

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The *Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

JUNE, 2004

## **CHALLENGES from CHINA**

**Take Risks or Play Safe?**

**A Bible school that teaches how to escape  
handcuffs**

**Go to North Africa to evangelize Chinese?**

**A new kind of Passion in the Middle East**

\* \* \*

**200 years ago: "Argue less and pray more"**

# The 57th Annual Kentucky / Indiana Fellowship

August 2nd - 5th, 2004

Theme: **GOD'S WORD Deals With TODAY'S PROBLEMS**

## Monday Evening, August 2

7:30 The Impact of One Life Sonny Childs

## Tuesday, August 3 - Encouragement From God's Word

9:00 Prayer Time  
9:20 Ambition: Vice or Virtue Billy Ray Lewter  
10:20 Stress in Church Leadership Alex Wilson  
11:20 Romans 9: God's Faithfulness & Israel's Unbelief  
Don McGee  
1:15 The Ground of Hope Jim Gillaspie  
7:30 Caught Between Two Worlds Billy Ray Lewter

## Wednesday, August 4 - Equipped By God's Word

9:00 Prayer Time  
9:20 Walking in the Spirit Dale Offutt  
10:20 Bearing the Cross Amid Stumbling Blocks Dennis Royse  
11:20 Romans 10: Wrong Righteousness and God's Remedy  
Don McGee  
1:15 Dressed for Battle John McNerney  
7:30 Presenting Ourselves to God Buford Smith

## Thursday, August 5 - Edified By God's Word

9:00 Prayer Time  
9:20 The Church in Crisis Darren Johnson  
10:20 God in Relationship with the Church Cecil Garrett  
11:20 Romans 11: God is Not Through with Israel Don McGee  
1:15 A Better Church Begins with Me Jason Duncan  
7:30 Preaching Christ to a Changing World Julius Hovan

Daily Lunch: 12:00

Youth Activities will be held after the regular meeting only one night.

There will be a Missionary Offering Wednesday Night.

Dinners at Sellersburg: Tues. (SBS), Thur. (Goin' Fishing)

For Housing: Bud Ridgeway (502) 477-8255;  
Clint Dorman (812) 246-2600

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

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

# THE WORD AND WORK

*"Declare the whole counsel of God"*

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

The Word and Work is published monthly except December by Portland Ave. Church of Christ, Inc., 2500 Portland Ave. Louisville, Ky. 40212. Subscription: \$11.00 per year; bundles of 10 or more to one address = \$10.00 per subscription. Address correspondence to Word and Work, 2518 Portland Avenue, Louisville, KY 40212.

Periodicals Postage Paid at Louisville, Ky. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Word and Work, 2518 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212.

---

Vol. XCVIII

JUNE, 2004

No. 6

---

## In This Issue

*Theme: Challenges from China.*

Introduction to this Issue -- Alex V. Wilson . . . . .	162
China Report -- Dennis L. Allen . . . . .	163
To Register or Not to Register . . . . .	165
Risk Taking -- Dennis L. Allen . . . . .	168
Bible Teaching in China . . . . .	172
Insights On the Present Situation in China . . . . .	174
How God used George Chen . . . . .	175
Voices From The Fields . . . . .	177
Opening Doors in the Middle East -- Lane Powell. . . . .	180
Crushed at the Cross -- Victor Knowles . . . . .	182
Why Did Jesus Die? -- Joe Phelps . . . . .	184
"We Will That This Body Die" -- Leroy Garrett . . . . .	186
Monitoring our Christian Speech -- Steven Clark Goad . . . . .	189
Nadab and Abihu -- Edward Fudge . . . . .	191
News and Notes -- Bennie Hill . . . . .	192

## Introduction to This Issue

A.V.W.

Our missionary editor and his partner, Dennis and Betty Allen, are not just armchair speculators about world missions. They recently returned from another year's ministry in China. We are delighted they were there, and delighted they are now here. And we are excited to share with you their insights and experiences from the other side of the world. It's been said that God must love Asians very much, He made so many of them. Over one-half of Earth's people live in Asia, more of them in China than anywhere else.

Despite persecution there, the disciples are not quitters. Instead of looking for ways to stay safe and unharmed, they are seeking ways to spread the Good News—and not just in their land, either. They are dreaming of how to help carry out the Great Commission worldwide! I recently read of a unique school for evangelists there. Knowing that if they share the gospel they will likely be arrested, they train their students how to pick the locks of handcuffs, and how to jump from second-story windows without breaking their legs!

In a report entitled "Resources Enough," Edward Fudge writes,

In the current issue of *Christianity Today*, Philip Yancey tells of visiting persecuted "underground" home church leaders in China, whose membership is thought to total 80 million despite official atheistic state opposition. Yancey concludes his article by recalling a conversation with a missionary who had been expelled from China in 1950. "We felt so sorry for the churches we left behind," he said. "They had no one to teach them, no printing presses, no seminaries, no one to run their clinics and orphanages. *No resources, really, except the Holy Spirit.*" It appears the Holy Spirit is doing just fine.

# CHINA REPORT

Dennis L. Allen

We returned home May 6 after almost a year in China. The Lord blessed us and cared for us in so many ways. We made many friends and found a great deal of freedom for ministry. We had a Bible class in our apartment once a week. We did not recruit people to come. It was at their request. One man was even a member of the communist party. We had doubts about the wisdom of his attending, but before we could refuse he came anyway. He was so open and so hungry we dared not refuse him. In a few weeks he accepted Christ. His wife is not a believer. He needs our prayers.

A language training center provided our opportunity for contacts. It was begun in 2003 a few months before we arrived. Classes are offered on all levels. In addition every Friday night the public is invited to English Corner. This is free to all who wish to improve their English. Each week we selected a topic with the goal of stimulating them to think about the meaning and purpose of life. It was my responsibility to make a large poster for the hallway bulletin board each time to attract interest. We often had 100 or more in attendance. We would divide the group into five different class rooms and then divide those in each class room into even smaller groups to give opportunity for individual participation. Sometimes Christians who attended would give testimony to their faith. We encouraged students to ask questions. This gave us good opportunities, but was also a challenge because we never knew what they might ask.

At Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter we felt free to use the opportunity to speak boldly and explain the background and meaning of these American festivals. The birth, death and resurrection of Christ were clearly explained and we were never challenged since we were explaining the meaning of an American festival. At Christmas we were given permission to present a Christmas pageant at a large book store in the city. The story of Christ was told in English and Chinese.

There are two prominent universities in Quanzhou. There are active Christian groups on both of them and a fruitful ministry is being carried out. We visited both and made friends with several students. Our best opportunities were when they would come to visit us in our apartment. Two have been baptized since we left.

This year's experience in China has given us a new perspective on the state of the church there. However, we are well aware that

our experience was in a small portion of one province and thus very limited. Conditions vary greatly in other provinces. Before going to Quanzhou we had felt that although there were individuals in the three-self churches who were genuine Christians, the restrictions on the churches under government control kept them from having a clear testimony. However, soon after arriving there we were told of a young people's meeting held every Saturday night at one church where the gospel was preached and many were brought to Christ.

The first time we went we found a packed house. Singing was led by young people with the joy of the Lord very manifest in their praise. Through the year we saw attendance increase there from around 500 to 800 each week. When the invitation was given from 12 to 27 would respond to accept Christ. One night a visiting American evangelist was invited to speak through an interpreter. We just rejoiced that Christ was being preached so boldly.

