS CALLS THEM HOME!**

Buford Smith

Brother Richard Ramsey, an old Soldier of the Cross, got his call the morning of July 8, 1997, and leaving every earthly possession behind, he returned to the presence of his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. His call from God was an answer to his longing prayer.

The committee and staff at “**Words of Life**” rejoice in his release from the body of pain and suffering and the fulfilling of his life-long dream--going home to Jesus. His life, even in suffering, was an enthusiastic recommendation for the cause of Jesus Christ! For some four years Bro. Richard was the evangelist on “**Words of Life**.”

In 1961, Maude and I responded to Bro. Richard’s invitation to study the Word with the intent to serve Jesus. In part, his invitation read, “I can’t promise you monetary support, but I promise you I’ll share my last slice of bread with you.” For two years, he did that! He showed us how to live faithfully, how to study the Word, how to give selflessly, and how to yield to the leading of the Spirit.

Though Bro. Richard looked eagerly toward his heavenly home, we grieve our loss of his presence, his unyielding faith in Jesus, his courage and his vision, his zest for life in anticipation of eternity, and his selflessness in giving his all to the cause of his Lord Jesus Christ.

— From **Words of Life News**

## **VOICES from the FIELDS**

Motoyuki Nomura

July 10, 1997

I have just read on the *ACU Restoration Movement List* a note from Paul A. Clark on the departure of Br. Richard Ramsey. I now praise God for such a faithful saint like him, and I thank Him for His calling him back Home in gloryland in His grace. His Heaven has become one step closer again and I only pray that He will help me stay faithful in His Vineyard till He calls me back Home according to His time for me.

Since May we have been taking care of a girl suffering from mental problems. I always wonder myself or ask myself this question in a situation where I fully can not know its answer . . . saying what would Jesus say or do if He were with me now in physical form . . . ? We are learning how to serve her and her family who know Him not.

I will be a bit more free after next Monday, for we are going to sponsor a monthly preachers’ meeting at our Bethany Home. I am hoping to

tell our brethren something about the faith Brethren Stone, Lipscomb, Harding, Armstrong, Moser as well as Br. Boll, Br. Rhodes and down to Frank M. Mullins and LaVern Houtz had in their hearts, that faith that has taught me His grace and has sustained me thus far.

**Robert & Joy Garrett**  
**Box 30, Ruwa, Zimbabwe**

**June, 1997 PO**

May 26 (a public holiday) was our retreat for young married couples. We had 19 couples! If you have forgotten your arithmetic, that is 38 people for a day of lessons on the Christian family, how to raise your children in the Lord, and the marriage relationship. Our bundle of the March W&W--with some excellent articles on the family, marriage and children--arrived just in time and I was able to give a copy to each couple.

Strong Christian families, where Christ is the head of the house, are essential to the life and growth of the church, in any country, amidst any culture. It was thrilling to see these 19 young couples at this session. Pray for them and for us who teach that we may have the Lord's enabling.

**PRAISE THE LORD!** The government has at long last granted a church site! Epworth is a densely populated and also the poorest suburb of Harare. There is a growing congregation there that has had to struggle with makeshift shelters in the backyard of one of the brothers. A meeting house will be a great boost for this congregation.

However the site does not come free. The lease rental is US \$340.00 per year. That may seem small to you but many of our members barely earn that much a year! After we have built a church building we will be permitted to buy the site outright for the sum of US \$3,400.00 (Is there a congregation or someone who would give that \$3,400 now. We would put it in a savings account here where it will earn 14% interest until the day comes when we can make that final payment.). The requirements are that we must begin construction within nine months and complete the building within 2 years.

It has become impossible these days to do anything without a fence. First, before we can start building we must fence the site and put a temporary hut there for someone to live in to discourage thieves. A wire fence is useless--thieves just cut a hole! The only thing is a 7 foot high wall made of thin prefabricated concrete panels. That has become the standard here and the manufacture of these fences has become a booming industry--thanks, or no thanks to the thieves. If we try to build without a fence the building materials and equipment will simply disappear overnight. The perimeter is 350 yards. A fence will cost US \$7000. It is a pity that we must spend that much on a fence before we can even start building, but there is no alternative. So we urgently need enough to erect the fence and then soon after that we must commence building.

