

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The **Word and Work**



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

Sept 1998

AUGUST, 1998

"WORD and WORK"

D. L. Moody said, "Word and Work--the two W's. You will soon get spiritually gorged if it is all word and no work, and you will soon be without power if it is all work and no word. If you want to be a healthy Christian, there must be both word and work."

-- found in W&W, 1919, p.52

*"Wisdom is supreme;
therefore get wisdom.
Though it cost all you have,
get understanding."*

SKN
done

8th Annual Ladies Overnight Retreat

Sept. 25-26

Crestwood, Kentucky, near Louisville

The Friday night session starts at 6:30. Bring a covered dish for that night. The fee is \$20 which covers overnight accommodations, breakfast, and lunch on Saturday. The retreat ends at 3:00 p.m.

THEME: Following Jesus into the 3rd Millenium.

SPEAKERS: Betty Allen, Susan Brooks (just back from Mozambique), Whilma Garrett, Adele Hill.

For more information, call Ruth Wilson (502-897-2831), Sherry Marsh (606-744-3021), Jackie Gill (502-259-4031), or Melanie Mitchell (812-967-4861).

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Last Minute News: Carl Kitzmiller Now with Christ

He fell asleep in Jesus on Aug. 22, and was buried on the 25th. More next month. Tributes are welcome.

Overwhelmed!!

Since agreeing to be a part of the W&W team in editing the News and Notes section, I have been overwhelmed at the response from various churches. Your cooperation and participation in sharing information has already been a blessing to me personally and I trust will be a blessing to you. **Keep those bulletins and other aspects of the Lord's work coming!!!** Bennie Hill, P.O. Box 54842, Lexington, KY 40555).

Hamburg's New Minister

Randy Coultas, 11509 Highway 60, Sellersburg, IN 47172, (812) 246-0799

Denham Spring's New Minister

Sam Marsh, Rt. 1, Box 214 Z,
Pine Grove, LA 70453,
(504)777-4192

Sellersburg Church of Christ reports 6 baptisms since January. The Sonny Child's Ministry continues with the youth--ages 6 to college age. A recent trip to the Smoky Mountains was enjoyed by around 60. The church is looking for an associate minister who will work with young people and couples. We prefer a married couple. Contact Lawrence Montgomery at (812) 246-9874.

Crowley, La.

Brian Leger has become the associate minister with Bro. Valdetero at Ave. E Church. Truly an answer to prayer. He will assume several preaching and teaching responsibilities.

Continued on Pg. 255

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, New & Notes

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PROVERBS – An Introduction

Alex V. Wilson

Many have found the book of Proverbs a treasure which enriches their spiritual lives. And since it contains 31 chapters, and many months have 31 days, some—including Billy Graham—have formed the longtime habit of reading the entire book every month in addition to their other Bible reading. Yes, this book is a rich resource for us. But since our culture communicates in proverbs much less than ancient cultures did, we often need help in appreciating and adjusting to this way of thinking.

The Author

1 Kings 4:29-34 tells us that God gave Solomon wisdom, insight and understanding "as measureless as the sand on the seashore....He was wiser than any other man" in the world at that time. In all the surrounding nations he became famous as what we now would call a scientist: studying and describing plants, animals, birds, reptiles and fish. He was also a world-class musician, composing and/or collecting 1,005 songs. And he excelled in wisdom as well, speaking 3,000 proverbs. (The book of Proverbs has under 1,000, and a number of them were not written by Solomon, as we'll see.)

The Book's Purpose and Theme

Notice the first seven verses in the New International Version.

*The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
for attaining wisdom and discipline;
for understanding words of insight;
for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life,
doing what is right and just and fair;
for giving prudence to the simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young--
let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance--
for understanding proverbs and parables,
the sayings and riddles of the wise.*

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*

Footnotes in the NIV point out that "the Hebrew words rendered *fool* in Proverbs, and often elsewhere in the Old Testament, denote

one who is morally deficient," and the word rendered in English as *simple* "generally denotes one without moral direction and inclined to evil." In other words, it's not mentality but morality--not IQ but character--which this book emphasizes.

Prov. 1:20-22 brings out the urgent importance of moral wisdom:

*Wisdom calls aloud in the street,
she raises her voice in the public squares;
at the head of the noisy streets she cries out,
in the gateways of the city she makes her speech:
'How long will you simple ones love your simple ways?
How long will mockers delight in mockery
and fools hate knowledge?'*

Here Wisdom is pictured as a woman ("wisdom" in Hebrew is a feminine noun). She is a teacher, but more than that. Today we might call her a school recruiter or promotional director. Since magazine and TV ads are not available for her to use, she stands at busy street corners calling to the crowds, urging them to stop and listen to her teaching. This is vivid symbolism. Wisdom comes to life and pleads with us to become her pupils and to pay her the fullest attention.

Wisdom is pursuing us, as it were. God is eager to impart it to us. But we also must pursue wisdom. We don't become wise in our sleep, or while merely twiddling our thumbs, or even while sitting passively in a classroom. "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding" (4:7). Chapter 2:1-11 puts this fact in neon lights for us. It's true, as we saw above, that Wisdom cries out and calls aloud for us to enroll in her school. Thus we should "call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding...look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure" (2:3-4). To gain wisdom far exceeds winning the state lottery!

Proverbs as Literature

In literary form, proverbs are of two kinds--popular proverbs and polished, philosophical proverbs. R. N. Whybray's commentary has some interesting thoughts for us on the former type:

Every language has its own popular proverbs...which enrich and enliven ordinary speech. "The early bird catches the worm"; "A stitch in time saves nine"; "Too many cooks spoil the broth" -- these are characteristic examples of English proverbs....They represent the accumulated experience of a people and express it in a brief and memorable form. Among uneducated people especially they function as a rough and ready philosophy and a set of practical rules, and

are handed down from one generation to another. "Spare the rod and spoil the child," for example, has served through many generations as a rudimentary educational theory.

Ancient Israel was no exception. The Old Testament contains a number of popular proverbs...for example, "Like mother, like daughter" (Ezek.16:44); "One wrong begets another" (1 Sam. 24: 13); "The lame must not think himself a match for the nimble" (1 Kings 20:11).

The book of Proverbs deals with all kinds of every-day situations. And numerous sorts of people pass through its pages: the farmer, thief, king, court-official, dishonest salesman, adulterous woman, husband away on a business trip, teenage gang, prostitute, servant, gossip, lazy loafer, etc. We are dealing with real life here.

Second, there are **polished, philosophical proverbs**. Usually the popular proverb is a "short, pithy, memorable saying in prose." But most proverbs in this book are in poetic form (in their original Hebrew language), more literary in style. Rather than being short and simple, many use elaborate phraseology. Rather than originating among the common folks, we know that many of them were composed by "wise men" -- counselors, educators and philosophers, and another king besides Solomon. A few of these other authors are named in the book--Agur son of Jakeh; King Lemuel (30:1; 31:1)--but we know nothing more about them.

So while Solomon composed many proverbs, he compiled many others. Some were no doubt written by Israelites, but not all of them. "Wisdom Literature" was in fact a well-known form of literature in the ancient world. There was the Egyptian style, which was commonly advice and warnings by a father to his son. Most often they were given as commands: do this; don't do that. Compare, "My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them" (1:10). Then there was the Mesopotamian style, usually statements describing life. Compare, "Like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a distant land." Also, "Wealth brings many friends, but a poor man's friend deserts him." (25:25; 19:4.)

So the Bible contains both Egyptian-style and Mesopotamian-style proverbs. Not only so, but in a few places our book seems to copy proverbs from secular, heathen sources! Notice the Words of Ahikar (probably Assyrian in origin): "Do not hesitate to take the rod to your son if you cannot restrain him from wickedness. If I strike you, my son, you will not die, and if I leave you to your own devices you will not live." This is almost identical with Prov. 23:13-14.