Even in that church there were ecclesiastical restrictions. Only ordained ministers could preside at the Lord's table or perform baptisms (sprinkling). Candidates must wait a year after accepting Christ to be baptized. However, we did know of another three-self church that allowed a house church group of university students to meet in their premises and carry on their meeting according to their own conscience. So it seems to rest with individual churches and their leaders. Some get by with things that are not officially permitted. This university group immerses converts. So we rejoiced in what the Lord was doing even in spite of the restrictions on the three-self churches.

There is a darker side which is just as real. One day two brothers were brought to our apartment. Several years ago their house church was raided by the police. The leader spent 20 months in prison simply for having unauthorized meetings in his home. Living conditions in the prison were very difficult with 40 men crowded into one room. They slept on the floor. His wife was allowed to bring him food, but the prison officials took what they wanted before he saw it. He is still under careful observation. His phone is tapped and his activities are monitored. We also were invited to attend another house church which meets on the third floor over a flower shop downtown. Attendance was about 25. We were impressed with the zeal and earnestness of this group.

The government puts strong pressure on any house church groups it knows about to register. (See the following article.) Since this is a form of government control, most house church groups resist this. They feel it means giving up their sovereignty and really makes the government the head of the church. Knowing what hap-

pened in Eastern Europe Chinese government leaders are alarmed at the rapid growth of the church and thus do all that they can to restrict it.

---

## To REGISTER or NOT To REGISTER?

The question of whether or not to register their church with the authorities is often a challenging one for Chinese church leaders. For Christians living outside of China it can also be a confusing issue. We would therefore like to explain a little of the background to registration and to let you hear what the Chinese believers themselves have to say.

Article 36 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China stipulates, "*Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion. The state protects normal religious activities. No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the state.*"

In theory this all sounds good, but as many of you reading this article will know, the reality is not so rosy. Many Christians in China have faced persecution from the authorities. So how do the Chinese authorities seek to justify this? In simple terms, the government has a very limited definition of "*normal religious activities*" and a rather wide definition of "*activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the state.*"

The authorities in China continue to insist that all churches must be registered. Like many other laws on religion, regulations published last year in Qingdao, Shandong Province, stated very clearly: "*Only registered religious sites are legal. All nonregistered ones are illegal.*" Therefore, if a church is not registered, it is considered illegal and will not come under the government's definition of "*normal religious activities.*"

Those of us who live in countries with a Christian heritage where the government treats religious believers reasonably benignly may find it difficult to understand why the majority of Christians in

China are not willing to register their church. But in China the issue is a lot more complicated.

Registering a church in China ultimately means putting that church under the control of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which governs the country. The CCP actively promotes atheism and it is illegal for Party members to believe in any religion. As the news agency Compass Direct has stated, *“Registration means subjection to the Communist Party’s Religious Affairs Bureau and other party organs, all of which are controlled by the atheists. In registered churches, evangelism, finances, the appointment of pastors, the content of theological training and Sunday sermons are all managed by the Religious Affairs Bureau. The degree of autonomy granted to churches, registered or otherwise, varies widely from province to province. However, according to the official policy of the Communist Party, total control of religious affairs is not negotiable.”*

House church leader, Moses Xie, has commented, *“To register, you must give names and addresses of members, and hand over money to the Religious Affairs Bureau. This is still unacceptable to the majority of house churches.”*

Christians believe that God is the ultimate Head of the church. Many Chinese believers believe that registering their church would involve compromising that Headship. One church leader has said, *“Several of our church workers have searched the Scriptures and believe it is not right for the church to register...If the church registers, it will be like a bride with two husbands. The Bible speaks of being subject to the governing powers. We believe as Christians we should positively pay all our taxes. But in matters of faith, the church cannot simultaneously follow Christ and be subject to the government.”*

Those churches that do register need a large dose of godly wisdom as they try to walk the delicate line between obeying the Lord and subjecting to the strictures of the Chinese government. The current national religious regulations contain the following articles:

*“The names of all religious workers must be filed with their Religious Affairs Bureau. Individuals who are not approved or filed are not allowed to engage in any religious activities under the title of religious worker.”*

(Article 13)

*“All religious activities have to be conducted within the confines of religious sites lawfully registered.”*

(Article 14)



“Preachers cannot go outside their own area to evangelize or preach without first ‘filing with the relevant Religious Affairs Bureau.’”

(Article 15)

Fines may be imposed on all those who:

- \* Establish religious organizations without permission.
- \* Engage in religious activities as religious workers without approval from the government.
- \* Cross [internal Chinese] boundaries to engage in religious activities without permission.
- \* Hold religious activities in places not yet registered with the RAB.

Or to put it more simply, it is illegal to preach in a church unless you are a government-registered preacher, to go on mission trips outside your own area, or even to evangelize outside of an officially registered church, unless you have special permission from the government (which would rarely, if ever, be given).

The majority of Christians in China are not willing to be subject to these limitations imposed by the Chinese authorities. Therefore, their only choice is to meet in unregistered house churches.

We would like to give the final word to the Chinese believers themselves. The descriptions they give of their personal experiences of the registration issue help to bring home to us more clearly what is really involved. May their words challenge us to pray for all those who seek to serve the Lord in such difficult circumstances.

*“Our meeting grew from a dozen to over 30, and the brothers and sisters were very loving-praying for and helping each other. But later, when we gave hospitality to evangelists from another province, some leaders said we were a cult and did not want to meet with us any more. They even locked us out on Sundays! They said we should go to the Three-Self (government-registered) church to meet. If we carried on holding church meetings then they would call the police to arrest us. They claimed that house churches were illegal, and if we did not register, we were not protected by law. Later we were actually arrested. People were more fearful, so we split up...Please pray for our church.”*

\* \* \*

*“Our house churches here are now under pressure and persecution. The authorities are demanding all preachers have registration certificates. All work must be managed and overseen by the relevant government departments. But when we discovered this was the state interfering with religion and that this mixing of politics and religion was not in accord with Scripture, we refused to accept it. So now we are under persecution. They have come many times to our Bible studies (our monthly meeting for church workers from 18 counties has over 1,000 attending) to broadcast the government’s religious policy through loudspeakers as well as loud pop music and threats that they will arrest us. But thank God, though we have been unable several times to complete our Bible study, the Christians are unafraid and keep coming. They have a determination to suffer if need be. The last two days, the authorities have set up two loudspeakers permanently on telephones near our meeting. I am worried and don’t know what we should do. Please pray for us.”*

-From China Challenge

[Quotes taken from Compass Direct]

---

## **Risk Taking**

Dennis L. Allen

### **What Does it Mean to Take a Risk?**

When we enter a situation not knowing how it will turn out we are taking a risk. It may cause us to suffer loss or injury or even our life. Risk taking can endanger others as well.

We met a family in China with five children. Their ages ranged from 7 - 17. Their mother was home-schooling them. Their work was with university students. They were a beautiful family - wholesome and happy and effective in their ministry. But weren't they taking a risk? Do you suppose any of their friends warned them of the risks they were taking? I'm sure they did.

Sometimes a risk brings harm to yourself but great benefit to another. Last week the news reports told of a young mother who ran into the street to rescue her baby from an oncoming vehicle, threw it to the side of the road and was struck and killed by the vehicle - but the baby was saved.

### **All Living Involves Risk**

It is well to remember that we can risk or imperil our lives in the ordinary affairs of life. It is impossible to avoid all risk. Every time

you go out, you take a risk. But suppose you don't go out, are there no risks? Everywhere there are unknowns and things beyond your control.

We have certain ways that we consider safe, but are they? James reminds us. "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'" (James 4:13-15.) None of us knows what our future holds.

