

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

JANUARY, 2002

BELIEVE
STUDY
INTERPRET
TEACH

Present Tense

It was *spring*,
But it was summer I wanted--
The warm days and the great outdoors.

It was *summer*,
But it was fall I wanted--
The colorful leaves and the cool, dry air.

It was *fall*,
But it was winter I wanted--
The beautiful snow and the joy of
the holiday season.

It was *winter*,
But it was spring I wanted--
The warmth and the blossoming of nature.

I was a *child*,
But it was adulthood I wanted--
The freedom and the respect.

I was *twenty*,
But it was thirty I wanted--
To be mature and sophisticated.

I was *middle-aged*,
But it was twenty I wanted--
The youth and the free spirit.

I was *retired*,
But it was middle age I wanted--
The presence of mind without limitations.

My life was over--
But I *never* got what I wanted!

--By Jason Lehman,
written when he was 14

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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Believe, Study, Interpret, Teach

Alex V. Wilson

The theme of our preceding issue was *Teach the Bible -- It's God's Word*. We continue and amplify those ideas this month. We have good reasons to believe that the Bible is what it claims to be, the word of the Living God. See the intriguing article about how some diaries of Adolf Hitler were proved to be fake just a few weeks after they were published. In contrast, the Bible continues to stand firm despite all the attacks of its opponents through the centuries.

We need to study this holy Book from God. To gain insight into the Old Testament, read Charmé Robarts' article. Notice how the author combines thorough study of the history of Isaiah's time with vivid imagining of how and why he felt as he did.

To gain insight into the New Testament, dig into "One Gospel in Four" to see similarities and differences -- and ponder why we have four gospels anyway?

Last month there were articles on how to teach the Scriptures effectively, to adults and also children in general. Now we have articles that zero in on teaching either *pre-schoolers* or *teens*. And you'll also find some help in *hermeneutics*, which means how to interpret the Bible.

In all of this, let us remember the scolding our Lord Jesus gave to certain Bible students in His day -- and be sure we never need a similar reprimand: "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by *them* you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about *me*, yet you refuse to come to *me* to have life" (John 5:39-40; emphasis added).

THE BLESSINGS OF MEDITATION

Campbell McAlpine

"What is the secret of your success?" is the question which is often asked of those who have prospered. The answer normally gives some vital principles which have been applied and certain keys which have been used. It is both interesting and instructive to discover the reasons why men and women have been spiritually prosperous, and left an imprint for the kingdom of God, in glorifying him and blessing others. One of the essential ingredients for such prosperity is meditation on the Word of God. Let us look at some of these, so that we may be encouraged to be meditators.

David

It is most interesting how the wonderful book of Psalms begins. In the very first chapter we are given one of the main reasons why David had such a capacity for God, skill in worship, depth of knowledge of God--he had learned to meditate. He did not have much of the written Word; he never went to a Bible or theological college; but he did meditate on the Word he had, and meditated on God and the works of God. Meditation to David was not merely a duty or formality; it was the very joy of his heart, causing him to cry "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Ps.119:97). Meditation gave him an ever-increasing knowledge of God, and love for God, and he is described as "the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel" ..."David, who found favour before God" ..."a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will" ..."thy servant David, " etc. (2 Sam. 23:1; Acts 7:46; 13:22; 4:25). He was a successful shepherd, soldier, song writer and sovereign, and was living evidence of what he wrote in Psalm 1 of the meditator, "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Joshua

Joshua was given the great responsibility of leading the children of Israel into the promised land. He had taken on this monumental task of leadership from Moses, the man of God. Before him was a country occupied by enemies, walled cities and even giants. Such a task was going to require courage, wisdom and skill. At the very commencement of his leadership, God spoke to him, and placed, as it were, in his hands one of the vital keys for his life, to enable him to lead the people in victory. It was meditation. God said:

...be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (Josh. 1:7-8).

He did obey God, and he did have good success, and led the people to victory.

The testimony of George Muller

In the early 1830s George Muller, challenged by the faithlessness of so many of his contemporaries, longed to have something to point to, in his words, "as visible proof" that God our Father is the same faithful God as ever He was; as willing as ever to prove himself to be the living God, faithful to all who would trust him and live according to his divine principles. God gave him the desire of his heart by leading him to initiate a project for the housing and care of orphans in the city of Bristol, England. George Muller looked to God for every provision, not looking to man, but to God, and the history of the George Muller homes is a vibrant testimony to the faithfulness of God. His life, ministry and work was an inspiration and blessing to thousands.

He testified to the great value of biblical meditation in his own life by a written testimony entitled *Soul Food*, in which he states:

It has pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, the benefit of which I have not lost for fourteen years. I saw more clearly than ever that the first business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, but how my inner man might be nourished. I might seek truth to set it before the unconverted, I might seek to benefit believers, I might seek to relieve the distressed, and I might in other ways seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world, and yet, not being happy in the Lord, and not being strengthened in the inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in the right spirit.

Before this time my practice had been to give myself to prayer after having dressed in the morning. Now I saw the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God, and to meditate on it, thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, instructed, and that thus, by means of the Word of God, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord.

I began therefore to meditate on the New Testament from the beginning, early in the morning. The first thing I did after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon his Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word, searching, as it were, every verse to get a blessing out of it . . . not for the sake of public ministry, not preaching, but for obtaining food for my soul.

The result I found to be invariably this. After a few minutes my soul had been led to confession, or thanksgiving, or intercession, or supplication yet it turned almost immediately to prayer. When thus I have been for a while mak-

ing confession, or intercession, or supplication or having given thanks, I go to the next words of the verse, turning all as I go into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it, but still continually keeping before me that food for my own soul is the object of my meditation.

The difference, then, between my present practice and my former is this. Formerly, when I arose, I began to pray as soon as possible, and generally spent all my time till breakfast in prayer, or almost all the time. At all events I almost invariably began with prayer, except when I felt my soul to be more than usually barren, in which case I would read the Word. But what was the result? I often spent a quarter of an hour, or half an hour, or even an hour on my knees before having been conscious to myself of having derived comfort, encouragement, humbling of the soul, etc., and often after having suffered much from wandering thoughts, for up to half an hour, I only then began to really pray.

I scarcely ever suffer in this way, for my heart being brought into experimental fellowship with God, I speak to my Father about the things he has brought to me in his precious Word. It often astonishes me that I did not sooner see this point.

George Muller proved that biblical meditation was a life-changing devotional practice.

A Bible College president

Jim Argue, the president of a continually growing Bible College, writes:

God has blessed Genesis Discipleship School with continued numerical growth, that has necessitated four new buildings in the first six years of operation.

I believe a major contributing factor is our priority emphasis on a student's life, or state of being, rather than their ministry and much doing. I know of no single emphasis in our curriculum that produces a vibrant, vertical love relationship with God more than Biblical meditation.

How fortunate we were that God sent Campbell McAlpine our way to share this truth when the foundation of our school's study programme was being laid.

A housewife

Here are excerpts from a letter from Mrs. Betty Rawlins, of Salem, Oregon, who, after being a Christian for thirty-five years, has had her life revolutionized by the Lord through his Word.

...I was faithful to my church in attendance and Christian works, but inside I felt empty because I knew I did not have an intimate relationship with God. Quite by accident (or so I thought at the time), my husband and I sat under the teaching of Campbell McAlpine on Bible Meditation. The facts he presented, I knew immediately, were the solution to my seeking God, and becoming acquainted with him.

He gave practical steps, and I made a covenant with God concerning meditation on his Word each day.