You may be about to explode, "Wait A Minute Here! What About The Inspiration Of Our Bible?" That's a good question. I'm

glad you're not asleep as you read! I definitely believe in divine inspiration; see the Nov./Dec. '96 article, "~~What the Bible Teaches about the Bible.~~" Nonetheless, the facts in the preceding paragraphs are true. But there's really an easy solution to the seeming problem, and here it is: All truth is God's truth, even that which is spoken or written by unbelievers. Inspiration does not mean that all truth is in the Bible (and nowhere else), but that all the Bible is truth (when rightly interpreted). To believe that our book of Proverbs was divinely inspired and infallible means that Solomon, its compiler and editor (and the author of much of it), was guided by God to recognize those Assyrian statements as true and valuable and to include them in Scripture. In the very same way, in their inspired letters Paul quoted a philosopher of Crete who lived before Christ, and Jude quoted the apocryphal Book of Enoch. (Titus 1:12-13a; Jude 14-15.) Why? Because they, like Solomon, recognized those particular statements were true, important and relevant to their messages. They were not, of course, endorsing all that those authors taught or those writings included.

Write Some Proverbs!

Some Christians in their lifestyle and work stress planning, preparation and organization. Others stress being spontaneous, speaking and doing on the spur of the moment what they think God is leading them to say and do.

In the same way, some proverbs may have "come" to Solomon and others in a flash of intuition from God, as they spontaneously "saw" some truth in a moment. But other proverbs resulted only from study, planning and careful preparation. How do we know? Because 31:10-31, for example, the famous passage about the worthy woman, is an acrostic poem. Each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In a similar way Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, is an acrostic. The first 8 verses all start with the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet, aleph. The next 8 verses all begin with the second letter, beth; etc. The psalmist gave some prolonged thought to that composition. Even the entire book of Lamentations, written by Jeremiah from the depths of despair and anguish, is an acrostic. Imagine that!

Those inspired writers took time and thought and effort to compose those three works of art which are in God's word -- the Holy Spirit guiding them and supervising the whole process. (2 Pet.1:21.) We don't write divinely inspired Scripture today; the canon of the Bible is closed. But you could try to compose some helpful-even-if-uninspired proverbs! (Or a psalm, or an epistle to your Timothy.) The result might bless others; it will at least give you a deeper appreciation for Solomon and the other writers whose sayings are in the book of Proverbs. Give it a try!

THOUGHT-PROVOKERS

From or About the Book of Proverbs

...The Lord gives wisdom,
and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

(Prov.2:6. All verses are from the NIV
unless noted otherwise.)

* * * *

Make the Good People Nice!

"'Make the bad people good, and the good people nice,' is supposed to have been a child's prayer. It makes the point, with proverbic brevity, that there are details of character small enough to escape the mesh of the law and the broadsides of the prophets, and yet decisive in personal dealings. [The book of] Proverbs moves in this realm, asking what a person is like to live with, or to employ; how he manages his affairs, his time and himself. This good lady, for instance--does she talk too much? That cheerful soul--is he bearable in the early morning? And this friend who is always dropping in--here is some advice for him...and for that rather aim-less lad...

"But [the book] is not a...book of manners: it offers a key to life. The samples of behaviour which it holds up to view are all assessed by one criterion, which could be summed up in the question, 'Is this wisdom or folly?' This is a unifying approach to life, because it suits the most commonplace realms as fully as the most exalted." (Derek Kidner in Proverbs--An Introduction and Commentary)

* * * *

The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold,
but man is tested by the praise he receives.

(27:21)

* * * *

A heart at peace gives life to the body,
but envy rots the bones.

A cheerful heart is good medicine,
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

(14:30; 17:22)

* * * *

The first to present his case seems right,
till any other comes forward and questions him.

(18:17)

* * * *

A fool gives full vent to his anger,
but a wise man keeps himself under control.

(29:11)

* * * *

Where no oxen are, the manger is clean,
But much increase comes by the strength of the ox.

Prov. 14:4, NASV

"Neat but Negative: Orderliness can reach the point of sterility. This proverb is not a plea for slovenliness, physical or moral, but for the readiness to accept upheaval, and a mess to clear up, as the price of growth. It has many applications to personal, institutional and spiritual life, and could well be inscribed in the minute-books of religious bodies, to foster a farmer's outlook, rather than a curator's." --Derek Kidner

* * * *

One man gives freely, yet gains even more;
another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.

A generous man will prosper;
he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

(11:24-25)

* * * *

Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you;
rebuke a wise man and he will love you.
Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still;
teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning....

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
but he who hates correction is stupid....

At the end of your life you will groan...

You will say, "How I hated discipline!

How my heart spurned correction!

I would not obey my teachers
or listen to my instructors.
I have come to the brink of utter ruin...."
(9:8-9; 12:1; 5:11-14a)

* * * *
A man's own folly ruins his life,
yet his heart rages against the Lord.
(19:3)

* * * *

"Despite the centuries which separate us from the authors of these sayings, the unchanging continuities of human existence remain: making friends, coping with sexuality, handling money, responding to poverty, making a living, learning through loss, muddling through difficulties, facing death, and so on. These are constant human themes, and Proverbs addresses them all. Wisdom is about helping people to cope; about seeing things in a fresh way which gives new resources for living; and about working out what living for God means in the ordinarynesses of daily life. The book of Proverbs brings many of these themes to life in vivid, imaginative, often humorous pictures. It puts a mirror up to our behavior and says, 'Are you like this? Is there a better way to live?'" (David Atkinson in *The Message of Proverbs*)

* * * *

A Practical Suggestion

Here's a testimony I heard. A Christian man said that for some time he and his wife and children had been following this practice, with great benefit: While eating dinner together they would devote some time to discussing one verse from Proverbs. A great habit.

You could read the evening's verse from several translations. Then think about what it meant, how it might be applied today, any examples of people who've followed or violated its principles--with what results, etc. Family members could take turns picking out the verse for discussion.

The father said that this promoted the habits of meditating on God's Word, feeling at ease in discussing it publicly, and applying it in practical ways. It also provided a natural opportunity to bring up personal problems or questions related to the verse. A good idea.

HOW SHOULD PROVERBS BE INTERPRETED?

Four Helpful Principles

The Editor

Have you heard the puzzle in logic regarding sweeping generalizations? It goes something like this: 1. Without exception, every single broad, general statement is false. 2. But statement #1 is a broad, general statement; therefore IT is false. 3. But if statement #1 is false, then NOT every broad, general statement is false; some may be true. 4. Therefore statement #1 may be true after all, in which case every single broad, general statement is false. Repeat statements #2-4 on and on, until you solve the puzzle!

I won't tell you the solution (since I don't know it). But the puzzle serves to introduce the topic of interpreting proverbs. For proverbs by their very nature set forth moral lessons in broad, general statements. And such statements are not always true. They have exceptions, perhaps many of them. This is our first principle for interpreting proverbs: **1. General statements usually have exceptions.**

For example, Prov.16:7 says, "When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." Compare that with Matt.27:22. "Pilate said, 'What shall I do with Jesus?' They all said, 'Let him be crucified.'" How come Christ's enemies didn't make peace with Him? Did His ways not please the Lord? Those verses contradict each other. But not to worry, because proverbs are merely wise observations which are generally--but not always--true.

The same is true of non-biblical proverbs too, of course. Consider: "Look before you leap," but "He who hesitates is lost." Which one is true? Again: "Opposites attract," yet "Birds of a feather flock together." Once more: "Absence makes the heart grow fonder;" however, "Out of sight, out of mind." Hmmm.

Therefore don't be alarmed at "contradictions" in Proverbs, such as in chapter 13. "Misfortune pursues the sinner, but prosperity is the reward of the righteous. A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous (21-22)." That sounds like moral people will always succeed and be well-to-do. In fact, passages like that are what the health-and-wealth televangelists always quote. And of course those verses are Scripture, they are true--sometimes! But the health-and-wealthers never quote the very next verse: "A poor man's field may produce abundant food, but injustice sweeps it away." That's Scripture truth too.

But how can both sides be true? Well, sometimes godly people become rich--like Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, and Job (in 1:1-5 & 42:10-17 of the book of Job). But many other times godly folks suffer and become impoverished--like Jeremiah, Paul, and Job (in 1:6-42:9 of Job). Life is complex, and proverbs reflect that complexity.

Prov.26:4-5 is another example, and the "contradiction" there is even more blatant. "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes." R. N. Whybray comments, "These two apparently contradictory sayings have been placed together to show that human problems are often complicated and cannot always be solved by an appeal to a simple universal rule." And The New Bible Commentary explains the paradox in this way: "To argue with a fool on his own level is profitless (v.4). But sometimes you should meet his stupid question or comments with a wise remark or unanswerable question of your own, 'lest he should think he cannot be answered' (v.5)."