### **Queen Esther**

Take the case of Queen Esther. She was the orphaned cousin of Mordecai, who had adopted and raised her. But she was beautiful and found herself queen. Haman hated Mordecai and all Jews and by guile persuaded the king to make a decree that they be exterminated. (Ethnic cleansing is not new!) The king did not know that his own queen was a Jew.

When Esther was requested to go before the king and plead for her people, she was very much aware of the peril facing her. She knew of the royal decree that anyone approaching the king without being called would be put to death unless he lifted the royal scepter.

Mordecai reminded her that her own life was imperiled as well as her people. He further challenged her by saying "For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house will perish: and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther responded with this message (Esther 4:16): "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast in like manner; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish." Esther did not know how her bold act would turn out. She simply knew what she was called on to do. "If I perish, I perish." The Lord did not give her any revelation as to how it might turn out.

### **But if Not**

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had been faithfully discharging their duties in the places King Nebuchadnezzar had appointed them in the government of Babylon. Suddenly they were confronted with a crisis decision. Would they bow down to the golden image that the King had set up. The penalty for refusal was to be cast into

a burning fiery furnace. Everyone else bowed down. They did not bow down. When brought by their accusers before the King, they were given another chance to comply. Their reply made their decision very plain. (Daniel 3:16-18): Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." They did not know if their refusal would cost them their lives. They knew God could deliver them, but even if it meant the furnace, they would not give in.

King Nebuchadnezzar was furious at this affront to his power and lost all reason. The heat of the furnace was already sufficient to kill them. But he commanded that it be increased seven-fold. The men who threw them in were killed on the spot.

The fact that they were marvelously delivered does not take away from the fact that they hazarded their lives to be faithful to God.

### **God Does Not Always Deliver**

Hebrews 11 recounts many wonderful deliverances granted to those who risked all for God. They stopped the mouths of lions, escaped the edge of the sword, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens (Heb. 11:34). All these were marvelously delivered. But were they any more victorious than those who were stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword? God has allowed many of his faithful servants to lose their physical lives for Him. Christians sometimes go hungry and don't have the clothing they need. They went about in the skins of sheep and goats. He allows them to be destitute, afflicted, ill-treated. Stephen took a great risk when he, filled with the Holy Spirit, confronted the Jewish leaders with their resistance to the Holy Spirit and subsequent murder of their Messiah. The result was that he was stoned to death. Should he have been more diplomatic?

### **Perils and Risks Are Normal Christian Experience**

When Paul was warned not to go up to Jerusalem (Acts:21:11) he replied, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts. 21:13)". At these words, his friends relented and accepted his decision as the will of God.

Paul firmly believed that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem for the cause of Christ. He did not know what might befall

him there - imprisonment? Suffering? Death? But he was ready. In Acts 20:23 he had already said "The Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:23,24.)

Jesus said to his disciples "Some of you they will put to death" (Lk.21:16). That means some will die for Christ's sake and some will not. In other words, to follow Jesus we must take risk. We do not know how our lives will turn out. Jesus Himself promised His followers, "If they persecuted me they will also persecute you. (John 15:20.) Peter also brought the same message, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." (I Peter 4:12-14.)

### **The Peril of Choosing the "Safe" Course**

The children of Israel were faced with a decision about risk taking when the spies returned from Canaan. They saw the huge cluster of grapes borne by two men on a pole. They heard the exhortation of Joshua, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it." (Numbers 13:30.) But they also heard the warning of the ten spies, "There are giants in the land. We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we." God had promised to give them the land. He had already delivered them from bondage in Egypt, but they said in effect, "The risk is too great. Let's go back to Egypt." That decision caused them to wander 40 years in the wilderness.

We marvel at their unbelief after witnessing all that God had done for them. Do we ever do the same? The Lord of the harvest asks us to pray that He will send laborers into His harvest. He has promised to go with us as we go into all the world. But the risk is too great, so we remain at home and protect ourselves as best we can with various kinds of insurance, financial arrangements, and secure homes. Soon we find ourselves caught up in a manner of life far removed from that which we see in the book of Acts.

### **"Not a Hair of your Head Will Perish"**

It is not that people today take no risks. People take all kinds of risk for all kinds of reasons and are applauded for it. Why is it considered foolhardy to take a risk for the kingdom of God?

But is it really a risk? Jesus said, "And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or fathers or mothers or wife or children or lands, for my sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and inherit eternal life." (Matthew 19:29.)

Again Jesus said, "You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But not a hair of your head will be lost." (Luke 21:16-17.) What can that mean? They will kill some of you, but that's ok, "Not a hair of your head will perish." Possibly the best explanation of these words is found in Romans 8:35-39. These things cannot separate us from the love of Christ. In the end there will be no loss. In fact, we are "more than conquerors." You are a conqueror if you do not suffer defeat, but more than a conqueror if the enemies' purposes are thwarted and turned to glorify God in the end. What Satan has meant for evil, God has turned to good. In the end there is no risk when we walk by faith.

---

## BIBLE TEACHING IN CHINA

One of the most exciting features of the church in China today is the desire of many young people to be trained (often at great personal cost) and equipped to be effective leaders in tomorrow's church.

To speak of Bible schools in China may give the wrong impression. In some situations students may be able to live together in a building employed as a college. In that case there may be a 'front' to satisfy the authorities. So, the school may be officially used for language learning, or computing and management training. There are a good number of schools known to us that work effectively in this way.

Where this is not possible the schools must be secret and in out-of-the-way places. One known to the writer is based in a group of caves. There 50 students live together for a year's Bible training. All water, food and supplies must be transported 2,000 feet up into the foothills of a mountain range.

In other areas no resident Bible training is possible and the trainees are brought together regularly in villages or farms for three days or more of teaching. This may entail a student walking or traveling hundreds of kilometers, and that in itself may be risky for them.

House church leaders' gatherings are often organized in the same way, and then business and order within the church network will be dealt with as well as teaching. At such times people may sleep together on mud floors and even in open courtyards, so happy and hungry are they for fellowship, teaching and God's blessing.

They may arise at 5 a.m. to pray and worship. At one such time a brother prayed aloud for 30 minutes, hardly pausing for breath. The others 'amen'ed every sentence and wept as he cried passionately to God for China, the church and the Gospel. In that area of the country, Brother Yun, known as the 'Heavenly Man', used to work and God is still working very powerfully. Each leader can expect to baptize at least 150 converts per year.

The teaching programme of these schools can sometimes be a cause for concern. Where there are the facilities, they may use video Bible school CDs. While these may be better than nothing, our experience of the teaching is that it can lack doctrinal content and tends to be sensationalist/prosperity theology. So churches are ill equipped to counter false teaching and extreme views.

In places where the video Bible schools are not available, the students spend much time simply reading and memorizing the Bible. Wonderful as that is, they may have no framework for interpretation and so still be liable to wrong teaching.

Western teachers, who are already accepted and experienced at a senior level in their own countries, are greatly needed and mainly warmly welcomed. But we must be careful not to import our own views and culture, or teach only our favorite topics. We know of a school where six successive Western teachers expounded the book of Romans! Great as it is, Romans is not the whole Gospel, but the Chinese are very humble and ask us to give them what God lays on our hearts. What a responsibility we have to serve our brothers and sisters in the greatest revival in history.

Problems, risks and challenges there are, but we do not lose heart. Jesus said, "I WILL build my church, and the gates of hell shall NOT prevail against it." China today is proof of His faithfulness to His promise.