Today, after years of longing and searching, words just cannot express what is happening in my heart and life as a result of obedience and discipline in spending time daily in meditating in God's Word, and allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal to my heart the very heart of God. Some days I am aware of his greatness and awesomeness; other days I receive promises of his blessings for me and my family. Even this discipline is sweet because I know he loves me and desires an intimate walk with me. Each day I come with eager anticipation to wait on God and the revelation of himself through his Word, and to praise him--some mornings I feel as if I will burst from the fulness of his presence.

For fifteen year I had been oppressed with fears of all kinds--unreasonable, and unfounded--but very real to me. Now my heart has never been so full of praise to God, who knows me so intimately, and speaks to each need of my heart.

A businessman

I recently received a letter from a businessman in San Antonio, Texas. Eddie Eskew is manager of a large chain store. This is what he wrote:

This month is the third anniversary in meditating on the Word of God. I felt I must tell you some of the wonderful things that have happened as results of meditating. After the first month I realised I did not need any medication for my ulcer, or any more tranquilizer pills. Six months after I began meditating, I entered into a very bad business situation. Rather than worrying, I turned it over to the Lord and stayed in his Word. I never lost any sleep or had any negative thoughts. Praise God, I was healed of worry and fear.

Through God's Word, I have been able to have more discipline in my life. My eating, sleeping, and working habits are completely changed. Now I get up at 6 a.m., meditate until 7, then go jogging for three and a half miles before breakfast.

One morning a few weeks ago, as I was jogging, God told me that he had renewed my youth. I feel better physically and spiritually than I have in twenty-five years.

I have also learned how to meditate night and day. The last thing I do at night is meditate on one or two verses, letting them be my last conscious thought. I go to sleep immediately. When I awake, the Word of God is my first thought. Praise God for your teaching on meditation.

Your testimony

"If you will make meditation part of your life, you, too, will have a testimony, even after a few months.

--From *Message of the Cross*.

BECAUSE HE LOVES US

Why the Bible Is Important for Youth Today

Josh McDowell

C. S. Lewis reported the answer of a schoolboy who was asked what he thought God was like: "The sort of person who is always snooping around to see if anyone is enjoying himself and then trying to stop it."

Whenever the Bible is discussed, that sort of idea goes through many young people's minds. Some kids think God's Law interferes with their freedom and keeps them from having a good time. But the Bible is the greatest Book ever written! It contains the answers to the biggest questions in life: "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" "Where am I going?" "What is life all about?" Often called the Book of Life, the Bible gives significance to all people's lives.

Says the King James Version, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). The Greek word translated "inspired" here is *theopneustos*. It literally means God-breathed. The source of Scripture is God; in the Bible God has spoken His authentic Word.

Here are some significant facts that substantiate the Bible's reliability.

1. **Unity.** The Bible contains 66 books written over a period of 1,500 years by 40 different authors from different educational backgrounds. These books were written in different languages on different continents concerning hundreds of controversial subjects, yet the Bible remains unified--it's one story unfolding from beginning to end.

2. **Historical accuracy.** Although its different parts were composed over a period which ended almost 2,000 years ago, the Bible demonstrates itself to be historically accurate concerning the people, places and events it records.

3. **Indestructibility.** The Bible has survived intact throughout history, despite all criticisms and persecutions.

4. **Scientific accuracy.** Many other ancient works contain fanciful, unfactual ideas about the nature of the universe. In contrast, when dealing with areas pertaining to science, the Bible is accurate and restrained.

5. **Predictive prophecy.** Contained within the pages of Scripture are hundreds of fulfilled prophecies. No other book, ancient or modern, can claim anything like it.

6. **Christ-centeredness.** From beginning to end, Jesus Christ is the theme of the Bible.

7. **Intellectual integrity.** Men and women today can still study the Bible in detail and believe wholeheartedly in its message without assassinating their brains.

8. **Life-transforming power.** For 2,000 years, the message of the Bible has transformed lives like no other. And, it is still doing that today.

Limits of Love

The claims of a book with such remarkable credentials deserve serious consideration, especially by young people. The realization that God has our good in mind in setting down laws will give teenagers a whole new perspective on getting to know the God we serve. God doesn't issue commands to cramp their life-styles and limit their liberty. Instead, His laws define the limits in which their liberty can be fully expressed.

Moses articulates God's motivation for giving Israel the Law: for our good. "And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees *that I am giving you today for your own good?*" (Deuteronomy 10:12,13).

I live in southern California. Driving on the freeways there is the experience of a lifetime. The lanes define the way the traffic moves--when you must stop, how you may turn, how fast you may travel. All those regulations are for my own good, to insure my safety. Even with the traffic laws, there are times I have to literally drive for my life! Without those laws, safe driving would be impossible. I don't chafe under the law that says I must drive on the right-hand side of the road. That regulation defines a pattern for safe driving .

We need to help young people understand God's law in the same way. Kids need to see that God knows best and that He knows just what they need for happy, fulfilled living. Then they can obey God's commands, knowing that His Law expresses His best for them, not out of the fear of getting zapped if they don't. We are created to function best within the context of God's laws. If we disregard God's laws on sin, we may crash--and suffer the consequences. When God issues a

negative command there are always two positive motives behind it: to protect and to provide for His children.

God desires to protect us from the harm of our ill-informed choices. He gives us His Law so that we won't try to meet our own needs and miserably fail. He loves us so much that He wants to protect us from the pain that will surely result from pursuing our own choices. Sin always brings destruction--spiritually, mentally and physically. God gives His Law, then, to guide us away from those choices that would bring us pain. His Word helps us identify many wrong choices that might otherwise look harmless.

Also, if God is love (I John 4: 16), and if we are His dear children, the Law defines how a loving God has chosen to provide for us. When God says, "Don't," we know He has other, even better, provisions to give us if we will obey Him. The Psalm writer claims, "No good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless" (Psalm 84:11). God wants to meet our young people's needs. He is able to do anything. If He withholds something from them by issuing a command against it, kids can rest assured it is because He has something better in store for them.

Isn't it exciting to realize that God's motivation in prohibiting certain things is to protect us from destructive influences that we could never foresee? In essence, God is saying, "Josh, wait! Because I love you so much, I'm going to protect you from things that would keep you from living an abundant life." When people understand this concept, their outlook on God's law changes. Young people can begin to see a God of love who uses His law to enable them to achieve fulfillment and joy in life. No longer do they have to chafe under what they think are restrictions that inhibit their liberty; His guidelines for life are designed to maximize their happiness.

The Choices We Have

We always have two choices: trust God that He is able and willing to meet our needs, or selfishly attempt to fulfill our own needs. Choosing between the two may seem easy at first. But Satan is deceitful. One of his favorite strategies is to disguise wrong choices as good ones. He obviously doesn't want teenagers to see how sin will bring grief and sorrow into their lives. So Satan distracts their attention from the evil consequences of sin and represents the sinful choice as appealing, irresistible and even necessary.

Whenever Satan tempts kids to cross the line of God's moral boundaries with a promise to fulfill a need they feel they have, it's a lie. Anything Satan provides is an illusion, a mirage of the reality there is in Christ. Only Christ is truly able to meet our needs.

Help for Survival

As teenagers are bombarded with pressure from their friends to "fit in," their definitions of acceptance become based on actions that will gain popularity for them. And who doesn't want to be liked? We all want to be accepted. But where does the importance of acceptance lie? Here are two biblically based things I would like to say to all teenagers today:

1. Don't try to gain acceptance by performance--it's futile. Your acceptance does not depend upon what you can do. Your acceptance does not depend on what people think. Your acceptance does depend upon what God thinks.

2. If your faith is in Jesus Christ, there is nothing more you can do to be accepted. It's already done. You can't add to it or detract from it. You can drive the nicest car, wear the nicest clothes, date the nicest people and do the nicest things, but none of these will make you more or less acceptable. Your acceptance is complete in Christ. Accept your acceptance.