Here are some examples of this from the life of Otis Gatewood, when he was a missionary to the Mormons in Utah. Once a Mormon lawyer, during a debate with Gatewood, was very harsh, cutting and venomous in his remarks. The latter went to great lengths to be kind and gracious in his presentation, rather than stooping to answer the fool according to his folly, the insulter according to his insults. Many in the audience were favorably impressed with his Christlike attitude, and thus paid attention to his message as well. Gatewood followed verse 4 in this case.

But there are times to practice verse 5 instead. Once during a question-and-answer time at the end of a gospel meeting, someone in the audience handed in this note: "When did Job's turkey die?" The preacher replied, "From the looks of this scratchy handwriting, he's not dead yet." The questioner was merely trying to embarrass the evangelist, but the latter wouldn't let him. Another time a written question asked, "Please explain the difference between you and a monkey." Gatewood remarked, "If the questioner will come to the platform and stand beside me, the audience can see the difference." On still another occasion this statement was handed in: "After hearing you, Mr. Gatewood, I'm a better Mormon than ever."

The missionary responded, "It's a real joy to know that we can do something for you that the teachings of the Mormon Church couldn't do. For all these years you've been listening to Mormon teachings and haven't been made as strong as you say you are now. It must be proof that we have teaching which helps more than the Mormon doctrine does."

These incidents are recorded in Gatewood's book, You Can Do Personal Work. He concludes this section by explaining,

In these answers the fool was being answered according to his folly, and audience response showed we accomplished more than if we had reacted either with anger or by taking such questions seriously. Honest and sincere people should not be answered in these ways, but when we are dealing with the foolish or closed-minded or with troublemakers, the Lord has told us to answer them in these ways.

2. Distinguish Proverbs from Promises

God's promises are His pledge to do something for whoever meets the conditions He sets. "You shall seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart." "Come to me, and I will give you rest." "He who trusts in me, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water." Etc.

God's proverbs are general observations about life, and counsels for living wisely and morally. As we saw above, they are true but have exceptions. Great grief may result if this is overlooked.

For example, take the well known statement in 22:6. "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." First of all, the first half of the statement probably means more than "train him to be good and godly." More literally it is "train him according to his way" --that is, according to his individual inclinations. If your first child is quiet, studious and artistic, and your second is outgoing and athletic, make allowances for the differences. Don't try to force them into the same mold, but train each in the way he/she is inclined to go. Of course this doesn't mean let them do whatever they want whenever they please. The book of Proverbs makes it clear that loving discipline is important. But don't try to force your child to be something she isn't.

But back to our main point in this section. If you do train them to be good and godly, and do it with their personal disposition and abilities in mind--even then they won't always turn out right. They usually will, but sometimes they don't. In such cases parents are tempted to get bitter at God. "You broke Your word! You promised they'd never leave the right path, but You failed to deliver!" No, He didn't break His promise. It's merely that your case was one of the exceptions to the general rule.

(Other parents get overwhelmed with feelings of guilt. "We tried to train him right, and we thought we succeeded--but look at him now. We totally failed. We're miserable flops! It's all our fault!" No, it's

not all your fault, though you may be partly to blame. But human freedom and choice play a big part too. Even God, a perfect parent, had wayward children; see Isa. 1:2. And even Jesus had a Judas.)

3. Observe or Approve?

Some readers conclude that Proverbs approves of shady deals, or of "little white lies," or of bribery, just because they are described. No, while most proverbs give advice, some are merely observations about life. They do not necessarily approve of what they describe. "A bribe is a charm to the one who gives it; wherever he turns, he succeeds" (17:8). That merely tells a fact of life, but not life as we ought to live it.

"'It's no good, it's no good!' says the buyer; then off he goes and boasts about his purchase" (20:14). Today we might reverse the thought: "'It's wonderful, it's wonderful,' says the salesman; then he laughs with his friends at the dope who believed him." That's true to life, but it's still false witness. If 14:20 stood alone, it would fit into this category too: "The poor are shunned even by their neighbors, but the rich have many friends." But in this case the context makes very clear that such snobbishness is wrong. For the very next verse declares, "He who despises his neighbor sins, but blessed is he who is kind to the needy."

4. Use your Imagination to Apply Truths from Far Away and Long Ago to Here and Now

We need to apply Scripture cross-culturally. (That's good missionary training.) There is a great chasm between life in ancient, agricultural Israel and modern, urban America. Even Solomon wouldn't have had a clue if you asked his opinion of floppy disks or gangsta rap! So we need sanctified imagination to penetrate any outdated cultural wrappings and apply continuing Biblical principles to the very differing circumstances we live in.

Here's an illustration of what I mean. Ruth and I once stayed for a while with a fine Christian family. In their devotions together they were going through the early part of Proverbs. Chapters 2, 5, 6, and 7 all repeatedly warn young men against prostitutes and adultresses. The teen-age son said, "Why is that emphasized over and over? Most guys I know don't find prostitutes a temptation. It just doesn't seem relevant, or worthy of all the attention Solomon gives it."

The answer is that in ancient times young men and women rarely if ever were allowed to mingle unattended by adults. Dating was totally unknown; after all, marriages were arranged by the parents--usu-

ally in the early or middle teen years. You just never took your girlfriend out for a spin in your jalopy! Because young men could so rarely see a decent girl alone, sexual temptations usually came in the form of the indecent girls--the professionals. Thus the emphasis by Solomon. If he were writing now, no doubt Proverbs would warn against dating the wrong kind of guy or gal; and would urge purity when dating even the right kind of person; and would warn against considering any non-Christian as a spouse; etc. We need to apply the principles, though circumstances differ.

One fact really helps as we do this: human nature hasn't changed. Solomon lived in an era of dictatorial kings (in fact, he was one himself), while we live under democracy. But power was corrupting then, and still is. Again, we converse on cellular phones and communicate around the globe by e-mail, but if we can't keep a secret our inventions just compound our problems. We discover Prov. 12:23 is not out of date: "A prudent man keeps his knowledge to himself, but the heart of fools blurts out folly." And 10:19, "When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise." And 16:28b, "A gossip separates close friends." And 26:20, "Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down." Not so much has changed as we sometimes think. Yet cross-cultural application is necessary in Bible study.

As we prayerfully trust in the Lord with all our hearts, not leaning on our own understanding--yet using it, He will help us understand, apply and obey His holy Word. (Prov.3:5-6; Psalms:32:8-9.)

MORE GEMS OF TRUTH

(Present-day Proverbs by Homer Youngblood)

Last month we introduced Homer Youngblood and some of the countless proverbs he has written and/or compiled over a period of more than 35 years! Brother Youngblood is a semi-retired preacher and businessman who lives in Millsap, Texas. Here are more proverbs he has written in Gospel Tidings magazine. (Write for a sample copy: P.O. Box 4355, Englewood, CO 80144.)

There is no cosmetic for beauty like a nice smile.

Fear is the darkroom where negatives are developed.

The greatest handicap for some golfers is honesty.

There, there, little luxury, don't you cry; you'll be a necessity by and by.

Encouragement after censure is as the sun after the shower.

A generation ago when a man finished his day's work, he needed rest; now he goes to a club because he needs exercise.

A friend is one before whom you may think aloud.

Maturity is knowing when to speak your mind and when to mind your speech.

A cannibal is one who likes everybody.

To belittle people you have to be little.

The world needs more God-made men, and fewer man-made gods.

A person does not realize how much he has to be thankful for until he has to pay taxes on it.

If heaven is a prepared place for prepared people--and it is--then hell is a prepared place for unprepared people.

The family altar would alter many a family.

Some parents bring their children up; others let theirs down.

A man without money is poor; a man with nothing but money is poorer.

A Word About Moccasins **(Piedmont Church enters a New Door)**

Bob M. Yarbrough

There's an old American Indian saying to the effect that one should not be too hasty to judge another until he has walked a day in his moccasins. That's probably a very wise idea. We would all save ourselves countless heartaches if we practiced that old proverb; and we would be a lot more understanding. These moccasins are what I want to discuss with you.

For some time we at the Piedmont church have wrestled with what the Lord would have us do concerning the future of our congregation. Several years ago we attempted to have this discussion with two other churches in our area who were struggling with similar problems that we were facing: loss of members, an aging membership, and little or no younger people. We thought that if we pooled our people and re-

sources we could be once again a viable congregation. But for various reasons, that idea did not work out; and as a result, one of those congregations has since closed its doors and we at Piedmont are now in the process of selling our property and joining ourselves with another group of Christians. We learned that the dynamics in those kinds of issues tend to be very emotional and territorial.