-From China Challenge

# INSIGHTS On The PRESENT SITUATION In CHINA

The name "three-self" given to the official church in China refers to the principle that churches should be self-supporting, self-edifying and self-propagating. Actually these are all scriptural concepts. The original purpose of the communists, however, was to cut off all contact with and support from foreign sources. Today that policy is not consistently carried out. Amity Press (supported from the U. S. has printed 18 million Bibles in China. These are sold very cheaply in Three-self churches. None of them are allowed in normal retail channels of distribution such as book stores, book fairs or department stores.

Conditions in many orphanages in China are deplorable. We talked to several who gave eye witness accounts of dying rooms in some orphanages where children, especially girls, who are handicapped, sick or otherwise undesirable are put in a room and left to die. Staff are poorly paid and often have so many to care for that there is no way for them to cope. One British lady we know has adopted four girls and hopes to get two more. At first it was very difficult, but now the government sees they can make money through adoptions. In one orphanage she has worked with they are now adopting out 600 in a year. China is now accepting help from overseas for orphanages and hospitals.

One impression left upon us after spending a year in China is the rapidity of change. New roads are being built everywhere. There are now expressways comparable to those here. Many new cars and vans are seen on the roads. New factories and dormitories are being built. Young people are leaving the farms and villages to work at what seems to us incredibly cheap wages.

There is still much openness to the gospel. But how long will it last? The lust for material things chokes the Word.



# HOW GOD USED GEORGE CHEN

George Chen is a significant example of how Americans and Chinese are rewriting the ministry playroom. Born in Shanghai 64 years ago, Chen gave up university studies in economics for Bible school and began working as a missionary at age 18. "God called me to spread the gospel to the poor of the villages," Chen explains. "The cities have made progress. But in the villages, it's the same as ever. The people are very poor."

After the 1949 Communist revolution, Chen's work grew increasingly hazardous. He was jailed for religious activities in the 1950s. In 1960, he was sentenced to hard labor at a prison in Anhui Province in eastern China.

With a wife and son still in Shanghai, he saw little prospect for survival. "They tried to make things really bad for me by putting me to work in the cesspool," Chen recalls. "I spent my days deep in human waste, turning it with a shovel to make compost. They thought I'd be miserable, but actually I was happy. It smelled so bad that no one would come near me, so I could pray and sing aloud all day."

Yet physical adversity was only part of the hardship at the camp. "The brainwashing was the worst," Chen says. "If God had not been with me, I'd have collapsed under it. People who were physically stronger than I did."

In 1978, as official attitudes toward religion changed, Chen was finally released. He discovered that the churches he planted had grown to 5,000 from the original 300 members.

Now a U. S. citizen, Chen travels for nine months each year throughout China organizing churches, preaching, training leaders, and raising funds.

Because Chen works mostly in rural areas, he has been able to enlist the cooperation of local government leaders as well as house-church leaders in his ministry efforts.

In May, a journey brought Chen deep into the rugged wilderness of Yunnan Province to show the needs of Lisu tribal people to Ralph Plumb, president of International Aid, a relief and missionary support agency of Spring Lake, Michigan.

Wedged between Tibet and the countries of Southeast Asia, Yunnan remains one of the least-known areas of China.

The Lisu were converted from demon worship early in the century by missionaries. In the early years of Communist rule, the tribal people were forbidden to worship. Their Bibles were confiscated, and some of the people were imprisoned or killed. Many fled across the mountains to nearby Myanmar (Burma). Yet most remained faithful. The year that brought Chen's release also brought them freedom to worship again.

With special permits to enter the territory normally closed to foreigners, Chen and Plumb traveled in trucks provided by the provisional government to the distant village of Kang Po near the upper Mekong River.

Mountain people waited to lead them up a steep foot trail into misty valleys. They passed log and plank houses clinging to slopes. Meager crops of corn, rye, and wheat smear mountainsides so steep that farmers lie on their sides when they plant and harvest to keep from tumbling downward.

"I've never seen people in China poorer than the Lisu," Chen says. "They have not enough food."

Yet the welcome at a village named Wahsaluke was lavish. Many of the 900 residents lined both sides of the trail applauding the visitors and shaking their hands. They provided basins of spring water for washing and feasts of freshly killed chicken, eggs, fried ferns, corn cakes, rye pancakes, and honey.

"The Lisu people love very much," Chen explains. Really they follow the teaching of the gospel."

Plumb saw the log frame of a new school his agency financed through Chen. The visitors worshiped with villagers in a dark and primitive log-and plank church building so rotted that local officials fear it might collapse.

Both Chen and government authorities encouraged International Aid to finance a new church structure. Chen had also arranged a cash gift to buy 100 goats loaned to families for breeding then returned for reloaning. "But the greatest need of all," Chen emphasizes, "is for trained church leaders. Christianity is growing, but because we don't have trained leaders, cults and heresies are springing up. Nine thousand evangelists should be trained," he says.

But the spirit of cooperation that Chen has forged in rural areas has not always translated into urban settings. When Chen traveled to a major urban area in southern China, he was invited to preach at a Sunday service. But at the last minute, officials denied permission for him to preach because he is a foreigner.

# VOICES from other FIELDS

Martin Brooks [Almost anywhere in the world] June 2004

I did not get a newsletter out in the last two months. I traveled to Ireland to visit one of our workers there who is battling cancer, then to London to organize a new work in Algeria. In Morocco we viewed the earthquake destruction, visited the team there, and formulated a plan to respond. When I returned to Louisville, e-mails were backlogged, some of which were pretty important.

I was home for a week then back to London for a meeting about the work in Libya, then on to Bosnia to do the yearly visit and evaluation of the Italy team. When I returned to the States we had a four day security conference I had organized to train our mission leaders on how to respond to a kidnapping and what policies we needed to beef up to be prepared. Again, e-mails were backlogged as team leaders around the world write asking advice and reporting progress. On a personal note, my oldest son, Kirk, graduated from high school and my family was feeling a bit neglected from all my travels.

As I write this, Pre-field Orientation is in progress during which we give a week of intensified training to 50 summer interns headed out to various points across the globe. The visas for the Afghanistan workers are stuck in Washington (the planes leave in 4 days), and the China crew is wondering if they should risk taking religious materials into the country. Also this week an ammunition stockpile exploded in Iraq next to our workers. They are okay, but the stress level is climbing. I have purchased my next tickets to Afghanistan for July 13, and a trip to Ghana and Tanzania had to be cancelled due to lack of funds.

**God at Work: Reach Asians in Africa** – Over 30,000 migrant Chinese workers are in Algeria. It may be illegal to proselytize the local people in China and in Algeria, but Algeria does not seem to mind Christians working among the Chinese in Algeria. Algeria also has the **largest group of Muslim-background Christian believers** that we know of anywhere. Remember Henry Blackaby's teaching to "**find what God is doing and join in**"? The Lord is moving in Algeria, and we have invitations to be a part of this work. We just need workers.

## When you pray ....

\*I will be traveling to Afghanistan July 13-26. Please pray for Susan and the kids as I travel.

\*I will be traveling to Afghanistan July 13-26. Please pray for Susan and the kids as I travel.

\*I will be re-writing our security protocols [policies and procedures] in the coming weeks.

\*Protection for workers around the world especially in Iraq as a new government asserts control.

\*My oldest son is starting college in Fall, and is considering marriage.

**Robert & Joy Garrett                      P.O. Box 30, Ruwa, Zimbabwe  
June 2004**

We have been back in Zimbabwe almost two months now and it seems like yesterday. In some ways things here are better than they were a year ago. There is food in the shops but at a price. Fuel is readily available at about US\$2.70 per gallon. The first of June we had to make a quick trip down to South Africa to get some truck tires and a few other things and must go again next month.