Accepting this acceptance in Christ--to the point of feeling accepted even when rejected by others--comes through a maturing process over a period of time. Encourage your young people to look at life from God's perspective and not man's. They must inform their minds and emotions about what is true according to God's Word: that they are accepted and loved by God, the Creator of the universe. And how can kids do this without studying God's Word and applying it to their lives?

The Bible is the healthiest guide to right living that we have. What an outrageous fallacy it is when young people assume that the Bible is no longer relevant to their lives! Without God's Word of guidance, they have no hope for survival.

--Article supplied by *David C. Cook Publishing Co.*

Josh McDowell is a popular speaker and author with a special concern for young people. His many books include *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Campus Crusade) and *The Secret of Loving* (Campus Crusade).

Guiding the Preschool Child

Mary E. Lebar

It is common knowledge in educational and psychological fields that the formative years, the most impressionable years of one's life, are preschool years when the child's basic pattern is formed and attitudes are shaped that affect the rest of his life.

DETERMINING YEARS

Testimonies are easily gathered from sources concerned with mental health, juvenile delinquency, and divorce--the social problems of our day--as to the root importance of the first years of life in such areas. For example, according to *Parents' Magazine*, "Modern psychologists and psychiatrists are convinced that the chances for healthy mental development are largely determined during the first six years of a child's life." In a magazine put out by Roosevelt College, "It is a well-established fact that the seeds of insanity are sown from the ages of one to six." International Journal of Religious Education asserts: "By the time a child is five or six, his emotional pattern and his habit structure are fixed. Of course, variations in development can be expected in one direction or the other, but in general the pattern has become permanently set. Preventative treatment is better than remedial medicine."

Says *Parent's Magazine*, "Still another recurring stereotype. ...is that juvenile delinquency mysteriously blossoms out among teenagers. The truth is: It begins very early! Citing a study of 500 delinquents, nearly half were noticeably delinquent before they were eight years old." Judge Joe Glasser makes this observation: "It is important for parents to concentrate upon the family environment. This is especially true during the first six years while basic behavior patterns are being established. I am firmly convinced that almost 95 per cent of the juvenile delinquents are such because of environmental factors and improper parental guidance during the critical age above set forth." Dr. C. W. Hall, Professor of Bible at University of Texas said: "A study of the home backgrounds of 300 happily married individuals and of 300 divorced individuals reveals the fact that the atmosphere of the home during the early impressionable years of a child's life determine his later success or failure in marriage. In other words, a successful or unsuccessful marriage is usually made in childhood." And *Time Magazine*, reporting a gathering of leaders from industry at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, said that some of the businessmen "boggled over the immense importance attached by experts to the preschool years in character formation." Dr. Roy Burkhart of Columbus, Ohio,

declared he was more concerned with what went on in the nursery of his church than what went on in the pulpit.

How much weight does the average church attach to such knowledge? If most church members come through the Sunday School, as is widely stated, church leadership ought to be concerned with the basic training that future church members are receiving. Can we say that the best teachers are being chosen to teach the two through five year olds? Is there insistence that teachers be trained for such specialized work? Or is just any willing individual being urged to perform a baby-sitting service? Perhaps some zealous soul is seating little children in rows and preaching to them diligently each week to "give their hearts to the Lord."

Misled Children

Look briefly at the kind of training that goes on in the average church. Take the matter of prayer, for instance. Here is a concrete situation: Mrs. S. tells her group of two and three year olds, "Now we're going to pray. Close your eyes. Bow your heads." She stands before them, closes her eyes, and proceeds to pray. She prays for the pastor and the missionaries, the young men in service, the events of the coming week, and for the whole Sunday School. This is a good prayer to utter when she is home alone, but with two and three year olds, it is not, for none of them are praying. As the teacher continues, they open their eyes and begin enjoying their moments of "freedom." Some even get up and walk around till an assistant corrals them, while others play with any object at hand or with each other.

Unfortunately the situation is not one of "no learning." Children are constantly learning. They are learning that prayer is meaningless, long, tiresome--something to avoid when possible. They are forming attitudes that will militate against their being in prayer meeting when they grow up. Such attitudes may be changed, of course, but they are always harder to break once they are established, and many never are changed.

As to the reading of God's Word, we may ask what attitudes are engendered in young children toward learning Bible verses and having the Bible taught to them? Do teachers "assign" verses for parents to teach at home? And how do parents "teach" verses? Are children understanding what each verse means, or are they being told to repeat words, the truth of which they will need years later? We would hardly teach algebra to first graders on the grounds that it will be so useful when they get to high school! God's own laws of learning and remembering are against the system so widely used in churches to justify some of the material given to small children.

Nonetheless, the child still learns something about Scripture. It is meaningless, it is a chore, verses are something to be said for adult approval, a star, or a prize. The Bible has no relevance to life, and so he forms a habit of sitting and outwardly "listening" to get adult approval with his mind turned off. He repeats glibly, "Let us love one another," and forthwith proceeds to hit the child next to him. The teacher scolds him but makes no connection between the Bible verse and the deed; neither, of course, does the child. Pastors grieve over the unchanged lives of adults who sit Sunday after Sunday through biblical sermons. But early in life the people learned to let pious truth and daily living run in parallel courses.

Right Guidance

Children are so pliable, easily led, open to suggestion, and ready to love what we make lovable to them. Good training is available, not only in secular schools and Bible schools which give educational insights even by correspondence, but in easily available books. Curricula for nursery and beginner departments have methodology and helps for the untrained teacher in recognition of the usual local church situation. Bible materials suitable for the young child and ways of teaching to make truth vital and relevant to his life may be obtained from evangelical publishers. Would that churches insisted that teachers follow such material. Within the lessons, verses and Bible stories are carefully selected, carefully used, and repeated to make them a part of the child's thinking and living. Short verses are repeatedly used in conversation, rather than formally taught in parrot-like repetition. Activities are so geared into Bible teaching that the child, from his first years in the nursery department, learns he is responsible to live what he knows. Real teaching involves helping the child to understand the truth and to put it into action.

In regard to giving, it is certain that good habits of bringing money to church will begin long before the child has much appreciation for the value of money. The time when he does come into such appreciation varies from child to child, depending upon his experiences. His offering should be called "money," not "pennies," and should be brought for the valid motive of love for the Lord.

It is not "to give to Jesus," but "to help in Jesus' work." "Giving to Jesus" is taken too literally by the nursery child to render it a clear expression for him. That is, he is likely to identify the Sunday School secretary who collects offering envelopes as "Jesus," as some little children have done. The generalization, "Jesus' work," may be defined, even in the nursery, as buying pictures and chairs, or paying for the lights and the heat.

Prayer also may be real and a delight for children two and three years old. One idea is enough for one prayer, which must be offered when the child is prepared and feels thankful or ready to confide in the Lord something of interest to Him. Expression must be short and pointed. Posture is perhaps the least important thing, although even a small child can feel the helpfulness of closing his eyes so he does not see other children while he talks to God.

Training For Tomorrow

Were pastors and church leaders to look into the preschool departments of their own churches and see how few of them operate with understanding and skill, they would begin to show concern for the foundational training that is being given. Children will continue to grow up with habits that defeat what the pastor is trying to accomplish. And pastors will continue to grieve over the hardness of the human heart. Adults will act as they have been trained to act, for the laws of human development are God's laws.

Seeing God, Seeing Me

Charne Robarts

Jerusalem, 8th Century BCE

“My son, do not fix your eyes only on what you see. A man's vision is not clear unless he sees the Lord God. You must see him, and you must see as he sees.”