Our decision to sell the property is certainly filled with mixed feelings. We are saddened to admit that we did not keep pace with a changing neighborhood, and that many of our younger ones have moved on to other churches which addressed their needs. Many of our older group remember the "good old days" when the church was vibrant and young. But that was then and this is now. Our question is What do we do now? We have answered this question by making the conscious decision to sell our building, distribute our assets appropriately, stick together, and join up with a great group of Christians who, like us, are "looking for the blessed hope" and also gather at the Lord's table every Lord's day. This decision has not come easy, but we believe it is the right one for us. We have attended too many of our own funerals, and we have witnessed too few births--both physically and spiritually.

Most of our group (about 85%) will go together to our new congregation in order to maintain the fellowship which we have enjoyed with one another through the years. Even those few who elected not to go with the group are not bitter or disgruntled. There has been a very sweet spirit among the congregation as our leadership worked through this decision (Praise God!). We attempted to provide opportunity for everyone to express themselves in the matter and we have attempted to keep everyone informed on all details.

There will be some changes for us, but we have decided that this will be good for us. Different for us now will be hearing the sound of young children, young people, and the young married couples. Church singing will definitely improve, and we will have the opportunity to share our wisdom with those younger than ourselves should they choose to accept it. These will be good feelings to feel vibrant again! Perhaps our own group of churches has been too slow to change, causing some of the situations in which we now find ourselves. God will be the judge of those things, however, not us. He is the only one who can truly walk in our moccasins.

We treasure the ministry that God has allowed us to have through the years, first as the Fair Park church and later as Piedmont. A lot of good preaching, teaching, singing and soul saving went on during those sixty plus years. And now together we have the opportunity to join hands with others of God's people and continue to build up the

body of Christ. The name on our door may be different (Eastfield Bible Chapel), but our hearts and our friendships will remain the same.

For many years we have sponsored the Nakahara Mission in Japan. We want you to know that Bob Yarbrough will continue to serve as treasurer for this mission fund. Contributions should be sent directly to his home at 19930 County Rd. 324, Terrell, TX 75160. We would urge you as churches and as individuals to continue your support of this work. Don't be tempted to discontinue your financial support simply on the basis of our action. Michiya, Tomoko and Teruko are worthy of our continued support and prayers. We have also set in place memorials to those individuals and those works of faith that have been important in our church history.

While local churches may rise and fall throughout the ages, we are more convinced than ever before that Matthew 16:18 is sure and true. The gates of hell will not prevail against the church of the Living God. Somewhere I came across a little article which sums up this epistle. The author is unknown to me, but it reads:

A Table In The Wilderness

David served in one generation, his own. He could not serve in two! Where today we seek to perpetuate our work by setting up an organization or society or system, the Old Testament saints served their own day and passed on. This is an important principle of life. Wheat is sown, grows, ears, is reaped, and then the whole plant, even to the root, is ploughed out. God's work is spiritual to the point of having no earthly roots, no smell of earth on it at all. Men pass on, but the Lord remains. Everything to do with the Church must be up-to-date and living, meeting the present--one could even say the passing, needs of the hour. Never must it become fixed, earth-bound or static. God Himself takes away His workers, but He gives others. Our work here may suffer sometimes, but His never does. Nothing touches Him. He is still God!

We ask your prayers for us as we embark on a new course of service for the Lord. We are excited about the prospects which lie ahead for us, and we believe that to be pro-active in this manner is far superior to being reactive. We ask that our sister churches who read this journal be understanding of the moccasins that we are now wearing. Someday, if the Lord tarries, you too may have to try them on for size. If you are ever in the Dallas area we would love for you to worship with us. Our new address is Eastfield Bible Chapel, 3141 Highway 67 (Interstate 30), Mesquite, TX 75150.

What the Bible Teaches about...

The SECOND COMING Of CHRIST JESUS

Part Two

Alex V. Wilson

Last month we observed that Matt. 24-25 gives the longest and most detailed teaching of Jesus about future things. It contains 97 verses. It was spoken by our Lord Himself. It was addressed to the leading apostles (Mk.13:3), who would be the major teachers of the church soon to be established. Obviously this is a passage of prime importance for understanding Biblical prophecy. Any later teaching on eschatology, in the epistles and Revelation, should be studied in light of this foundational passage.

Some Bible teachers deny this, saying that the "Olivet Discourse" (Mt.24/Mk.13/ Lk.21) is mainly about the Roman army's overthrow of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Last month we examined that view in detail, concluding that 70 A.D. was a pre-fulfillment but not the full-fulfillment of Mt. 24. On the other hand, some other teachers say that since Mt. 24 was taught before the church was established at Pentecost, it is not for Christians but mainly for the Jews who will be living during the yet-future "great tribulation" (v.21; "great distress" in the NIV). Our earlier article refuted that position also. Now on to the text!

A. Christ's Prediction and the Disciples' Questions (24:1-3 and parallel passages)

This "sermon" all began with a conversation. As Jesus and the disciples were leaving the temple grounds, one of them remarked, "What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" And he was right (see part 1). The Master's reply must have startled His hearers: "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." (His words were literally fulfilled when about 40 years later Roman soldiers destroyed the temple area. Its stones were even pried apart to get the gold leaf that melted from its roof when the temple--against Titus' orders--was set on fire by the soldiers in their frenzy.)

A little while later four of the disciples, dumbfounded at Jesus' prediction, barraged Him with questions: "**When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?**" Probably their first thoughts had been, "No way this can happen, for Jesus is Messiah and is about to set up His victorious eternal kingdom on earth--any day now! How, then, can God's temple be destroyed? What can He mean?"

But maybe on second thought, they remembered hearing Him say, "Destroy this temple and in 3 days I will raise it up" (Jn.2:19). That statement had been a real puzzler, of course. And perhaps a prophecy from Zechariah came to mind--that all nations would fight against Jerusalem and capture it. (14:2.) Could that be the time of the temple's destruction? If so, it was significant that the prophet went on to say, "Then the Lord will...fight against those nationsThen the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him....The Lord will be king over the whole earth" (Zech.14:3,5,9). Jesus had earlier told them He was "going to come in his Father's glory with his angels," and then mentioned his "coming in his kingdom" (Mt.16:27,28). Notice the similar language and ideas.

Whatever was whirling through their minds, they somehow tied together the temple's downfall with Jesus' "coming" and also with "the end of the age" (24:3). The word for "coming" (parousia in Greek) was often used to designate an emperor's royal visit. The emperor ruled over the subjects throughout his farflung empire, whether they ever saw him or not. But when he made an official visit to some distant province, he manifested there the glory of his person and power in a fuller way. There were extravagant celebrations. His people had the joy of seeing and honoring him. At such times he might grant rewards to outstanding citizens and special favors to the whole province. He might also preside at the execution of enemies who had rebelled against him. Such state visits by Caesar provided an apt picture of the coming glory when our Messiah, the Emperor of emperors, will come "with power and great glory" (Mt.24: 30), rewarding His faithful servants and destroying the wicked.

His royal coming will also end this present evil age (Gal.1:4) and usher in the age of righteousness. Jesus and the Jews in general believed in dividing history into "this present age" and "the age to come." (This is a field for profitable study. See Mt.12:32; Mk.10:30; Lk.20:34-35; Eph.1:21; Jn.12:31; 2 Cor.4:4.) Thus the disciples asked about the timing of the temple's destruction (which we now know was in 70 A.D.), and the sign of His coming and of the end of the age. They doubtless thought all 3 events would be at the same time. With hindsight we recognize that the latter 2 are still to come.

B. Characteristics of This Present Age Between His 1st and 2nd Comings (4-14)

Space limits us to a mere survey of our Lord's teaching here. As He describes the course of this age, He first tells **What the World in General would Experience** (5-7 and 12). In *religion*: false Messiahs who would deceive many. In *international affairs*: many wars. In *na-*

ture: famines and earthquakes. In *morals*: increasing wickedness. Well, He got 4 for 4 so far, didn't He!