Cement has become available and we purchased 4 tons to finish the Epworth building and 8 tons to start the Bulawayo building. (US\$136.00 per ton). Next week I plan to go to Bulawayo to oversee the pouring of the concrete for the column bases. Bro. Zilawe had to make two round trips in our four-ton truck to ferry the eight tons. Unfortunately the truck suffered two blow-outs. (The rear wheels are dual.) The quality of the Zimbabwe-made tires leaves much to be desired. I hope to buy better quality ones in South Africa, but can only get two or three each time we go. We have three of these four-ton trucks. Two are used as church buses and one for haulage. Only one is moving now because of the tire problem.

A New Congregation, Hwange: We just got back late Sunday night from Hwange where we spent 6 days in a meeting with a new congregation there. Hwange is a coal-mining town. The church there had requested some special teaching from us, especially prophecy. We had a good time in the Lord of fellowship and study. There are two deaf-mute women in the church who attended every meeting. They had been educated in a school for the deaf and learned to read and write English! But have never heard a word in any language. One of the sisters usually sits with them and writes out on paper the scripture references and the headings of the topics of the lesson. I gave them each an NIV Bible. They were very happy and proud of those Bibles. They are working hard on another deaf-mute girl, try-

ing to convert her to Christ. That girl did attend one of the meetings but of course could not understand much.

There were no meetings during the day except for a women's class in the afternoon, which Joy taught. The night meetings were held in a school classroom. I gave lessons on prophecy each night for five nights, Tuesday through Saturday. Then on Wednesday through Saturday they had two lessons each night.: Bro Khumalo (our minister in Bulawayo) on Wednesday and Thursday; and then Bro Chibura (our minister in Rimuka) on Friday and Saturday.

**Cost of Fuel:** Many in the USA ask us about the cost of fuel here. It is approx US\$2.70 per gallon. Well, cost of fuel for the round trip of 2,090 Kilometers (1,298 miles) was Z\$761,800. which works out to US\$144. That included a side trip up to the Victoria Falls which was only 50 miles from Hwange. Khumalos and Chiburas had never seen the Falls so we treated them with a morning trip. As always, the Falls were a truly glorious, impressive sight, although the great Zambezi river being in full flood caused so much spray to rise up that much was obscured and the wind would blow the spray onto the sightseers and drench any not prepared to wear raincoats. We were not prepared so we got soaked.

**NIV Study Bibles:** While we were in the USA some brethren gave me money to purchase NIV Study Bibles. I bought 35 and sent them ahead of us in three spaced lots by mail. One of the mailbags containing nine Bibles was somehow destroyed at the Cincinnati sorting office, but the others came through. I have given some, and will be giving these, out to leaders in different congregations who will make good use of them.

**Famine Relief:** Most areas have enough food, as the rains were good last growing season in most areas. However, brethren in Kamativi were still suffering and we sent a one-ton load of corn in May to help the Christians there.

**THE PASSION:**

## **Opening Doors in the Middle East**

by Lane Powell

By now, the movie *The Passion of the Christ* is old news here in the US. But in late March, as the rush to see it was slowing down here, the movie began opening in the Middle East, including countries in the Arabian Peninsula.

It caused a huge stir of interest among many of the Muslim people of that region. Reports from OM staff and other Christians in the Middle East started surfacing, telling of their personal encounters with people who had seen the movie or who had heard about it and wanted to know more. It was causing many Muslims to be curious about Jesus and want to know more of His story. That provided more open doors than usual for Christians to talk openly about the Gospel.

According to media reports, in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates, the movie broke all previous attendance records. In Lebanon it accounted for 80 percent of all movie attendance on its opening weekend and closed its first week with approximately 10,000 box office admissions.

Christians reported that in Jordan people exited theaters and asked for Bibles in Arabic. Although Saudi Arabia has no movie theaters, there were reports that pirated DVD versions of the movie were making the rounds among curious Muslims who had found a way to see the movie everyone else was talking about.

A Christian worker in a Middle Eastern country said that two Muslim friends asked him, "Do you have the New Testament in Arabic? Me [sic] and all my friends want to read it!" Another asked how to find the Bible on the Internet. Their interest came from the film. This worker said, "We have been able to give away more Arabic Bibles and Arabic *Jesus* videos in the past two weeks [since the movie opened] than we were able to give out over the past year. The openness is unprecedented ... Jesus continues to be a major topic of discussion." In one country where there is the freedom to have Christian literature, a man walked into a Christian bookshop and asked the manager about the book *The Passion of the Christ* was based on. He was directed to an Arabic New Testament, and the manager explained where to find the account of the crucifixion. The man bought the New Testament.

In another part of the Arabian Peninsula, a Christian worker wrote that she had a local friend who wanted to see the movie. As they drove to the theater, the Arab woman said that her friends told

her not to see the movie because it would "put pain in her heart that would not go away." She said she knew nothing about the movie or the main character and asked for some background information on the way. After viewing the movie, she said, "Now I have a pain in my heart that won't go away." The Christian worker responded, "I don't have pain in my heart because I know the whole story." The local woman asked to know more and wondered if there was a book to explain it. That night she received a New Testament and the rest of the story.

A Christian woman in a Middle Eastern country said she sat next to three local women in the theater and after the movie one asked her, "Is everything He said really true? Did it really happen like that?" The Christian asked if they had ever heard the story before. "No."

### **"God really loves us! He cares about us!"**

She discussed Jesus' words and explained the Gospel: "I explained that Jesus not only died for His friends, but also for His enemies. He asked the Father to forgive those who tortured and killed Him. He died so that these girls personally could receive forgiveness for their sins, and that Jesus would come and live in them and give them eternal life. One girl then exclaimed, 'God really loves us! He cares about us! But no one knows this! They don't know God's love!' Pray that these girls truly believe and are not swayed. The Christian later wrote, "Workers in this region have sought for years for opportunities to share their faith with locals, with little or no opportunity or receptivity. People have gone to prison or been deported for giving out Christian materials. And yet the Lord has brought this movie to town."

Although the movie doesn't present the whole story of the Gospel [*see the following 2 articles -avw*], it's stirring up curiosity to know more. Some had heard nothing of Jesus, others know Islam teaches he is a prophet, and they revere Him as such. But Islam also teaches that Jesus wasn't killed on the cross but that a substitute died in His place. Seeing a powerful film that contradicts that is at least making some want to explore the topic more. Similarly, a young Arab woman saw the movie and was still crying about it a day later. Her parents asked her why, and she replied, "Because He taught them to love their enemies!" She could hardly grasp such a concept. Perhaps such a startling idea will move her and others like her to learn more about this Jesus.

--From *OM InDeed* (Operation Mobilization), Summer 2004

# CRUSHED At The CROSS

Victor Knowles

In the opening scene of the movie *The Passion of the Christ*, Satan appears in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus is praying. Director Mel Gibson had a woman play the part, with a man's voice dubbed in, played in slow-mo. The androgynous appearance is a clever stroke because sin is often attractive and repulsive at the same time. Though Satan is called a "prince of darkness" he has the ability to transform himself into as "angel of light." He is the master of masquerades. While Jesus agonizes in prayer, Satan lurks in the shadows, suggesting to Jesus that He is not strong enough to bear the weight of the world's sin.

Some have said that Satan was not present in Gethsemane. Was he? We know that he was once in another garden – the Garden of Eden. It was there he heard the voice of God telling him that the promised Messiah – "the seed of woman" – would bruise his head (Genesis 3:15). In the movie, this thought is transported in time to the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus crushes the head of the serpent.