Though I was accustomed to my father's warnings, his words confused me. These days the voices all around Jerusalem were mirthful. Life was good. We held the Philistines at bay, and the crops were bountiful. Even Egypt envied our prosperity. Why was my father always so serious?

Uzziah had been king for decades. In the minds of the young, his reign rivaled the reign of King David himself. The Lord was with Uzziah; surely we could all see that. The domestic improvements alone spoke the truth. Ornate towers now stood at the Valley Gate and the Corner Gate. At the angle of the great city wall stood another finely crafted tower, this one with beautiful carvings of grapes and pomegranates. Uzziah had even built towers out in the desert, and all around there were new cisterns -water in the desert--surely a sign that God was with us.

The king's army was the finest among the nations. Our teachers told us of times when the Philistines owned all the weaponry, when no one in Israel could even sharpen his own plow. All the smiths had been in Philistia. But now we laughed at those stories. Every Judean

soldier had shields and spears and even helmets and coats of armor. Uzziah had seen to that. He had also made great war machines which could fling large stones and burning arrows. Enemies no longer laughed at the Judean army. Even the bloodthirsty Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah. Still, my father spoke his words of warning.

My father was Amoz the songwriter, a musician in the king's court. His compositions were soothing to the ear. However, his real gift was in the crafting of words. No melody was more beautiful than the message of his songs. He wrote of hope in the midst of hopelessness, flowers in the wasteland, and of the Holy One who brought such things about. But even though his songs gave him special favor in the royal house and though family and friends lauded his talents, Father always seemed a bit morose for he feared that no one really heard his message.

Growing up in these prosperous times had been a delight for a young boy. My school friends and I hurried through our morning lessons and our early afternoon chores so that we could spend the rest of the day roaming the streets, playing boyhood games and hoping for a glimpse at the lovely neighborhood girls, who carried water pitchers to and from their houses. There was little to worry about.

But as I dallied in the streets of Jerusalem, my father's teachings often haunted me. Friends teased me for my concern for the beggars at our gates. "Isaiah, your father's complaining about injustice to the poor is getting to you. Let the priests worry about the beggars. Lighten up now, or your beard will be as gray as Amoz's before you even grow one!" For a moment I pondered their words about the responsibility of the priests and thought of my father's devotion to providing for the poor, but in the carefree manner of youth, I laughed as we went on our way.

We often stopped by Eliab's father's produce business. Acaliah was a wealthy man who enjoyed the profits of Uzziah's emphasis on agriculture. The fields were full of farmers, and Acaliah's pockets were full of their money. I had learned that my father's suspicions about Acaliah's integrity were well founded. Once I had seen him tip the scales in his own favor as he measured a poor farmer's grain. The farmer was uneducated and didn't seem to notice that he had been paid much less than the agreed-upon price. When Acaliah caught me staring at him through the lattice dividing the weighing room from the rest of the store, his black eyes flashed a warning. His usually smooth tongue stammered something about the poor quality of the grain he had just received, implying that he had done the man a favor to pay him at all. Acaliah turned his back on me and counted his money. He placed it in a small box that had a figure of Baal on top of it. Eliab said

the idol meant nothing to his father. "He just likes to feel like all the holes are plugged." I knew what my father thought about this.

The years passed, and Jerusalem continued to prosper. As I passed from boyhood to manhood, I felt more and more confused by the tension between what my father said and what my eyes could see. The vats brimmed with wine, and women of the city wore the finest dresses this side of the Nile. Yes, there were poor people, but what could I do about them? The idols I had seen from time to time concerned me, but I always felt that my father was unrealistic to expect that people wouldn't be a little superstitious about the gods of the Amorites. Besides, the Lord God was with us, and Uzziah's successful reign was witness to the fact. Uzziah's reign had been almost flawless. Once there had been rumors about his contracting leprosy, and some had even said that he had profaned the temple in some way. But the royal court recorder had issued a proclamation which had quieted the rumors. The good king was sick, and his son Jotham would manage the affairs of state until the king was well. No one needed to worry about anything at all. As we stood in the street that day talking about the proclamation, Amoz, my father, stroked his gray beard and stared at the horizon looking like he knew more than he was willing to say.

My father dressed in his mourning robes as he had done for the past several days. After 52 years on the throne, King Uzziah was dead. Amoz and the other musicians would again lead the procession of mourners and sing the songs of lament. This day Jerusalem would bury her king. The funeral procession took a detour en route to the burial ground to a field nearby which was owned by the kings. Uzziah would sleep near his fathers, but not with them, for he died a leper. Father feared for the priests who had revealed the truth of the king's condition. The Lord had struck Uzziah some years ago when he tried to burn incense in the temple, a privilege reserved for the consecrated priests of Aaron. Many of the priests had been courageous enough to stand against Uzziah's sacrilege, but it had not gone well for them. Father said that for every God-fearing priest there were two whose faithfulness wouldn't fill a libation cup. "Judah is full of thieves and murderers" he said, "and the priests love bribes more than righteousness." Trying to deter my father from another sermon, I asked about Uzziah's achievements.

"Father, isn't it true that Uzziah's successes were from the hand of the Lord? Don't we enjoy more wealth than ever and aren't our borders safer than they have been in years? Surely God is with his people!"

"Yes, my son, God has given the king and all of us these good things, but how have we responded? Uzziah grew proud. I saw with my own eyes his change in demeanor. Many of our people respond to God's goodness with greed and idolatry. The Lord's patience may grow thin. We must humble ourselves."

He picked up his lyre and went to join the funeral procession. I followed him, taking my place among the mourners.

Several weeks of ritual mourning followed the funeral of the king. I made frequent visits to the temple during that time. Though I had grown up in its shadow, the magnificence of the structure always awed me. Two bronze pillars outside the temple porch stood strong and sturdy, gleaming in the morning sun, almost boasting of the glory that was ours. The splendor of the bronze sea and the statues of the bulls it rested on was like nothing else in Jerusalem. The gold and silver on the walls and beams and the intricate carvings of cherubim and pomegranates were truly a feast for the eyes.

The priests went about their regular business of morning prayers and daily sacrifices. A few worshipers milled about in the courtyard, and I, still gazing at the beauty of the furnishings, wandered slowly into the outer temple court near the altar of burnt offering. This massive bronze structure about fifteen feet high and seven and a half feet wide symbolized for me the strength and stability of Judah.

Suddenly I felt the floor begin to shake. Without warning, smoke filled the room, and there was a deafening noise, louder than I thought I could bear. I struggled to keep my balance and to shield my ears from the roaring, relentless sound. I fought to see through the smoke, anxious to find my way out, yet helpless to know which direction to turn. A stifling, controlling presence filled the place. I could scarcely move, yet I continued to feel as if I would lose my balance at any moment. Where the other worshipers were, I had no idea. The noise grew louder and louder, but I was at last able to distinguish the sound: voices chanting over and over,

Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty.

The whole earth is full of his glory.

The smoke never subsided, but somehow I was able to see the creatures as they repeated their chant. These frightening creatures, winged seraphs, flew around and around, high and low, commanding the air that I was trying to breathe. As suddenly as they had appeared, they suddenly gathered in the rafters of the tall ceiling, hovering without perches, their voices stilled. Their great wings touched each other

so that they formed a circle. Did the circle include me in whatever was going on or did it shut me out? I could not fix my mind on this question or any other, for even though the noise had stopped, I still felt a loss of equilibrium--I think my feet were still on the floor but I lost all sense of up and down. Time seemed to have no meaning.

I had lost all control but suddenly the light of stark realization pierced the darkness of my confusion. But the blessedness of light in darkness was not yet mine. I was stunned by what I saw. The vision forced me to my knees. I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

The image shook me, and I strained to comprehend. I saw just his train, in essence only the lower half of his body. How could he be so large? Where was the rest of his body? Where were the temple furnishings? Dare I even wonder? I now understood Solomon's query so many years before. "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!" Though these questions assaulted my mind, they were forced out by a more terrifying question--how could I live another moment in the presence of such power?