Notice an important point here. The items just mentioned have taken place all during the centuries since Christ's departure, just as He foretold. They were to be continuing characteristics of this entire age, and *thus could not be signs of His soon return*--as many believers have often claimed. That is, the rise of fake christs, and occurrence of wars and earthquakes, and increase in crime, do not show that Jesus' coming must be very soon. Jesus Himself said, not that they were signs of His soon return, but were signs that He would not come right away! Notice His words carefully: "Such things must happen, but the end is not yet....All these are *but the beginning of birth pains*" (6c, ASV; v.8). Often sincere Christians have brought discredit to Biblical prophecy in the eyes of others by saying, "*Oh I know the Lord's return must be right away*--look at the awful earthquakes, crimes and wars around the world, etc." It's OK to say He might return very soon; but don't say He must, for folks have said that for centuries--and been wrong.

The Master compared such events to *birthpangs*. An expectant woman might have an early contraction which has no significance at all. But when her labor pains definitely *increase in both frequency and intensity*, then she knows her delivery is near. In the same way, when all these matters happen more often and become more severe (and some of them are), then indeed it is time to take notice. And another thing about labor pains. They lead on to such joy that soon they are forgotten (Jn.16:21). For us it will be the same: "The toils of the road will seem nothing when I get to the end of the way."

Jesus also forecast **What His Disciples in Particular would Experience** (9-14): Hatred by all nations. Persecutions, even martyrdom. Apostasy, as many would turn away from the faith and even betray other believers. False prophets who will deceive many, gaining numerous converts. A decline in love. A need to endure. What dreadful prospects! But the *one item of Good news among all these bleak predictions* is this: Despite all the preceding tragedies, the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations (or cultural groups)--"and then *the end will come*." Here is one answer to the disciples' question about a sign of the end of this age. Before we reach the end of the age, we must reach the ends of the earth--with the Gospel (24:14, also see Mk.13:10). Ponder that well: Rejoice that much progress in world-evangelization has been made in recent decades; but lament and pray for the many who still have never heard of the Savior.

Let's stop briefly and ask what the teaching of our Lord in this section reveals about His **philosophy of history**. Where is history going? Some philosophers take a cyclical view: it just goes round in circles, repeating itself endlessly but going nowhere in particular. Others take an *optimistic* view: things will get better and better till gradually, somehow, utopia will evolve. Others have been very pessimistic: conditions will continue getting worse and worse till madmen blow up the world, or we all starve, or are burned up by global warming, or some comet smashes us to smithereens--or until some horrific "brave new world" of social engineering emerges.

Christ took none of these three views. We might call His position an *Optimistic-pessimistic* viewpoint: short-term pessimism buoyed by long-term optimism. Knowing the depths of human sinfulness, most of his predictions are gloomy indeed. (So we should avoid a simplistic hopefulness about the human race on its own.) But knowing the power of God's Gospel and the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit, our Savior knew that the task given to God's people would be carried out. (So we should have God-based confidence, hope and joy as we look to the coming End.) The Great Commission will be accomplished. Despite the weakness and failures of the church, the whole world will be *evangelized*. All nations will hear of the Savior; all peoples will be gospelized. That's vastly different from converting the world; who can believe in that idea after reading this passage? Yet we can work heartily, knowing our labor for our King is not in vain. We know the final score. We know we are on the winning side. Toil on!

C. The Period of Unequaled Distress or Great Tribulation (15-25)

Having described the continuing general characteristics of this age, Christ goes on to warn of a period just before His 2nd coming that will be so horrific it will be unmatched in history. He says there will be great *thlipsis* -- that's the Greek word. Various versions translate it "tribulation," "distress," "affliction," "trouble," "misery" or "persecution." Other synonyms are "pressure" and "anguish." It occurs 20 times in the NT, usually in nonprophetic settings. Notice some instances. In v.9 of this chapter Jesus said, "You will be handed over to be *persecuted*...." In other places we read, "In the world you shall have *tribulation*; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." "We must through much *tribulation* enter into the kingdom of God." "...No one [should] be unsettled by these *trials*. You know...that we were destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be *persecuted*" (Jn.16:33; Acts 14:22; 1 Thes.3:3-4).

The kickoff event of this period will be the *abomination that causes desolation* standing in the holy place of the temple (v.15).

Comparing the three texts where Daniel mentions this phrase, we see predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple; the continuing of wars and desolations but the stopping of sacrifice and offering (9:26-27); the desecration of the temple and abolition of the daily sacrifice (11:31); and, again, the abolition of the daily sacrifice (12:11). Notice the emphasis given by the repetition of terms; Daniel makes his point very clear. The context tells also of a willful king who will exalt himself above every god (11:36).

Several of these points surely bring to our minds 2 Thes.2:3-10 where Paul tells of "the man of lawlessness" who will "oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God." That also reminds us of Rev.13, where people worship "the beast," who utters proud words and blasphemes God, slandering His name. He makes war against the saints and conquers them (as Daniel had foretold in 7:21,25). An image is set up in his honor (the word "abomination," by the way, is commonly used in the OT to refer to images used in false religion). The similarities between Daniel 7/9/11/12, the Olivet Discourse of Christ, 2 Thes.2, and Rev.13 are obvious, are they not? Thus the endtime reign of terror and tribulation starts with the man of lawlessness' claim to deity--his exclusive right to worldwide worship. *Perhaps* he will say it this way: "Jesus claimed to be God who became man, which was false. But I am the man who became God. I have evolved sooner and higher than anyone else and have reached true godhood: worship me and me only!"

This event will begin a period of unequaled persecution so dreadful that somehow "if those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened" (Mt.24:22).

D. Christ's Coming with Power and Glory (26-31)

Immediately after the tribulation of those days (29) our Lord will come, as visibly and spectacularly as lightning which is seen from east to west (26-27). His coming will be introduced by a blackout of the sun and moon (29). You may have attended a concert which began with the house lights being turned out, bringing darkness, followed suddenly by a spotlight beaming down on the soloist on stage--calling all attention to him, the star. In some such way, it seems God will turn out the lights of the universe.* [For more about this, see the note at the end.] Then suddenly "the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will

gather his elect from the four winds"--from all points of the compass. (30-31.)

E. An Agonizing Question and a Comforting Answer (1 Thes. 4)

A review of Mt. 24-25 shows that Christ gave no teaching there about death and resurrection (though of course He did at other times). Some years after His prophetic discourse, Paul wrote to Thessalonian Christians. Some of them had "fallen asleep" in death, and the living believers wondered about the fate of the deceased. Would they miss the triumph and glory of Christ's return?

Not at all, Paul assured them in 1 Thes.4:13-18. Since Christ not only died but rose again,

we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him....We who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

So the apostle writes of the Return, Resurrection, Rapture, and Reunion. What joy awaits the Lord's people!

F. Differing Interpretations about how Mt.24 and 1 Thes.4 Fit Together

There are two main interpretations regarding the relationship of Mt.24 and 1 Thes.4. Our Lord, as we saw, says that a period of unequalled persecution will come before He comes. Or to put it another way, in His own words: "Immediately after the distress of those days...they will see the Son of Man coming." His people, "the elect," will undergo the tribulation of that period. However, Paul in 1 Thes.4 does not mention the great tribulation, but only the resurrection of Christians. The question naturally arises, Do these two passages refer to the same coming of Christ, or to two different stages of His coming--separated by seven (or at least 3-1/2) years? That is, do Mt.24:30 and 1 Thes.4:15-16 describe the identical event, or two distinct events?

If they refer to the same coming, then the Christians living at that time will pass through the last, most awful tribulation. Christ makes that clear. Those who believe this is what Scripture teaches take what is called the post-trib position: Christ will return for the church after

the persecutions by the Beast. But other Christians believe the Lord Jesus will come for the church before the tribulation, so we shall escape. That is the pre-trib view. If that is true, then Christ's coming as Paul described it will precede (by some years) that coming as Jesus described it. But who is right? Which view is correct?

1)The *pre*-tribs say: Paul was writing to Christians, so what he wrote directly concerns us. But Christ was speaking to Jewish disciples before Pentecost, so Mt.24 is not directed to the church but to Jews who will be converted after the church is raptured. Post-tribs reply, If you follow that reasoning, then the church shouldn't observe the Lord's Supper, for Jesus gave His instructions about it to the same disciples during the same week as He preached Mt.24. How can we say that Mt.24-25 is not for us but Mt.26 is? (See last month's study for more on this.)