We also know that the devil came to Jesus during his 40-day fast in the wilderness and tempted Him. There he attempted to get Jesus to doubt His identity. Twice he said, "If you are the Son of God..." (Matthew 4:3,6). Luke's account says that when the devil had ended his temptations, he departed from Jesus "until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13 ESV). What more "opportune time" than just before Jesus went to the Cross to atone for the sins of the world? I believe that it is possible that Satan was in the Garden of Gethsemane. In fact, I would surmise that it is probable because scripture says that when Jesus was arrested in the garden, He said, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). Satan, of course, is the ruler of darkness (Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:13).

The devil did not have full knowledge of what Jesus was going to do. God alone is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. But the devil had to know something "big" was up. He is not called Satan for nothing (Satan means adversary). An adversary has to know something about his opponent's game plan! God's eternal purpose cannot be thwarted (Isa. 49: 8-13). Satan does not possess less factual knowledge than man. He roams the earth (Job 1:7). He sees and hears things. Even before Messiah was born, Satan was waiting to devour the child (Rev. 12: 1-5). After He was born, Satan (working through Herod) attempted to have Him slain (Matt. 2:1-13).



Here are my thoughts (my "viewpoint" if you will!) on what may have happened. Working on his knowledge of what God was up to, Satan, sought to divert Jesus from His divine mission. That Satan knew that Jesus was the Son of God there can be no doubt (Mark 1:24). That is why he tried to inject doubt into the mind of Christ as to who He was (Matt. 4: 1-11). Later he successfully infiltrated the ranks of Jesus, actually entering one of the 12 disciples, Judas, who betrayed Christ (Luke 22: 3,4; John 13: 2,27).

Can there be any doubt that if Satan could enter one of the twelve, he could enter some in the mob, who cried, "Let Him be crucified!" But then something strange and wonderful takes place at Calvary. Jesus has been nailed to the Cross. And His first words – the very first of those "magnificent seven" sayings from the Cross – are, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Satan (can there be any doubt that he would be there to see that his job was finished?) got a glimpse of what was coming. Forgiveness!

Seeing what was coming, he immediately goes to work. For the very first words spoken to the Cross are "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." Those words were uttered by some passing by, but I have to believe that someone darker than the darkening clouds "inspired" them to say them. And those words have a very familiar ring, do they not? "If you are the Son of God ..." Then the unrepentant thief takes it up, "If you are the Christ, save yourself and us." And what does Jesus do? Promises Paradise to the penitent thief! He became, as Sheen so eloquently put it, "the first soul purchased over the counter of Calvary by the coins of Redemption." Satan is getting very nervous now. So the religious intelligentsia get into the act. "If He is the King of Israel, he has but to come down from the cross." Why does everyone suddenly want Jesus to come down from the Cross? Because if He comes down from the Cross (and He could have) it means God's plan to redeem man has been thwarted!

It was a Roman centurion who, upon seeing the way in which Christ died, drove the nail into Satan's coffin when he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" If a man who helped nail Jesus to the Cross could see that He was the Son of God, what hope was there now? In Gibson's movie Satan is seen in a dry cavernous place, screaming in rage. The truth of God's redemption plan – and his own death knell – hit home (Heb 2:14; Col. 2:13-15; 1 John 3:8). The tables have been turned. The jig is up. The game is over, Jesus has been crushed at the cross but the crushing has satisfied God (Isa. 53:5), redeemed man and defeated Satan!

*--The Knowlesletter*

# WHY DID JESUS DIE?

By Joe Phelps

[Joe Phelps is a pastor of Highland Baptist Church in Louisville.]

The world is abuzz about "The Passion of the Christ." I admit, I didn't want to see it. I couldn't make it through "The Pianist" or "Gladiator." How could I endure two hours of torture – on the screen and in my gut? But when popular culture is talking about your story, you better know what is being said.

The movie is graphic and repulsive, generally following the New Testament accounts of the death of Jesus. It includes some interesting plot twists and stylized visual metaphors, which make it more than merely a re-enactment. So it's a mixed bag.

More than anything else, "The Passion" invites the ageless question that has followed every oral or artistic retelling of the death of Jesus through the centuries: Why did Jesus die? How do we understand the purpose of his death?

While this may seem to be an important question only for current or prospective Christians, in fact, it is a key issue for any society whose majority religion is Christian. How Christians understand and apply their most elementary faith story has enormous implications for the rest of society, and for the world.

The movie opens with an Old Testament quote from Isaiah 53. "He was wounded for our transgressions." This suggests the most popular understanding of Jesus' death in our day: Jesus, the perfect one sent from God, is given as a substitute for human sin that God could not condone. As Isaiah wrote, "By his bruises we are healed." This is a fine Biblical picture for Jesus' death.

That is, unless it becomes the *only* picture. Alone, the substitution image creates problems. Is what happens a kind of swap with the devil – Jesus in exchange for humanity? Or is it a way to allow God to stand the sight of us? Does someone really have to die? If God is God, why couldn't God change the rules? And what happens to those who aren't persuaded by this particular picture of God and Jesus?

This picture of Jesus' death, on which "The Passion" focuses its energies, doesn't speak to many people today, especially those outside the church. There's too much baggage. Too broad a cultural chasm.

The good news is that in God's extravagance, there are other pictures that point to meanings of Jesus' death. For example, the political meaning. This view requires unpacking what Jesus said and did, something "The Passion" doesn't have (or take) time to explore. Jesus conveys the depth of God's love for every facet of our lives, not just our souls, but our well being. Threatened by Jesus' message of inclusive love and advocacy for the powerless, as well as his criticisms of the religious establishment (which happened to be Jewish in Jesus' context, but might be Baptist in our day), the political and religious leaders executed him to silence his message. (Easter, then, is about God's vindication of his message.)

Close to this is another picture: In dying, Jesus overcomes the "powers and principalities of this present darkness" (in the words of St. Paul)--that is, all that oppresses, obscures, and obliterates God's intentions for humanity. In his death, as brutal and public as it was, the futility of violence is exposed once and for all.

Another view of Jesus' death is that it shows us the way to live as God's children - sacrificially, laying down our lives for others, advocating for God's intention for the world, no matter the consequences. "Take up your cross and follow me," Jesus said. This view sees Jesus' death, and Jesus himself, as the way to be followed with our lives, not merely to be believed with our heads.

The major meanings of Jesus' death, when held together, create a composite picture that has depth and breadth. They tell the whole story. "The Passion of the Christ" paints but one facet of this composite, in vivid color. But in omitting the other facets, "The Passion" ends up being a rendition that is fairly one-dimensional and only minimally helpful.

Still, I am grateful that everyone is talking about the death of Jesus. Now, if only the church will provide some faithful renditions of the other important meanings of Jesus' death, in word and in deed.

# "WE WILL THAT THIS BODY DIE" 200 Years Later

Leroy Garrett

I greatly admire that little document of but five pages called *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*. Back in 1979 in my journal *Restoration Review* I celebrated its 175th anniversary with an editorial titled : "175 Years Later: 'Let This Body Die.'" In that editorial I noted that we should not let 1979 pass without giving tribute to what our pioneers did back in 1804 -- an acceptable date for the beginning of Churches of Christ/Christian Churches in this country. I added: "We are their heirs, and we are less than faithful to our heritage if we fail to emulate their faith and courage."