In a flash, all of the sinfulness of my heart was brought to my mind. All of the presumptuous notions I had about myself and our chosen people were forced into my awareness. All the apathy toward his holiness and insensitivity to the heart of his laws which lived in my heart seemed to be written all over me and the Holy One could read every letter. I felt as if my body might burst open for fear or shame or for the mere ugliness of myself. His presence was like a reflecting glass and my own image was despicable. Though I was afraid to even speak, I could not keep silent. So frantic to confess, I found myself screaming, "Woe to me, I am ruined for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King the Lord Almighty."

With this confession barely leaving my lips, one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal from the altar. He touched my lips with the burning coal and pronounced my sins atoned for and my guilt taken away. The dizzying effect of all I had seen about the King and about myself was matched by the incomprehensible forgiveness and healing I was granted. I had seen his glory--and its greatness could only scarcely be described in human words of seraphs and smoke and his great train! My sinfulness was so devastating in the light of his glory that I despised my own life. I knew that I neither had the power nor the desire to approach his holiness, and yet he had let me live! Solomon's confession and my own were the same. When I pondered God's greatness I was forced to admit that he cannot be contained. I now

knew my own smallness and abject poverty before him. And yet he had called to me! This new understanding would guide my life for the rest of my days.

That day the Holy One gave me a fearful work. I must preach to his people a message of destruction. The cities we all love will lie in ruins and the only survivors will be those who are willing to see God as he is and return from their blind pride and deaf arrogance. My countrymen must learn to confess as I had. But none of us can merely speak the right words and hope to survive. Our lives must confess that God reigns--he must be seen in all of our affairs. The scales in our shops, the bracelets on our ankles, the plows in our fields must speak the glory of God. Only the foolish put their trust in chariots and horses and weapons of war or alliances with foreign kings. Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, the Redeemer will come to Zion to those who repent of their sins.

When the vision ebbed away, and as I felt my legs and feet supporting me again, I began my new life. But the newness was not just in beginning the task of preaching. Now I see the foolishness of humanity as we try to make our own way, shaping and reshaping our gods, making rules of the heart that bring sorrow and bloodshed to our streets. I see myself as a woefully inadequate creature halting between good and evil, easily tempted to trust myself for deliverance. My salvation is in seeing myself in this true light, in learning to confess who I am and who he is, and in awaiting his healing.

--From *Wineskins*

One Gospel In Four

Dan Anders

Nothing any of us will ever learn is more important than knowing Jesus Christ. "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). No subject--from anthropology to zoology--is more vital. In Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3).

We must turn again and again to the study of Jesus. He alone is our master, our model, our mentor. He is the wellspring of Christian faith and life.

We begin with the four gospels

When you open your New Testament, you immediately encounter four Gospels telling the story of Jesus. These are the starting point for our knowledge of Christ.

Granted, most scholars think that the Gospels are not our earliest New Testament documents. Some of Paul's letters--Thessalonians, Galatians, Corinthians--were likely written earlier than Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

And it is certainly true that other data stood behind the written Gospels. Luke knew of information that had been "handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (Luke 1:2). He himself had "carefully investigated everything from the beginning" (1:3). Back of the four Gospels lay oral stories and probably some written accounts, now lost to us.

Still in a real sense, the Gospels are our starting point. Paul's letters, earlier though they may be, nevertheless reflect knowledge of gospel material.

Paul knew that "though [Christ] was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor" (2 Cor. 8:9). He had the same basic story of the institution of the Lord's supper (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-25 with the Gospel accounts). He sang a hymn, possibly already in use in Christian worship, of a Lord who "humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!" (Phil. 2:8). It is unlikely that Paul ever read Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, but he clearly knew their stories.

The Gospels are our only source for 98 percent of what we know about Jesus. "Without him I would be nothing," we sometimes sing. And without the Gospels, we would know almost nothing about Jesus. To get to know Christ, we must look at him primarily through the lenses of the four Gospels.

We have four accounts of Christ's life

I repeat: we look at Jesus through the lenses of four Gospels. We do not have one written Gospel, but four. At first, this is surprising. You open your New Testament and read Matthew's twenty-eight chapters about Jesus.

What comes next? Mark's sixteen chapters about Jesus. Surely the story line is ready to change by now. But no! Then come Luke's twenty-four chapters about Jesus, only to be followed by John's twenty-one chapters about Jesus. Why should there be four successive accounts of Jesus' life? Wouldn't one narrative have been adequate?

Well, we don't have that view when learning about any other person's life. A Lincoln scholar will read every biography he can lay his hands on to learn about Lincoln. She would never be satisfied with only one account.

Even seeming clashes between the biographies don't bother us when we deal with historical persons. We see the differing views as a way to get closer to the real character.

So from the very start, Christians have had to handle four canonical Gospels. Early Christian documents, outside the New Testament itself, quote from each Gospel. Our earliest known lists of New Testament books include all four.

Each Gospel has a different perspective on Jesus. Each one looks at him from a slightly different angle, shedding a different shade of light on him. Looking at Jesus through the four Gospels is like looking at the sun through a stained glass window. Only one sun (or Son!) is shining, but we see different hues in the colored glass.

We need the tint of each gospel

At the risk of oversimplification, I suggest that each Gospel shines a different "color" on Jesus.

Matthew

Matthew's color, it seems to me, is royal purple. Notice the peculiar start of Matthew's gospel. His first chapter is dominated by Jesus' family tree. The genealogy begins with Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. Matthew clearly wants to identify Jesus with Israel, its history, and its traditions.

Interwoven with that Jewishness is the thread of royalty. This family tree is "a record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1). David is mentioned four more times in the genealogy (1:6,17).

Why such a dominant mention of David? Obviously Matthew thinks that his name and bloodline is terribly important for the story of Jesus. Any good Jew knows that David was Israel's king par excellence. In 2 Samuel 7:11-29, David had been given the eternal promise that his offspring would reign permanently. (The word "forever" is used eight times in Nathan's oracle and David's prayer!)

Matthew has other lights to shine on Jesus, but we can certainly color his Gospel purple for its royal theme.

Mark

We might color Mark red for its energy and excitement. When you read Mark 1:1-4, several ideas jump out. His brisk beginning is so different from Matthew's leisurely root-tracing. "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God" is Mark's blast-off.

Note that Mark alone uses the word "gospel" in his introduction. We got our idea of calling these books Gospels from Mark's beginning. He wants us to know from the very start that he has a *euangelion*, "good news," to tell. Any Christian reading that line traces it straight to Calvary. The cross is in Mark's story from line one!

Only Mark of the four adds vivid color with that bright title "Son of God." Careful students will notice that some ancient manuscripts omit "Son of God" in Mark's first sentence. But the strongest evidence supports including it. Mark wants us to know at once who this Jesus Christ really is!

If you read the rest of the paragraph, you see the dramatic energy with which Mark plunges into Jesus' life. No genealogy here. No time spent telling birth stories. No interest in Jesus' home town or adolescence. Mark jumps right into Jesus' adult life and ministry. With rocket speed, he propels us into what really mattered for him.

This level of vigorous action is maintained throughout the second Gospel. He uses the exciting adverb *euthus* forty-two times--eleven times in chapter 1! The word is usually translated "immediately" (RSV) or "straightway" (KJV). Mark is red with energetic excitement.

Luke

Luke could be colored tan for his emphasis on the human interest of Jesus. The first four verses of Luke are an elegant, classically Greek preface. In one long sentence--some of the New Testament's most polished Greek--he explains his purpose and his methodology. Luke alone stresses the carefulness of his research.