2)*Pre*-tribs say: The church can't undergo the tribulation, for 1 Thes.1:10 and 5:9 assure us that Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come--God has not appointed us to wrath. Post-tribs say: That's true, of course; we are saved from God's wrath by Jesus' death (Rom.5:9). But passages about "the tribulation" (Mt.24, Dan.7:21,25, Rev.13, etc.) do not mention wrath from God but persecution from men--the Beast and his followers. And our Savior never said we would be exempt from persecution like that. Rather He warned us it was sure to come (Jn.15:18-20; 16:1-3, 33, etc.)

3)*Pre*-tribs say: If the Beast must come before Christ can come, then our Lord could not come at any moment, today. *Post*-tribs reply, But could He really have come any moment, any day since He left for heaven? Of course it's true that disciples were taught to wait and watch for Him, but what exactly did that mean? Didn't Peter have to grow old and die before Jesus returned? (John 21:18-19.) Didn't some other events have to happen too? (These questions will be discussed in further detail next month, D.V.)

4)*Post*-tribs now ask some questions: If Jesus' return as He described it is not the same return that Paul described, then why are there so many similarities? Notice the emphasized words in those passages as given above in sections D and E. Both mention His coming, a trumpet call, and clouds. Jesus mentioned angels, Paul the archangel who leads them. These sound like one and the same coming. *Pre*-tribs reply, Those likenesses are just coincidental; they don't prove anything.

5)*Post*-tribs ask, But where does any scripture anywhere specifically say that Jesus will remove the church from earth before the persecution under the Beast breaks out? Where does either Christ or Paul

really say that there are two distinct "comings," separated by a period of years? Mt.24 is Jesus' major teaching about the endtimes, and if His coming which Paul taught about in 1 Thes.4 precedes the coming of Mt.24:29-31, why didn't Christ say so in this sermon? Where is the "pre-trib rapture of the church" in the Olivet discourse? When teaching the leaders of the soon-to-be-born church about the future, would it not be extreme negligence for Him to omit all mention of the event which, if true, would be of greater importance to the church than anything else in His whole sermon? These seem to be weighty questions indeed. May the Lord give us understanding in these matters.

I think Oswald J. Smith found the solution to the question, Which view is true? He wrote, "You ask, Is the Church to go through the Tribulation? This is not the question. It is this: ARE YOU READY, ready either for Tribulation or Rapture? If you are, that is all that matters. What difference does it make so long as you are ready? If you are to be in it, you cannot avoid it, and if you are to escape, you will not be in it." That's true. Lord, help us be ready for whatever lies ahead, till You come again. Strengthen us to endure to the end. Empower us to spread Your gospel to all peoples. Amen; come, Lord Jesus.

*Note re: Mt.24:29. We realize that Jesus' statement, "The sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken" may not be literally fulfilled. It is an allusion to several OT passages. See Isa.13 re: Babylon and the Medes; 34:1-5 re: Edom; Ezek.32:1-12 re: Nebuchadnezzar and Egypt; Joel 2:30-31 (quoted in Acts 2:19-21) and 3:14-16; compare Rev.6:12-14. Levertoff says, "These are symbols of divine acts effecting great changes in the world, and are not to be taken literally. The OT prophets employed such imagery in their announcements of God's intervention in the history of nations." Jay Adams writes, "These signs are familiar scriptural symbols indicating the downfall of something considered unshakable...particularly used of the destruction of cities or nations [or] the fall of the old order and the entrance of a new one." That is often true; we noted that several of the passages referred to some earth-shaking overthrow of specific kingdoms. Yet some of the passages seem to point beyond their near fulfillment (or pre-fulfillment?) to a greater one at the final Day of the Lord. And such an overwhelming event as the revelation of Christ may be accompanied by Mt.24:29 occurring in some literal way.

Another observation: Where NIV has "the heavenly bodies will be shaken," other versions render the phrase as "the powers of the heavens [or: of heaven] will be shaken" (ASV/ NASV/ RSV/ Jer.Bib.) or "the celestial powers [or: the powers of the universe] will be shaken" (NEB/God's Word). Might this refer somehow to Satan and his agents, some of whom are termed "powers"? (Eph. 6:12; Col.1:16; 1 Pet.3:22.)

A final point: These "cosmic signs" occur after the great tribulation (Mt.24:29) but before the Day of the Lord (Acts 2:19-21). Thus those 2 periods cannot overlap. That is significant, as we'll see.

Voices From the Field

Nakahara Mission Fund
July, 1998

c/o Bob. M. Yarbrough

We would like to report information to you on two fronts with this July newsletter.

1. Since the Nakahara family first went back to Japan in the 1960's to begin this mission work, the Piedmont Church of Christ has been the sponsoring church in the states. There have been many good friends and churches who have shared in this ministry through the years with Piedmont and we praise God for this mutual support of the ministry. However, effective August 1, 1998, Piedmont will no longer serve in this capacity as the church has decided to merge with another congregation. For the past ten years, Bob Yarbrough has acted as treasurer on behalf of the Piedmont church for the Nakahara Mission. We have been in contact with all of the Nakahara family and it is their desire for Bob to continue in the role of treasurer. We pray that you will continue to be faithful in your stewardship of this good work for the Lord. Presently, we are expending \$2,400 per month toward this work. However, during the past six months contributions have decreased by almost 20%. Were it not for a small reserve, we would be unable to meet expenses. Thus we are asking for your faithful prayer and financial support for the Nakahara Mission. Your contributions should be sent to 19930 County Rd., 324 Terrell, TX 75160.

2. Teruko Nakahara has just returned from a month's visit to Japan. Michiya and Tomoko and family are all doing fine. Michiya sent the following report:

"We have been putting much emphasis on our Sunday School program. We presently have a junior and senior high class, and an age three to five class. A toddler class begins this month. We recently had a training class on Sunday School taught by a specialist in the area. There was much interest and good attendance even from other churches in the area. In August we are planning to join with the Numazu church (35 miles away) for a camp with Sunday School children. This will give these children the opportunity to meet and know other Christian kids. We have recently added one member to our Junior-Senior class. The second Sunday of June was our Flower Day at church. Children and adults bring flowers to church and praise God for the beauty of His creation. Afterwards, we take the flowers to neighborhood people and shut-ins. Hopefully it helps nurture much regard for the feelings of others, and witnesses God's love."

"Thanksgivings and Prayer Requests

Teruko's high school friend, Mrs. Nishimura, has been worshiping with us since last year. Teruko is thrilled over this and grateful to God for answered prayer. Our son, Kazuma, age 4, has started preschool. The school he attends is the only Christian school in the city and is celebrating its 90th year in June. Our 10 mo. old son, Lynn, is loved by everyone. Please pray for our annual church seminar in August. This year's theme will be "Worship". We have a need for parking and have been saving our funds to purchase a nearby lot when it comes available. Land is very expensive, however. We had been using the lot of a nearby factory, but it recently sold. Now we are using the alley by our building but this is causing a problem. Pray for our Sunday School program, and pray that we will be effective witnesses for Jesus.

Harry Robert Fox, Jr.

Former missionary to Japan

In response to an invitation from brother Shoji Vemura, minister of the Sharon Church of Christ in Toyko and President of Ibaraki Christian College. My wife Jeri and I made an 11-day round trip to Japan, June 11-22, 1998. Brother Vemura's main purpose was for us to serve in a two-day gospel meeting for the Sharon church. He also graciously arranged for us to spend the rest of our time serving other congregations and individuals as well as two half-days speaking to chapel assemblies at the college and visits to the Nukada Children's Home and the Nazare-en Home for the Aged. This was my 16th trip to Japan (& Jeri's 4th) since she and I left there in 1958 (after serving 10 years). By my returning on an average of once every three years the Lord has enabled me to stay in touch with most of the churches in Japan the past 40 years.

Japan remains one of the most difficult of all mission fields. Missionaries from churches of Christ have served in Japan since 1888. Now, after 110 years, "visible results" amount to approximately 1000 members in about 50 congregations. But I believe that there are many more "invisible" results known only to the Lord that will eventually be known to us. Meanwhile, we continue to serve "in hope" and marvel at how the Lord "comes to our rescue" time after time when things look humanly impossible. An example of this has been Ibaraki Christian College, which is now in its 51st year. With almost no Christian constituency to support it financially or to provide it with Christian personnel and students, it has managed, by God's incredible grace, to maintain itself as a "Christian" college now serving 4,200 students and reaching some of them with the Gospel who might not otherwise be reached. Last year when the Christian president of the Board of Directors, brother Ryoichi Sasaki retired, we wondered if a Christian re-

placement would be available. Sure enough, the Lord raised up Brother Akira Hirose to serve in that capacity--a brother who had formerly served at a high level in the Joyo Bank and is now an elder in the church in Mito, capital of Ibaraki Prefecture.