I am asking for help for this Epworth meeting house. The churches here are contributing to the Kudwadzana building which has now reached roof height. They have now raised just enough to put the roof on. Lord willing we will start the roof within the next three weeks. The roof will cost about US \$10,000. I have not been asking for help there because the Harare area churches were working hard in contributing to that project themselves. But now with the added urgency of Epworth, it is beyond our local means. If we do not meet the requirements at Epworth we will lose the site and never have chance at another one. Also we would be forbidden to meet in the backyard of the brother. That was only tolerated because we had an application for a site pending with the authorities. **PRAY - GIVE - REJOICE!**

**Linda Rake**

**Winchester, Ky.**

**July 21, 1997**

My mission trip to Russia is now history. I want to give a summary of the trip and a thank you to your prayers.

On June 21 (the day before our team left Louisville) part of the assigned reading in my One Year Bible was Psalm 139. The promise in verses 9 & 10 spoke to me more vividly than ever before. "If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast." Truly God was faithful, honoring that promise faithfully, while, for the next two weeks, I was "on the far side of the sea."

The trip to Kineshma was exciting--flying to Chicago, then on to Munich and on to Moscow. I had heard horror stories about customs in Moscow and I was not to be disappointed! We were detained over 2 hrs. with different officials trying to decide whether or not our medical supplies could go through. Finally, they kept them. (We were able to bring them back to the U.S. on our return home.) My teachers' gift bags were inspected and I was prayerfully holding my breath, as they examined the contents. After a few minutes of examining, they passed me on through! The Russian people love receiving little gifts and it would have been sad to have gone to Kineshma empty-handed. One of my team mates, Paul Kitzmiller, had one suitcase mistakenly taken by a traveler. He received it back over a week later.

We took a bus to Kineshma which is approximately 250 miles north-east of Moscow. It was an interesting trip to say the least. When we were stopped by the police about 2 A.M. once again silent prayers were being sent up! However, we were allowed to continue on, and we arrived in Kinehma about 3:30 A.M. there time. We were happy to settle in our dorm rooms for a few hours' rest before meeting our translators later that morning.

June 25, 26, and 27 were the days for which I asked your special prayers, because those were the days in which the teachers' seminar was



in session. I truly felt your prayers during that time as the Spirit led in the teaching in a way I had never before experienced. My translators asked me to speak slowly. Most of you know how hard that would be for me! Yet, God gave grace and enabled me to slow down and to weigh each word. The first day we covered the creation, Adam and Eve, Cain and Able, Noah, and Abraham. God blessed with visuals and aids from Aunt Kate Oliver Millet's Basic Bible Truths. The second day The Wordless Book from Child Evangelism Fellowship was presented, with the stories each color represented. We also made wordless books, bracelets, and bookmarks for the teachers to share with their students.

The third day was the day to wrap-up and our time was shortened. I presented, using the flannelgraph, a summary of Joseph's life and how his life pictured that of Christ's. We then had the birth of Christ, the miracle in John 9, and His death and resurrection. We concluded with visualizing Peter's vision and his preaching the Good News to Cornelius--emphasizing that God is desiring all people of all nations to believe on His Son.

It was a wonderful three days. I had 20 kindergarten teachers and principals in my group. Several of you prayed with me that God would send just the ones He wanted there, regardless of the number. I have no doubts that God beautifully answered, as each teacher's response was so positive and accepting of the Word presented. What a blessing. Only one or possibly two teachers had ever heard of each of these Old Testament Characters! Old Testaments in Russia are rare and written in their old Synanot version, which is a difficult version for Russians to read and comprehend (like reading Chaucer!).

Each afternoon was filled with visiting kindergartens, a school, and a sanitorium. At each place, we were treated very special, given gifts, and fed delicious meals. I feel that sacrifices were made for them to do this for us. I was able visit in two homes there in Kineshma. Both were very small apartments. Very few people have cars. In fact, none of the teachers in my group owned an automobile, nor had they been paid since April! Kineshma is a poor town with people who are very hungry for the Word. As the educational superintendent told me: "Things are very hard now and sometimes very dark, but there is more hope for us than there has ever been before."