His Gospel alone is addressed to an individual, a "most excellent Theophilus," perhaps a high Roman official or a distinguished Greek scholar of the time.

Luke is clearly interested, in this brief preface and in the major movements of Luke-Acts, in historical epochs. He sees the importance of salvation history. So he wants to relate an "orderly account" conveying the "certainty of the things" about Jesus.

In Luke's genealogy of Jesus (3:23-27), he alone tells us Jesus' age, "about thirty years old," at the start of his work. And Luke traces the family tree, not from Abraham as Matthew did, but all the way back to Adam, the son of God." He spotlights the distinctive universality of Jesus.

On and on through his Gospel, Luke shines that "tan color" of human interest on Jesus. Luke has a special interest in disadvantaged and

marginalized folks. He knows of a "good Samaritan." He has a unique concern for women. He tells of a Father who cares for two prodigals.

John

Finally, color John gold for deity. His Gospel opens with that incomparable eighteen-verse prologue. It contains some of the New Testament's simplest Greek and some of its most profound theology! A lifetime's study could never exhaust John's opening paragraph.

John unforgettably introduces Jesus as the Word of God. This one flesh-and-blood man who lived so humanly among us is the unique self-disclosure of God. It is interesting that in all his following story, John never again calls Jesus the Word.

But Jesus is the God-revealer on every page of this Gospel. Over and over, we know that we are seeing God when we see Jesus Christ his Son. Truly, "no one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" (1:18).

Another golden tint in John's prologue is the theme of Christ as life giver. "In him was life, and that life was the light of men" (1:4). That hue shines repeatedly throughout the Gospel. More than thirty times John uses the word "life"--seventeen of them with the adjective "eternal."

Here Jesus is the bread of life (6:35), the resurrection and the life (11:25), the way and the truth and the life (14:6). He gives life to the full (10:10). John's whole Gospel is written so that "you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (20:31).

John's color is gold for the deity of Jesus.

Still one Gospel

Each Gospel has its special variegated hues. All four make unique contributions to our understanding of Jesus. And yet all four tell one essential story, one message of life and hope. In Jesus Christ, God acted uniquely to provide forgiveness and goodness for his human children who all have lost their way. The four Gospels give us one gospel. That indeed is good news!

--From *Image* magazine.

Points to Ponder

Illiterate Generation

A Gallup poll reported that Bible knowledge is at a record low:

Most Americans say they believe in the Ten Commandments. But many can't name more than two or three.

Half of those who identify themselves as Christians don't know who preached the Sermon on the Mount.

A surprising number can't express what Easter is about.

Bible illiteracy is a real problem.

Generations before us knew and loved the Bible. Many of our ancestors were so steeped in the Scriptures that they could easily quote dozens of verses from memory . . . verses whose wisdom helped them make crucial decisions. They could tell the great stories of the Bible and apply their lessons to everyday life. Words from the Bible routinely slipped into their conversation and became part of the common knowledge.

Sadly, many people today are unable to benefit from the Bible's treasures. In times of personal difficulty, they may even have a yearning to hear a word from the Scriptures, but don't know where to begin.

* * * *

Beyond Interpretation: Application

"It is not enough to determine what a given passage meant to the original writer and to those who read it in his day. It must be interpreted for our generation and applied to our situation. *What does it mean to us?*

"One of the most comforting passages in all of Scripture, Rom. 8:37-39, has elements in it that are both strange and meaningless to modern ears, rooted as they are to the age in which the words were written:

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“The ancient world feared things that we do not even believe in, much less fear. Who today is worried about principalities or powers or heights or depths? To the ancients these referred to things that haunted their lives: the tyranny of the stars and angels that dominated their lives. In assuring them of protection against ‘height’ and ‘depth’ Paul is telling them that the stars in their rising and setting cannot hurt them or separate them from God’s love. But what does that mean to us? We are to go beyond the original meaning and see in this passage that nuclear weapons, terrorists, old age, Alzheimer’s, AIDS, drugs, cancer, and senility cannot separate us from God’s love.” --Leroy Garrett

VOICES from the FIELDS

James Ashley

Solomon Islands

Dec. 8, ‘01

Elections were held peacefully (as far as we have heard) all across the nation. Thanks for praying. Not all results are in yet, but more than half are. Some good guys got elected, and several of the bad guys were defeated (although not enough).

We are disappointed with Small Malaita. They voted for a leader of the MEF (whom we know). We don’t understand how they could vote for the group responsible for unleashing the wave of criminal activity that has devastated this country far worse than any cyclone could have. Although he is still friendly to us, we confess we don’t understand him. We felt his campaign speech at Sa’a was divisive and prone to breed bad feeling between people right there on Small Malaita. His attitude seems to be that he is the only savior of Small Malaita, and he is dismissive of others and their ideas. Parliament will be meeting on December 17 to elect a new Prime Minister, so please don’t stop praying.

Tom Schreiner

Fri. 30, Nov 2001

Well, it is almost time to leave England. We are currently waiting for the shippers to pick up our excess baggage to ship by sea to Nairobi. (Flights from the US allow 2 bags at 70 lbs each, while the European standard is one bag at 44 lbs.) This afternoon I will go and get my exam results. [He passed.]

God willing we will have full support by the time we reach Nairobi....

We are looking forward to spending time with Sharon’s parents. Please have the church pray for safety as the news reports we have

seen indicate things may get worse the closer we get to elections. (Mugabe is behind in the polls.)

What Lies Ahead? In January we will be in Nairobi for three months of language training and orientation. Half of the time will be spent in the capital and half in the country, and in both places we will be living with a Kenyan family in order to enhance our learning both of their culture and of Swahili, which is the more widely known of their two national languages of English and Swahili.

In April we will head to Kapsowar where Tom will be joining the staff of the mission hospital there. Kapsowar is in the mountains, about one hour from the nearest city, and about an eight hour trip from the capital city of Nairobi.

Prayer Requests: Pray for 1) safe travel and God's keeping. 2) God-given ability to learn the language. 3) the provision of a reliable vehicle. 4) Pray for the safe arrival of our house-hold goods, and that we will not be charged duty for them.

Richard Broaddus

Dec. 5, 2001

[Richard accompanied his parents, Victor and Mae Broaddus, to Manila for the 50th anniversary of their arrival there. Victor and Mae were pioneers and mentors in that field for many years. They now live in Lexington, Ky.]

Greetings from the land of hot muggy winters!!

We arrived safely at Manila airport about 15 minutes ahead of schedule. Several members of the church family here were there to greet us. The days have been quite full since then. Yesterday we visited the new building [used by the Filipino congregation, the Chinese congregation, and Central Bible College]. The Lord has certainly blessed. We shared with the students at C.B.C. (they with us and we with them). It was rich and wonderful to see the fruit of Dad and Mom's many years here in the Philippines. There were students there who were second and third generation fruit of young men and women that Dad and Mom trained and nurtured over 40 years ago. These students have been going back to their towns and barrios and sharing the Gospel with their families and neighbors and establishing churches that in turn reach out to other communities and establish churches. The seed planted here has produced a thousand plus crop!!

New Opportunity for the Nomuras: Bro. Moto writes,

We have been authorized by the government to be foster parents for an almost 17-year-old girl. As soon as she was born she was dumped into an orphanage. Then a mean couple applied for foster par-

entship and accepted her for the next 16 years for the sake of money the government supplied them with monthly.

We knew the family was mistreating her but we could not do a thing as long as they were legally her foster parents.

Recently she fled from the family and went back to a government sponsored orphanage. Thus we quickly acted, and have been authorized to keep her. She seems to be a nice girl, and our house-church folks all love her. She has already started to show her ability and willingness to the new challenge before her.