Much the same can be said of local congregations which have seemed on the verge of extinction only to be give new life by the Spirit of God (as described in Ezekiel 37). The most encouraging development in this connection has been the young men God has raised up to replace the current generation of over 60 preachers. I am sorry we didn't have time to visit Brother and Sister Motoyuki Nomura or the Nakahara family, two families so well-known to readers of *Word and Work*.

Robert & Joy Garrett
June 5, 1998

Ruwa, Zimbabwe

First was the Easter Camp. This is for our youth age 18 and older. We had 82 campers who came together to enjoy a great time of fellowship and Bible study in the Lord over a four-day period. Junior Camp followed a week later with 64 campers aged 9 through 12 for a full week. This age group is a lot of fun to teach. They really enjoy their Bible studies and enter into games and activities with enthusiasm. I did not teach any classes but gave some chapel talks. Five new Births. We scheduled a special lesson to show the way of salvation. This was taught by Ruchiva Chibura. However we were careful not to pressure the children and did not offer an invitation. Should any come to the Lord it should not be from emotion of the moment but real conviction. There were five of the older children who came to the Lord and were baptized.

Women's Camp. Then it was the the turn for the women to come together for three days. There were 140 women representing 21 congregations. By all reports it was a refreshing and inspiring time with a large number of rededications and one baptism. Senior Camp was next. 67 campers from ages of 13 through 17 had a full week of interesting and helpful Bible lessons for 5 hours every morning. There were four who came to the Lord Jesus Christ and were baptized. Last but not least was a one-day camp for Young Families. 28-and-a-half couples attended. The half was because a child was sick and the mother had to stay home to look after it, but the young father came and took the lessons back to his wife. So that was 57 adults plus a few small children. This speaks well for the future of the church as these will be the leaders within a few short years should the Lord tarry.

Hey, don't be fooled by the title: This isn't "Ugh"—It's exciting!

THEOLOGICAL JARGON

A Case Study: "Total Depravity"

(2nd in a series by the editor on Theology & Interpretation)

Is there a need for theology? (Or "systematic doctrines"?) Or is it a plague to be avoided? If it is needed, is it something we should embrace with enthusiasm? Or is it merely a necessary evil that somebody ought to do—but not me, thank God!

One problem with many theological books and classes is the technical terminology that is used. Why can't everyday language be used, instead of such hifalutin' words as "eschatology," "soteriology," "antinomianism," and stuff like that? Why do theologians make everything complicated? And why do they invent a vocabulary of their own?

Well, I agree they overdo it. And when it discourages the common, untutored Christian, that's truly sad. And in S.B.S.'s class in "systematic doctrines" we rarely use such terms. Yet every advanced field of study--law, medicine, education, philosophy--has its special terminology. "Jargon" is what it's called. (Webster defines jargon as "the technical terminology or...idiom...of a special activity or group.") It's used as a sort of shorthand or abbreviation. Let's proceed now to a concrete example of theological jargon, and think about how to handle it.

Total Depravity

Sometimes you'll hear theologians and maybe preachers use the term "total depravity." Like "the Trinity," and "original sin" (discussed respectively in Jan. & Aug. '97 W&Ws), "total depravity" is a theological rather than a Biblical expression. It's never used in Scripture. Therefore either we should (1) never use such terms, but confine ourselves strictly to Biblical words; or we should (2) use them, but only with exceedingly great care, making sure we don't jump to anti-scriptural conclusions. Barton Stone, the Campbells, R. H. Boll and E. L. Jorgenson favored the former alternative. (That's why "Holy, Holy, Holy" in Great Songs of the Church was altered, instead of ending, "God in three persons, blessed Trinity"--which is what the author actually wrote. "Three persons" and "Trinity" are not in the Bible.)

I personally favor the latter alternative. For if an expression is known fairly widely by the public, we need to help people evaluate it. If it is erroneous, we can trim their minds of error. (Alexander Campbell believed in doing that.) If it is accurate and helpful, we can take advantage of its wide usage. Actually, we often use nonbiblical short-

hand terms for convenience. (Not antibiblical, merely nonbiblical. Note the difference.) Is "the Golden Rule" in God's Word? What about "the Great Commission"? And "the Pentateuch," "the Fall," and "indigenous churches"? Of course those exact words are absent from our Bibles (except possibly in added notes or headings). But "Do unto others...", and "Make disciples...", and Genesis-Deuteronomy are there. Also Genesis 3, and self-governing/self-supporting congregations. And using expressions like "the Fall of man" saves us time and space when we discuss the meaning of Genesis 3. Yet I repeat: non-biblical doctrinal terms must be handled with care.

Well then, what about depravity? "Depraved" simply means "vile, base, corrupt," so that fits right in with what God's Word teaches about human sinfulness. Check Rom.3:10-18 for starters. True, Scripture doesn't use the word "depraved." Instead it uses such expressions as "iniquity," "my sinful nature" (Rom.7:18,NIV), "sin living in me" (Rom.7:17,20), a heart that is "desperately corrupt" or "beyond cure" (Jer.17:9, RSV/NIV). So far, so good. I'll admit that with all those terms which the Bible does use, we don't really need to add "depraved" to the list. But since it's in fairly common usage, it's no great problem to do so.

But is human nature "totally depraved"? Well, again, it depends on how you define the expression. James Packer gives a helpful explanation. It means, he writes, "not that at every point man is as bad as he could be, but that at no point is he as good as he should be." (Run that through your mind another time or two. Chew on it. I added the emphasis.)

His statement seems to agree with Paul's description of the unconverted in several passages. Take Eph.4:17-19, for instance. He says their thinking is futile, their understanding is darkened, and they are ignorant--because they have hardened their hearts (wills). They also are insensitive (calloused--in feelings), and have willfully given themselves over to sensuality--indulging in every kind of impurity. Therefore they are separated from the life of God. What a thorough analysis of the components and results of sin! He mentions its various dimensions--intellectual (3 statements), volitional (2), emotional (1-2), moral, and spiritual. Man's original likeness to God (Gen.1:26,27) is now distorted in every aspect of our personality and relationships. That does sound like total depravity. "Not that at every point man is as bad as he could be, but that at no point is he as good as he should be."

Of course, all people are not equally SINFUL, but all are equally SINNERS. And even the better sinners, good and moral sinners--generous, helpful, brave, even heroic--have all areas of their lives marred by sin, at least to some extent. Like drops of ink in a

glass of water, which diffuse and dye the whole glassful, so sin affects people. Some folks may have only a few drops of ink (and you can barely discern their fallen condition because of their pleasant personalities). Others have a whole bottle of ink poured in! But all are stained, fallen, guilty. E. F. Kevan wrote,

True, there are many fine people who make no profession of religion at all. Nevertheless...an unregenerate man is destitute of that love to God which constitutes the very essence of true holiness. Instead of this he is possessed by an aversion to God which, though sometimes inactive within him, occasionally bursts forth into active enmity as soon as God's will comes into conflict with his own.

That quotation seems to be supported by Rom.8:5-8. The apostle says that when people set their minds on the sinful nature rather than on God's Spirit, the result is death. "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh [that is, not born again] cannot please God." They may be nice, but they are "nicely" either neglecting or rejecting the claims and rights of their creator! Whether passively or actively, they are rebels, know it or not.

(Note in passing that we've referred to six or more Scriptures in analyzing this nonscriptural term.)

Alexander Campbell's View

I've read several times that Alexander Campbell strongly denied the idea of total depravity. Well, he did and he didn't. Let's examine his beliefs.

He believed it. Here are quotations from his book, The Christian System, chapter VII, entitled "Man as He Is." [I'm giving numerous condensed extracts, but omitting ellipses (...) to save space.]

Adam rebelled. The crown fell from his head. The glory of the Lord departed from him. The stream of humanity, contaminated at its fountain, cannot in this world ever rise of itself to its primitive purity. We all inherit a frail constitution physically, intellectually, but especially morally. We have all inherited our father's constitution; for Adam, we are told, after he fell, "begat a son in his own image."