A few years later -- in the 1987 *Restoration Review* -- I wrote about that little document again under the title "Pray More And Dispute Less." That is a quotation from the document, one more thing that its authors "willed" to those that would receive it -- "We will that preachers and people cultivate a spirit of mutual forbearance; pray more and dispute less." I noted that our problem in recent generations has been that we reversed the order -- we've disputed more and prayed less! I also observed that their call for forbearance was in keeping with the apostolic plea -- "Preserve the Spirit's unity with forbearing love" (Eph. 4:2-3). I pointed out that those pioneers -- like the apostle Paul -- in calling for forbearance recognized that there would be differences and diversities to deal with -- otherwise there would be nothing to forbear. They were calling for unity in diversity. We can differ -- at least on marginal issues -- and still be one together in the body of Christ.

Earlier this year at the ACU Lectures I helped celebrate the document's 200th anniversary -- 1804-2004. I presented a paper on "Freedom in *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*." I ventured to list seven freedoms I found there. Quoting extensively from the document in listing the freedoms, I reproduced a large part of it.

You might be interested in seeing them here. They should give you a feel for what the document is about.

## 1. Freedom from Separatism

"We will that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large; for there is but one Body and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling."

## 2. Freedom to Study the Bible

"We will that the people may have free course to the Bible."

## 3. Freedom from Arbitrary External Authority

"We will that the church of Christ resume her native right of internal government . . . and choose her own preacher, and support him by a free will offering . . . and never henceforth delegate her right of government to any man or set of men whatever."

## 4. Freedom from the Creeds of Men

"We will that the people henceforth take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven . . . and cast the other books into the fire."

## 5. Freedom from Divisive Disputation

"We will that preachers and people cultivate a spirit of mutual forbearance; pray more and dispute less."

## 6. Free the Oppressed!

"We will that the Synod of Kentucky examine every member who may be suspected of having departed from the Confession of Faith, and suspend every such suspected heretic immediately -- in order that the oppressed may go free, and taste the sweets of gospel liberty."

## 7. Freedom from Partyism

"We will that Ja---, the author of two letters lately published in Lexington, be encouraged in his zeal to destroy partyism."

The document's bicentennial was especially celebrated at the place of its inception -- Cane Ridge in Kentucky -- this summer. Leaders from all three churches of the Movement were there. There were stirring messages on the imperative of unity in the body of Christ, which properly reflects the message of the document. I could be there only in spirit. At the same time I was helping the First Christian Church in Garland, Tx. celebrate their Heritage Sunday -- a church that dates back to the 1870s. I told them that when their church began we were still a united people pleading for "the unity of all the Christians in the sects" -- and not divided into three churches as we are today.

In sharing with them about their heritage, I told them we would have never divided -- as Alexander Campbell said we wouldn't -- had we been true to the principles of unity set forth by our pioneers. I told them that those principles were set forth in a brief document

called *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* -- drawn up 200 years ago this very month of June! It was written and signed by five former Presbyterian ministers -- Barton W. Stone being one of them -- who were so influenced by a great revival at Cane Ridge three years earlier that they resolved to reject all forms of sectarianism and be Christians only.

Struggling to find their way as reformers, they early on created -- as good Presbyterians would -- a presbytery for their several congregations that they called The Springfield Presbytery. But it was not and they were not really Presbyterian any longer -- just Christians, the name their congregations took. As they studied the Scriptures together with an eye for reformation, changes kept coming. When they resolved to be baptized by immersion -- and finding no one at hand who would oblige them -- they proceeded to immerse each other.

Now having hearts for the unity of all God's people -- and a disdain for divisions among Christians -- they feared the presbytery they had created might be an obstacle to their plea. They resolved to lay it to rest. Their method of doing so was a stroke of genius -- perhaps inspired by the Holy Spirit. They drew up a "Last Will and Testament" for their dying ecclesiastical body! One might see a touch of humor in it all, and it is a bit quizzical. They were serious, but they were having fun -- such as, after willing that the people take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven, they urged that all other books (creeds) be "cast into the fire if they choose; for it is better to enter into life having one book, than having many to be cast into hell."

The document gives us one line that captures the genius of the Movement, "We will that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large, for there is but one Body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling." They not only saw that the church by its very nature is one, but that any form of sectarianism is inimical to that one church. Sects therefore should not exist; they should make out a will and die -- including our own!

All this was going on -- which was the beginning of the Barton W. Stone movement -- while Alexander Campbell was still a teenager back in Ireland. While it shows that Stone had precedence over Campbell in time, it also shows that the Stone movement already had in place the things that Campbell would later champion -- and do so very well indeed.

In fact, Campbell was so obviously the one to lead the Movement that Stone himself recognized this early on. "I am constrained,

and willingly constrained," he said, "to acknowledge him the greatest promoter of this reformation than any man living."

By now at First Christian in Garland I had donned my raccoon cap and cane and was portraying Raccoon John Smith before the combined classes. They had read in my autobiography that I fooled around in this manner and wanted to see it for themselves. Raccoon went on to tell how the older Stone showed such grace to the younger Campbell as to say, "I will not say there are no faults in brother Campbell; but that there are fewer perhaps in him than any man I know on earth."

Then Raccoon said, "While it's a big word for a country preacher like me, that's what I call *magnanimity*."

I'll borrow a word from Raccoon and say that is what I make of one of our founding documents, *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, bequeathed to us two centuries ago this summer by frontier pathfinders for Christian unity. It is magnanimous.

It tells us who we are or who we are supposed to be.

---

## Monitoring our Christian Speech

By Steven Clark Goad

**"But I tell you that men will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." Matthew 12:36,37**

We live in an age when we are so bombarded by expressions and figures of speech that we become unconsciously overwhelmed by them and unduly influenced. With the average household watching some five to six hours of television per day, much of it primetime sleaze, is it any wonder we and our kids start talking like the irreverent ones we observe role-playing on the tube? We pick up cutesy little phrases that roll off our tongues without thought. "Yadda, yadda, yadda." I still have no idea what that means. Must be Yiddish or something of the sort. I know what "Yabba dabba dooooooo" means.

A "Reverend" from out of town was talking to me on the phone hoping to get me to give some money to a friend of his "just passing through." When I asked for some confirmation of who he was and who the person was in need of aid, he said, "My God, man, what is

this, a trial or something?" I asked him why a man of the cloth would take the Lord's name in vain like that. He proceeded to really show his temper. Expletives spewed forth like an erupting volcano. So much for that telephone scam. "Nipped in the bud" as Barney would say.

Often I will hear teens walking by the church house cry out, "Oh my God!" They have just discovered some new bit of gossip I presume. I don't think they're praying.

A lady won a few dollars on a country radio station and exploded with, "Oh, my God! Oh, my God! I can't believe it. Oh, my God!" The sound of such ill-advised and profane talk sickened my stomach. All I could do was turn off the radio. No wonder we are viewing television and listening to radio less and less.

Then as I was listening to a talk program a man suddenly exclaimed, "Jesus Christ! Why don't you pay attention to what I'm saying?" If he were trying to gain my attention, he lost it immediately with such vulgar obscenity. Living in a world of paganism, hedonism and humanism, we are hardly shocked at this kind of daily blasphemy against the very one who created us in His image.

Have you noticed that among the impiety and filthy talk of the human race it seems to be open season on the biblical concept of God? When was the last time you heard someone say, "Oh, my Buddha?" When someone messes up at work or at school, do they cry out, "Bob Hope" or "Mohammed"? Never. If the name of the Lord our God can be blasphemed, it will be. And what troubles me most is that it is creeping into our minds and mouths. I heard a Christian youth say "My God" recently with a parent standing within earshot and not a word of discipline or correction was offered. Why not? I think it may be from becoming so desensitized that we are hardly aware of how slowly we are becoming like the rest of the world. Heaven help us.