We pray she will accept the Lord and His blessing while she lives with us. Her name is Kayoko Hachiya, and I pray you folks will pray for this girl. It will be a physical burden on Yoriko for the next one year, and will be one of my last ministries on earth, but with His help and in Him we know we can accept the challenge and will be able to accomplish the mission.

Forged Diaries and Authentic Scripture

Steven Mosley

[Though this was written in 1984, you'll find it interesting and helpful. -- editor]

It was to have been the publishing sensation of the decade: sixty-two volumes containing the secret diaries of the twentieth century's most charismatic monster--Adolph Hitler. Their discovery promised to shed new light on the Third Reich and perhaps rewrite history.

Gerd Heidemann, a reporter for the German magazine *Stern*, claimed to have uncovered the diaries after a four-year search through East and West Germany, Spain and South America, tracing them from Hitler's last command post to a plane crash and through several obscure ex-Nazis. *Stern's* publishers gloated over their scoop. At a press conference in Hamburg, packed with reporters from around the world, *Stern* editor Peter Koch declared, "I am one hundred percent convinced that Hitler wrote every single word in those books."

But by two weeks after *Stern* published the first diary excerpts, chemists and handwriting experts had exposed them as forgeries. *Time* and *Newsweek* devoted cover stories to the process. After doggedly defending the authenticity of his find against mounting criticism, Koch

was finally forced to take the rap. "My career is finished. I was too trusting," he said.

We Christians are often accused of being "too trusting" in our claim to have the greatest scoop of all time: the one-and-only Word of God. It would appear that such a fantastic claim could be easily exposed as fraudulent; after all, "everyone knows" the Bible is full of myths and legends. However, after hundreds of years of scholarly scrutiny, Scripture has emerged as a credible historical document. Its authenticity is more widely attested than ever.

The publishers of *Stern* switched from euphoric faith to despair in just a few days. The confidence of believers in Scripture, on the other hand, has grown steadily, especially as recent archaeological and textual discoveries shed new light on the historical details of the Bible. The process by which Hitler's "secret diaries" were exposed contains interesting parallels to the methods scholars have used to verify Scripture.

Polyester

The most damning evidence against the authenticity of the diaries came when scientists at West Germany's Federal Archives were able to make chemical tests on the bindings, ink and paper. The diary bindings were found to contain polyester threads not produced until after World War 2. The paper showed traces of postwar whiteners. Red streamers hanging from the wax seals on some of the covers contained polyamide polyester, also invented after the war.

Professor Horst Heiderhoff, an expert on graphics and typography, discovered a telltale flaw in the elaborate metal initials, A. H., which adorned the cover of one volume. Heiderhoff stated that the A was actually an F rendered in a typeface called Engraver's Old English which the Nazis had banned in the early forties because they considered it Jewish.

With this evidence in hand, Federal Archives President Hans Booms called a press conference and announced that the "secret diaries" were "grotesque forgeries." Obviously the entire lot had been produced some years after Hitler's death.

Timely Tablets

Similar allegations were made by higher critics for many years concerning most of the Old and New Testaments. Moses, they confidently asserted, could not have produced the original documents which came to be called the Pentateuch. Writing was virtually unknown in Israel during his time and, at any rate, a nomadic culture would have little use for the written word.

But then archaeologists discovered the black stele whose wedge-shaped characters detailed the laws of Hammurabi, writing that antedated Moses by at least three centuries. Next, a British Egyptologist deciphered Proto-Semitic inscriptions found at Mount Sinai and demonstrated that Canaanite alphabetic writing existed before Moses.

Today we possess a vast body of texts dating from the age of Moses written in an Ugaritic poetic dialect which, according to archaeologist William F. Albright, corresponds closely in style to Hebrew poetic passages such as the Song of Miriam, Song of Deborah and many early psalms. Because new archaeological discoveries "continue to confirm the historical accuracy and literary antiquity in detail after detail" of the Hebrew, this world-renowned scholar declared, "it is . . . sheer hyper-criticism to deny the substantially Mosaic character of the Pentateuchal tradition."

Liberal scholars maintained, until late into the 20th century, that the patriarchal narratives were legendary projections back into antiquity of later Israelite national ideals. Old Testament authority Julius Wellhausen regarded Abraham as "a free creation of un-conscious art."

The excavation of the Mari tablets, however, began to change the picture. These tablets, dated to around 1700 B.C., mention many names, towns and customs of the period which fit perfectly with details contained in the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

When the law codes of the Hittites were discovered, many puzzling incidents associated with the patriarchs--such as Abraham's haggling with Ephron over the purchase of a cave for Sarah's burial--became understandable.

The Nuzi tablets illuminate aspects of legal and social life in the time of the patriarchs, such as Jacob's marital maneuverings to produce a male heir, which would have seemed anomalous to a post-Mosaic Israel.

Most scholars once maintained that the laws ascribed to Moses were far too morally and socially well developed to have appeared so early in Israel's development. Such a legal system, they said, had to have been codified much later.

But then archaeologists turned up Assyrian and Hittite law codes from approximately the time of Moses. The discovery of fragments of Babylonian and Sumerian codes took the antiquity of codified law back to Abraham's day. The Ras Shamra tablets, dating to about 1400 B.C., contain laws similar to statutes in Leviticus. They even use

terms related to those which Leviticus uses to describe the various types of offerings.

Proconsuls and Politarchs

The miracle filled New Testament has always had rationalistic critics quick to label it a legendary production of a later period. The Gospels and the book of Acts have often been viewed as reflections of the faith of the church long after Christ's death, rather than historical narratives by his contemporaries.

But archaeological and historical investigations have provided evidence that the New Testament writers painted an accurate picture of the social, political and geographical world of Jesus' day.

Luke, for example, is now regarded by many scholars as a first-rate historian. He was once thought to have erred in calling Sergius Paulus proconsul instead of *propraeter*. However, an inscription was found on the coast of Cyprus reading "in the proconsulship of Paulus." We now know the governor of Cyprus bore that particular title only during the period when Luke wrote.

Scholars once questioned Luke's usage of *politarchs* to denote the civil authorities of Thessalonica. The word was not found in classical literature. However, nineteen inscriptions have now been discovered which use that title, five of them in reference to Thessalonica.

The "assured results of higher criticism" once decreed that the Gospels were not written until at least one hundred years after the events they portrayed. But the discovery of older manuscripts has pushed the date of their composition back into the first century. Nelson Glueck, at one time the world's foremost biblical archaeologist, stated, "We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about A.D. 80".

Far from giving any indication of forgers projecting legends into the past, archaeological and historical evidence confirms that the authors of Scripture were contemporary with events they describe.

To Be Concluded

R. H. von Allmen, 1916-2002

R. H. von Allmen was brought up in a godly home. His father was one of the early elders of the Portland Avenue Church of Christ in Louisville. R. H. received Christ as his Lord and Savior at an early age. His Christian training was amplified when the church began Portland Christian School in 1924. He studied there from then till he graduated from high school in 1934. P.C.S. greatly blessed R.H. during those years, and he greatly blessed it for the rest of his life. He served on its board for 32 years (till his death). For 12 of those years he was its chairman, and he took an active role in 4 different building programs of the school!

Throughout his life, R. H. was a loyal and active member and leader at 3 Churches of Christ in the Louisville area: Shawnee, Ralph Avenue, and Portland Avenue. He was a diligent student and teacher of God's Word, a man of wise counsel, and a generous giver to numerous individuals and ministries.