There is, therefore, a sin of our nature as well as personal transgression. Our nature was corrupted by the fall of Adam before it was transmitted to us; [the result is our] proneness to do evil, so universally apparent in all human beings. [This is proved by the fact] that the special characteristic vices of parents appear in their children as much as the color of their skin, their hair, or the contour of their faces.

Still, man, with all his hereditary imbecility, is not under an invincible necessity to sin. Greatly prone to evil, easily seduced into transgression, he may or may not yield to passion and seduction. Hence the differences we so often discover in the corruption and depravity of man. All inherit a *fallen*, consequently a *sinful* nature, though all are not equally depraved. Thus we find the degrees of sinfulness and depravity are very different in different persons.

Until man in his present state believes the gospel report of his sins, and submits to Jesus Christ as the only Mediator and Saviour of sinners, it is impossible for him to do any thing absolutely pleasing or acceptable to God. [Yet, though we certainly are] condemned to natural death, and greatly fallen and depraved in our whole moral constitution, [due to] the sin of Adam, still, because of the second Adam, none are punished with everlasting destruction but those who actually and voluntarily sin: for this is the "condemnation of the world, that light has come into the world, and men *choose darkness* rather than the light." [A.C.'s emphasis]

Did you notice what he wrote? "Contaminated...corrupted...greatly prone to evil...depraved in our whole moral constitution." Clearly, Campbell believed that sinners are depraved through and through. But what he did NOT believe were some inferences or deductions which various theologians drew from the fact of man's sinfulness. More on that next month.

NEWS and NOTES

Continued from Inside Front Cover

Acadian Bible Institute - will begin on September 3rd with classes at the Ave. "E" congregation. Write or call Ave. E Church of Christ for details: 1001 North Ave. E. St., Crowley, LA 70526 (318) 824-3207.

Louisville Bible College (Kentuckiana Consortium of Restoration Colleges) now offers a Master of Sacred Literature in Preaching degree. This is to encourage ministers who desire to further their education in the area of preaching; professionals who want to enter "full-time" and/or "vocational" ministry. For details on

these two-day modules contact Dr. Tom Mobley (P.O. Box 91046, Louisville, Ky. 40291) or call (502) 231-LBC1.

Good News from the Philippines

Dave Moldez, president of Central Bible College in Manila, reports an increase in attendance for the new semester that began in June. 76 students registered. 42 are returning students, 34 are new. There are 42 men and 34 ladies, representing over 20 congregations in

Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

From Dallas to Solomon

Solomon Islands, that is. In mid-July James and Karen Ashley made a 3 week trip back to Sa'a Island, where they were missionaries for years with Wycliffe Bible Translators. For the past two years James has been administrative assistant at WBT's worldwide headquarters in Dallas--an important, difficult job. But his heart is still set on the NT translation project he was engaged in before. Pray for the Ashleys.

W&Ws available: 45 Years Worth!

An elderly relative of Bill and Lona Spurlock gave them a box full of W&W magazines from 1953 to the present. They are offering them free (but you should pay the postage!) to anyone who asks. Their address is: 1242 Saturn Springs Dr., Garland, TX 75041 (972) 278-2320.

Tapes Available

...of this year's Kentucky-Indiana Christian Fellowship by contacting: Don Stump, 1720 Plum Creek Rd., Taylorsville, Ky 40071. Cost: Audio tapes -- \$2.00 per session or \$35 for entire program.

More to Come at Woodland

Senior Citizen's Week begins Sunday, Sept. 13-18. Registration forms are available through any participating churches.

Buechel Church of Christ

(Bud Ridgeway, Minister) is hosting a Men's Leadership Conference for Sept. 12th from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm. This is for all men, young and old (ages 15-100). The church is located at 2105 Buechel Bank Rd., Louisville, Ky. (502) 499-

0724. Please let them know how many are coming in your group for the lunch to be provided.

Tell City Church of Christ

(David Johnson, Minister) The Men's Fellowship continues on Saturday at 6:00 a.m. for prayer and study. On July 25th a group of men (fathers, husbands and sons) attended Promise Keepers in Indianapolis. Africa is our foreign missions emphasis this month. We are in the midst of raising \$700.00 for Bibles to Zimbabwe.

Cramer's Bus Ministry

Attendance usually goes down during the summer but not the enthusiasm for our bus ministry. The Lord continues to bless with between 15-20 riders each week. Added to those are several "walkers" from the neighborhood. We offer Bible classes; occasional craft projects; and refreshments. Our focus is on the Lord Jesus Christ and we seek to present Him as the Lord of our lives. Two of our intermediate girl campers accepted the Lord and were baptized at Woodland this year. We have seen a revival of interest among our young adults. They are using the material "Experiencing God" in Sunday School and are planning a church-family retreat at Antioch in October.

Sowing The Seed

Sowing the Seed radio broadcast with David Tapp can be heard throughout Central Kentucky every Sunday morning at 8:00 over WCGW (770AM).

Maple Manor Christian Home, Adult Division . . .

held a ground breaking ceremony on Saturday, August 8, 1998. All paperwork necessary to the beginning of our long awaited 18 bed

addition was signed Friday, August 7, 1998. (Ray Naugle, Administrator)

Babers' New Address

Glenn and Opal Baber celebrated their (#49?) wedding anniversary on August 6. Brother Baber is in poor health. Their address is: 108 Bayne St., West Monroe, La. 71291-9101.

Christians Scholar Conference '98

This is an annual conference which is held at various universities of Churches of Christ. It rotates from school to school, being held this year at Pepperdine. Attendance is not large, but most of those who attend are influential thinkers, teachers and writers in various wings of the Stone-Campbell movement.

One sub-theme this year was R.H. Boll. Six papers were presented on various subjects of his life and thought. Paul Clark wrote on Boll's views and practices related to education. (Paul could not attend, but I was asked to read his paper for him. Keep praying for his health; he is still housebound.) My paper was on Boll as writer & editor. Look for it in series form, starting in the Nov. W&W. His early life, conversion & enrollment at Nashville Bible School were covered by Hans Rollmann. Others spoke about his views on pacifism, and on fundamentalism, and on the grace of God.

Attitudes toward Bro. Boll were almost entirely respectful, and usually appreciative. The "war" against him and his followers in the early 20th century is now deplored, and his insights valued--especially on grace.

One man raised this intriguing question: How different would the Churches of Christ in general have become if Boll had not been kicked off the staff of the Gospel Advocate in 1915. Perhaps later he, not Foy Wallace, would have become it's editor! God's grace and Christian love, not legalism and a fighting spirit, would have been stressed during the following decades in the churches' most influential magazine. Oh, if only. . . AVW

An Apology

The editor (AVW) apologizes for running so many of his own articles during the past several issues. It was not preplanned. But the series on Israel came up suddenly due to modern Israel's 50th anniversary. And the present series on theology was timed to accompany the current articles in "What the Bible Teaches".

SOS in Africa

Pray especially for CANDY GARRETT in Senegal. She fell and either severely sprained or broke her right arm. She's right-handed, but worse than that--she has an infant whom she's still nursing. Imagine picking up and nursing a baby when you have a broken arm. Pray also for special needs among the Zimbabwe churches. Epworth church's building program continues; unrest continues among many of the unemployed people in the land...it exists in some churches, too. Pray for holiness, love, unity, peace and protection.

JUST OFF THE PRESS! *A great gift for your church friends*

R.H. BOLL

CONTROVERSY and ACCOMPLISHMENT
by **TOM BRADSHAW**

Few people were neutral about R. H. Boll. Many people thought he was a false teacher and an evil divider of the church. Some even called him and his followers "wolves in sheep's clothing." Yet others hailed him as a great man of God and a superlative preacher and teacher of the Bible.

Which was he, and why did opinions about him differ so extremely?

Why and how did he make such a tremendous impact on our circle of churches? And why, more than 40 years after his death, is he receiving lots of fresh attention and study?

This new book is adapted from Tom Bradshaw's Master's thesis at Emmanuel School of Religion. It describes Brother Boll's life, ministries and impact. It explains his unsought controversies, and his many accomplishments. A large proportion of the book is made up of his own teachings--quotations from his writings.

Chapter 1: Boll's Early Life and Ministry

Chapter 2: 1915 -- a Year of Controversy

Chapter 3: Opportunity and Problems

Chapter 4: What Boll Believed

Chapter 5: More of His Teachings

Chapter 6: A Brotherhood Emerges

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