From *The Christian Chronicle*, Sept. 2004. [Steven Clark Goad ministers for the Blythe, California Church. His recent book *This Present Chaos and A Unity Cordial* deal with the causes of and cures for a divided Restoration Movement. Contact him at [goadandco@hotmail.com](mailto:goadandco@hotmail.com) ]



# NADAB AND ABIHU

Edward Fudge in GracEmail

A correspondent asks, "Can you give me some thoughts on the fate of Nadab and Abihu, whom God destroyed by fire when they erred in their worship? Could I not receive the same fate as these men if I make a mistake while serving God?"

\* \* \*

This story is frequently used by those who argue for a detailed pattern of Christian worship based on their own logical deductions from various Scripture verses, and who condemn others who do not conform exactly to that pattern. Yet there is not one example in the whole Bible, so far as I can find, of any person whom God punished or even reprimanded, for making an honest mistake while clearly trying to do the right thing with a reverent attitude.

Nadab and Abihu are no exception. These were men of unusual privilege and spiritual background. They had enjoyed a special appearance and view of God, with Moses and Aaron on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:9-11). They were sons of Aaron, the first high priest. The very story of their judgment and deaths in Leviticus 10 itself indicates that they did not reverence God (v. 1-3). The text suggests that they might even have been intoxicated when they went into the Tent of Meeting with their "strange fire" (v. 8-9). Their problem was not the honest mistake of humble men, but the presumptuous acts of men who did not reverence God.

The rest of the story tells how their two younger brothers, Eleazar and Ithamar, also violating a specific command of God by not eating the meat of the sin offering (v.16-18). Moses was angry about this transgression, but Aaron explained that these younger brothers disobeyed the command to eat the offering because they felt unworthy (v. 19). "And when Moses heard that, it seemed good in his sight" (v. 20). Apparently God agreed with Moses about the matter, because these brothers lived on and Eleazar became the high priest upon Aaron's death.

Reprinted from GracEmail by permission. To subscribe free to GracEmail, go to [www.EdwardFudge.com](http://www.EdwardFudge.com)

# NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

**Sign of the Times** (“mark of the beast?”) Boca Middle School. When teachers take attendance at a new middle school next month, they won't need a notebook or even a piece of paper. They can depend on biometric hand readers to do the job.

**Revival:** Fisherville Church of Christ (Kentucky) July 25-28 with evangelist Earl C. Mullins Jr.

**Ralph Ave. Church of Christ** (Louisville) announces their 51<sup>st</sup> Homecoming Day July 18<sup>th</sup>. Sunday school 9:45 a.m., Worship at 10:50 a.m. Basket Dinner.

**30th Annual Central Louisiana Christian Fellowship...**is announcing this meeting to be held at Glenmora, LA. Church of Christ November 15-18, 2004. Night theme: “The Church's Responsibility in the 21st Century.” Daytime sessions will focus on: “Prophetic Portrayals of Christ in Exodus.” A complete program will be forthcoming. Information re: housing etc., contact Dennis LeDoux at 318-748-4243

**Music Week at Woodland** is July 25-Aug.2 with directors John Fulda and Paul Denny.

**Summer Olympics...**is more than an athletic event to be held in Athens Greece this summer beginning in August. The Coridallos congregation sees it as an evangelistic opportunity and covets our prayers for their “buying up the opportunity” to reach souls for Christ. This is the work that our Bro. George Galanis ministered with

since 1964. Pray for the leaders as they seek God's direction in witnessing to literally thousands of young people who come there next month. “To God be the glory!”

**What's Going On...**in your congregation that can be shared with others? A special thanks to you who have taken the responsibility off the minister and are furnishing us with information. Our purpose in this is in no way meant to compare with other churches but exciting things that God is doing where you are is encouraging to others. Newspapers focus on the negative happenings in the world. Our focus is on the positive things that are going on in churches. Let us continue to “encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Heb. 10:25)

**Woodland Bible Camp...**for summer 2004 is reporting good attendance & several baptisms already. Don't forget the 50th year celebration to be Saturday, September 11th. Join with other alumni of the camp and Sr. Citizen's are especially encouraged to stay for the following week (12-16).

**School of Biblical Studies...**fall semester begins in August. Prospective students can contact the Buechel Church of Christ at (502) 499-0724 for registration information and classes being offered this semester. Ministers, are you encouraging your people to take advantage of these classes? The fellowship alone is worth the time.

**Missionary Biography: the Shewmakers** Some W&W readers will

remember J.C. and Joyce Copeland Shewmaker. She was a member of the first graduating class (1928) from Portland Christian High School in Louisville. They met at Harding College, married, and spent many decades in Africa. Charles R. Webb has written their biography, *Putting Out the Fleece*. It is available @ \$15 from J. C. Choate, P.O. Box 72, Winona, MS 38967, MS. Phone: 662-283-1192. Or email [Choate@WorldEvangelism.org](mailto:Choate@WorldEvangelism.org) Do not order from us.

**'GAMALIEL'** -- Several weeks back we mentioned a satirical email column by "Gamaliel" (gracEmail subscriber and pastor Rick Presley) advising would-be Pharisees in the perfection of that profession. Rick's email server has been down but he is now up again and you can subscribe to his column by writing him at [presleys@redbird.net](mailto:presleys@redbird.net) . -Edward Fudge in GracEmail

**"Have you noticed that all the people in favor of birth control are already born?" - Benny Hill**

**Reported in the World Convention News:**

A graduate of Emmanuel School of Religion, Col. Gene 'Chip' Fowler is commander of the 300 chaplains with the USA forces in Iraq. ARM International (Joplin Missouri, USA) has sent its first collapsible portable baptistry to Iraq. Both Emmanuel and ARM are ministries of the Christian Churches.

A May conference of Churches of Christ in Moscow was attended by 225 people from 40 churches.

*Dear all Woodland Bible Campers*  
*Woodland Bible*

---

---

## Woodland Bible Camp-- 50th Year Celebration

Woodland Bible Camp celebrates *50 years of Christian camping* in 2004. On Sept. 11, a special day of commemoration will be held on the campgrounds. So save the date and mark your calendar now. Plan to attend to reminisce about former camp days, renew friendships, and learn and see what is happening at camp now.

### Schedule for Sat., Sept. 11, 2004

Activities for all ages beginning at 1 p.m.

Celebration Program at 3:30 p.m.

Celebration Banquet at 5 p.m.

Evening Activities to follow

The camp will be open for overnight camping Friday evening, Sept. 10, 2004, for anyone wishing to come in advance of the Celebration Day. However, formal activities will not start until the afternoon of the 11th. Overnight camping will be available for Saturday, the 11th, as well. A fee will be charged for camp use for overnight camping. There will be a worship service at camp on Sunday morning, Sept. 12.

If you are a former camper or know former campers, please pass on this information. Any current addresses, phone numbers, emails, etc. of former campers would be greatly appreciated in order to notify as many camp alumni as possible.

The Celebration Banquet is free, but reservations for it or for staying at camp are needed by August 31. You may send reservations or inquiries to Alan Borders, R. 3, Box 649, Linton, IN 47441, (812) 847-7385. You may also contact Fonda Pound Carey, Louisville, (502) 459-0675 or David Pound, Indianapolis, (317) 298-4730, email [Poundhouse@aol.com](mailto:Poundhouse@aol.com) for more information.

Times listed are local (Linton, Indiana) -- that is, Central Daylight Savings Time (1 hour earlier than Louisville).