The money for our Bible fund was put to good use. Each teacher received a hard-bound New Testament. (Although I copied O. T. passages to pass out, we were still unable to purchase a full Bible for the teachers.) And a beautiful hard-bound Bible story book for each of their kindergartens. We also had enough Bible story books left over to give to an orphanage in Moscow.

# NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaes

## Gallatin Church of Christ Bulletin

Earlier this year the following report was given about one church. Is their experience one in which you are interested? Would you like to see such take place in your congregation? It can begin with you!

“Woodland Church is currently experiencing a major awakening. People are testifying of God’s revealing His Son to them (Galatians 1:16), consciences are being cleansed, wrongs are being righted, Christians are being restored, divorce proceedings canceled, marriages are being healed, oppressions are being lifted, lives are being broken, prayer is taking priority, families are being strengthened, fathers are assuming their roles as spiritual leaders, the Word of God is working mightily, and souls are being gloriously saved.

“These are genuine days of refreshing, renewal and revival. Dry, barren land has become an oasis of living water and fruit bearing. We are rejoicing and corporately praying, ‘Lord, continue Your work of reviving us in the midst of the years!’”

## God Created The World In Six Days

(Of course he didn’t have to raise the money first.)

The above lines are taken from an ad in “Church Business” magazine telling about the services of The Genesis Group. This company helps churches raise funds in various stewardship campaigns.

This August 1997 issue of “Church Business” has an article about the future of money to be received by religious institutions. The giving base of the church is literally dying off. As older people pass on, it takes more people in the current generation to replace them. For every one person in the church of my parent’s generation, *it can take as many as three or four of my generation to replace that financial contribution.*”

In other words, the younger generation is not as generous as their forefathers in spite of increased blessing and income. May each of us prayerfully and carefully take a look at our percentage of giving to the Lord’s work. It is only as we grow spiritually that we will act to increase funding for the Lord’s work.

“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

## Tell City Church, IN

On Junior Week #1, June 15, 26 people from the Tell City/Lilly Dale congregations attended Woodland Bible Camp at Linton. Director of this week

was Harry Coultas, David Johnson was assistant director and Sam Marsh was sport leader, song leader and a teacher.

On Sunday afternoons Brother David Johnson and others share the Word of God with the inmates of the Perry County jail. So far 12 Bibles have been distributed through request and there were 9 prayer requests last week. One previous answer to prayer seemed to encourage others. One man confessed his guilt and asked for forgiveness from the Lord.

### **From Leroy Garrett's Newsletter**

In May I made a quick trip to take part in a one-day study seminar at the Causeway Blvd. Church of Christ in Mandeville, La. Ken Istre and Ed Hendrix were the other teachers. I gave two discourses on "Walking by Faith" (the theme in the Old Testament. Cliff and Jeanene Istre were my hosts. Their dinner party on the night before was a foretaste of heaven!

### **Now Reaching Boston**

The Lord has opened the door for "Words of Life" to begin broadcasting in the New England area. Beginning on July 20, 1997, we begin airing the program on WJLT J-Light 1060 AM at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday. WJLT is a 40,000 watt station based in Framingham, MA, a suburb of Boston. Boston is the 10<sup>th</sup> largest radio market in the country.

WJLT currently reaches a potential listening audience of

about 400,000 souls in more than 70 communities. By taking on this broadcast location, we are stepping out in faith, confident that the Lord will provide the needed funds. We will need YOU to stand by us in this expansion. Remember, all gifts to "Words of Life" are completely tax-deductible.

### **Jennings Church, La.**

CYE Senior Week was great again, although there were fewer campers than last year. Bro. Sonny Chinds gave outstanding lessons in the morning and others did each evening. Five were baptized.

### **Tell City Church Elders**

Last April the Tell City Church leadership undertook the task of collecting \$11,000.00 to cancel the medical debts of brother Randy Coultas, minister of the Oak Grove church of Christ in Louisiana. Your prayers and financial gifts have greatly encouraged Randy and his family. We and the Randy Coultas family want to take this opportunity to thank each individual, and each congregation for your heartfelt prayers, and love gifts.

As of this date, we have collected a total \$10,607.53. At this time our collection efforts through the Tell City Church of Christ are finished. If other gifts do continue to come in, we will either forward them to brother Randy, or return them to the sender.

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