For decades he ran Von Allmen's Market. He used it as a ministry, offering jobs to many young men who studied at P.C.S. or Kentucky Bible College. Finally most mom-and-pop grocery stores were forced to shut down due to competition from the giant chain-stores. Von Allmen's Market was no exception, but R. H.'s loyal friendship is shown by this fact: Though losing money and needing to close the store, he delayed doing that for at least a year just because he knew an elderly woman who had worked there for a long time would not be able to find work elsewhere! When she reached retirement age, he closed it.

He was a discerning judge of women. This is proved by his choosing two wonderful wives (one at a time). For 50 years he was married to the former Genevieve Reader, then for the past 11 years to the former May Schott. He was always very devoted to his family.

R.H. was a conservative -- which is good, up to a point! He didn't favor change unless there were very good reasons for it. But he *realized* he was conservative, and tried not to overdo it or become unreasonable. And he could be persuaded to change too. Formerly he wouldn't listen to radio programs of Bible teachers like Chuck Swindoll, since he didn't agree with all they taught. Yet later on, as May influenced him to be more open to such teachers (but with discernment), he learned he could benefit from them. And guess whose writings comforted and helped R. H. in recent years? Chuck Swindoll, among others!

He went to be with his Savior on Jan. 5, 2002, at the age of 85. He is greatly missed.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Antioch Church of Christ (Frankfort, Ky) ...has a new minister. He is Jason Lindsay. The new Camp Director is Danny Rogers. Both covet your prayers as they enter into the Lord's work in Frankfort.

Ky. Ave. Church, Louisville Our young people were responsible for 49 shoe boxes filled with gifts for children in 3rd world countries who are not as materially blessed as they are. We thank the young people for initiating this project and for sharing so selflessly. We also want to thank the older adults who participated as well. --Bulletin

Back from Australia: In early December, Tim & Dawn Yates plus Lauren, Leah & Anna, flew back to the U.S. for home-leave. (Sometimes called a "furlough," but it's not just a vacation.) Tim writes, "Please make note of our traveling email address. You can reach us while we're on furlough at: yatestravel@hotmail.com

Lilly Dale Church of Christ Website announces an Evangelistic Meeting (formerly known as the Joint "Workshop") at Tell City Church of Christ Saturday at 6:00 p.m. and Sunday Feb. 23-24, at 7:00 p.m. Guest speaker will be Bro. Sonny Childs and the topic will be: "Fellowship & Marriage as a Christian" and "Antidote for Materialism." All are encouraged to come.

Portland Christian High School Chorus will be in concert at the Salem Church of Christ (Kentucky) on Sunday morning March 10th at 11:00 a.m. and the Mackville

Church of Christ that Sunday evening with a concert at 7:00 p.m.

Oak Grove Church of Christ: Independence, Louisiana will host the 10th Annual Christian Crusade for Christ **March 25-28**. Theme: "Hell Bound or Heaven Bound?" Speakers will include Walter Rahn, Robert Johnson, Frank Preston, Robert Gill, Louis Schuler, Harry Coultas, Joe Stone, Ray Naugle, Kenneth Preston, & Orell Overman if health permits.

On Resurrection Evening, SING! The next 5th-Sunday Song Meeting in the Louisville area will be **March 31**, Easter day. It will be held at the Portland Ave. church at 6:00. In addition to singing songs, we will learn about them and their writers. Graham McKay from Nashville will share stirring stories from a few writers' lives, and/or of the circumstances which led to the writing of well-known hymns. Then we'll sing them with greater appreciation and blessing.

The Westminster Church of Christ in Westminster, Maryland will officially meet in their new building on Jan. 20. Gary Pearson is the evangelist for this grace-centered congregation with members from various segments of the "restoration movement" & of Christ's people in general. It is also missions minded: Last fall a couple went from there as missionaries to Cebu, Philippines. And in August (as in several previous years) 9 other members went on a ministry trip to Haiti. That 2-week visit, in coordination with a Haitian church, resulted in 8 bap-

tisms with many other promising contacts which the Haitian preacher will follow up.

Church of Christ Worldwide at the Cramer Church of Christ in Lexington, Kentucky still has copies of the Missions Around the World Thanksgiving & Prayer Booklets available if your church didn't receive them. Bro. David Harding is available on a Sunday night to come and share with your church information regarding the various mission works around the world. Mike Harding & Bennie Hill are planning a trip to Japan in March to visit the various works there. They covet your prayers as plans are finalized. For more booklets or to arrange a time with David please contact us at: **Church of Christ Worldwide, % David Harding, P. O. Box 54842, Lexington, KY 40555. (859) 269-1312.**

Irene Allen: Each year the Lord loads me with benefits. I am thankful for my sons David and Norman who are attentive to me. Here in Norman's home I have all my daily needs provided. My laptop computer provides me access with other family members and friends. My email address is iallen@kdsi.net

Norman and I made a 5-day trip to Alaska in May. We enjoyed seeing friends and church family again. The time was too short to accomplish all we wanted to do. In Oct. I spent 11 days in the hospital with pneumonia. Now congestive heart failure is being dealt with and I trust the Lord to work out His purpose in my life.

Kentucky-Indiana Christian Fellowship is being planned for August 5-8, 2002 with theme: "Holiness of God." Begin now planning to attend this year's conference. This used to be called the Louisville Christian

Fellowship Week, in case you're wondering!

Can I Say this?

"Lord, send me anywhere,
only go with me.

Lay any burden on me,
only sustain me.

Sever any tie but the tie
that binds me to Thyself."

--David Livingstone, pioneer
missionary to Africa

Letter from a Publisher: "Thank you for the excellent studies on the intertestamental period [our May issue on 'the 400 silent years']. Study of that is indeed vital to an understanding of the N.T. writings. We need more studies on church history. Thanks again." --Stanley Paher.

Brother Paher is a writer & publisher of doctrinal materials, especially about God's covenant-relationship with men. For a catalog, write Nevada Publications, 4135 Badger Circle, Reno, NV 89509.

Exodus of Christians from Israel: "Before World War II, Christians made up some 40% of the population of what is now Israel and the West Bank. Now it is only 2%. Bethlehem was once 85% Christian, falling to 2% today." --Open Doors *Newsbrief*, Dec. 2001

Winchester, Ky: Lexington Community College officially opened its new Winchester-Clark County campus Jan. 16th in Winchester's renovated College Park Library building. Many reading this will remember "studying" there when it was known as Olmstead Library on the campus of Southeastern Christian College. It's good seeing the facilities still being used for educational purposes. Some Bible classes taught by qualified local ministers and Bible teachers are being offered.

SBS Annual Lectureship

LIVING For CHRIST in the END DAYS

Mar. 15-16; Fri. 7:00 p.m. & Sat. 9:00 a.m.

Southeast Church of Christ,

12610 Taylorsville Rd., Louisville, KY

Our Speaker, DENNIS POLLOCK

In 1993 David Reagan asked Dennis Pollock to join Lamb and Lion Ministries. This ministry emphasizes the importance of Bible prophecy and also the urgent need for spiritual renewal of individual believers and of churches. Brothers Reagan and Pollock jointly host the Christ in Prophecy radio program heard on many stations nationwide (in Louisville it's heard on WFIA at 11:15 a.m. Mon. through Fri.). They have held many conferences, jointly and individually, throughout the U.S. and also in Mexico, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, and the Philippines.

Early in his ministry Dennis began an intensive study of the Holy Spirit and the great revivals that have occurred throughout church history. Truths he learned about revival, prayer, and the need to preach Jesus made an indelible mark on him. He also has made in-depth study of doctrines pertaining to our Lord's second coming. He stresses the perilous times in which we live, but also God's grace and power to keep us "blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus."

In his ministry he yearns to enflame believers' hearts with a radical love for the Lord Jesus, and to lead sinners to become committed to Him. His preaching is best described as "fire with content." He uses God's Word both to instruct and inspire.