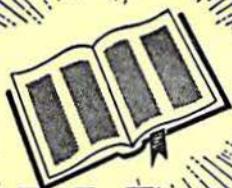
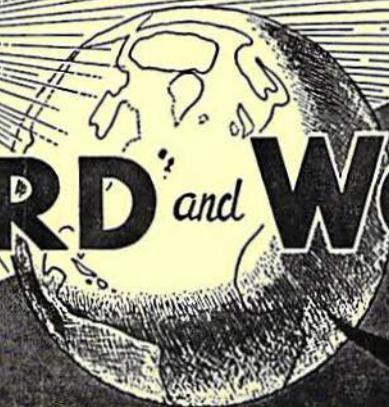


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The **WORD** and **WORK**



"Holding forth the Word of life."

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER, 1991

The MAGNIFICENCE of JESUS our LORD

"If you make **doctrine** the main thing, you are very likely to grow narrow-minded. If you make your own **experience** the main thing, you will become gloomy and critical of others. If you make **ordinances** the main thing, you will be apt to grow merely formal. But you can never make too much of the living **Christ Jesus**. Remember that all things else are for His sake. Doctrines and ordinances are the planets, but Christ is the sun. Get to love Him best of all."

—Charles H. Spurgeon

* * *

"Jesus Christ is my Lord and God and Savior and Song day and night. I can live without food, without drink, without sleep, without air, but I cannot live without Jesus."

—Charles Malik

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SPECIAL OFFER

GOOD NEWS & BAD NEWS: A recent letter from a preacher said, "Smiles for the August *Word and Work*. There are some good things for people to read on principles of good parenting. Sadly, I only know of one couple besides me in our congregation that get your magazine. I would like several to see this issue especially. I am wondering, *would you have any extras left over* that I could give to some key folks? If so, what would be the cost? Perhaps it would even encourage some to subscribe...."

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THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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THEME:

The MAGNIFICENCE of JESUS our CHRIST

"Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee"

Alex V. Wilson, Compiler

In this issue we want to turn our eyes upon Jesus, and become enraptured anew with His splendor. By means of poems, quotes, meditations and study of various Scriptures, let us focus our hearts and minds on Him—great Savior and Shepherd that He is.

Of course He is the Ineffable, the Unexplainable, the Inexpressible, the High One who transcends our minds' ability to grasp and tell. The songwriter asks, "Who can sing the worthy praise of the wonderful love of Jesus?" True enough; but at least we can try . . . and experience stunning delight in our trying. Read, enjoy and adore.

Jesus—Theme of ALL the Bible

In Genesis Christ is the seed of the woman; in Exodus He is the Passover Lamb; in Leviticus He is the atoning sacrifice; in Numbers He is the smitten rock; in Deuteronomy He is the prophet; in Joshua He is the Captain of the Lord's host; in Judges He is the Deliverer.

In Ruth the Lord is the heavenly kinsman; in Samuel through Chronicles He is the promised King; in Ezra and Nehemiah He is the restorer of the nation; in Esther He is the advocate; in Job He is our redeemer; in Psalms He is our All in All; in Proverbs He is our pattern; in Ecclesiastes He is our goal; in the Song of Solomon He is our satisfier; in the Prophets He is the coming Prince of Peace; in the Gospels He is Christ present to seek and to save; in Acts He is Christ Risen; in the Epistles He is Christ at the Father's right hand; in the Revelation He is Christ returning and reigning.

All Good Things Point to HIM

A. W. Tozer

This One is He who exhausted all metaphors. Look in the Old Testament and you will find every metaphor and every symbol, everything the human mind could understand. Everything that God could say to make the mind understand was exhausted to set forth the glories of this One that we call Christ.

The prophets of old times looked at the sun and said, "He is the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings." They looked at the stars and said, "He will be the Star of the morning to tell of the

coming Day." They looked at the rock and said, "He is the Rock in the midst of a weary land." They saw the bold raging lion and they said, "He is the Lion of Judah." And they saw the lamb yielding himself and they said, "He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world."

Jesus: Heaven's Joy, Our Joy

Frederick Faber

Whatever is good and holy, whatever is beautiful and joyous, Jesus is that to His servants. No one need be poor, because if he chooses, he can have Jesus for his own property and possession. No one need be downcast, for Jesus is the joy of heaven, and it is His joy to enter into sorrowful hearts.

We can exaggerate about many things; but we can never exaggerate our obligation to Jesus, or the compassionate abundance of the love of Jesus to us. All our lives long we might talk of Jesus, and yet we should never come to an end of the sweet things that might be said of Him. Eternity will not be long enough to learn all He is, or to praise Him for all He has done, but then, that matters not; for we shall be always with Him, and we desire nothing more.

Testimony of a Statesman

I speak to you as a Christian. *Jesus Christ is my Lord and God and Savior and Song day and night. I can live without food, without drink, without sleep, without air, but I cannot live without Jesus;* Without Him I would have perished long ago. Without Him and His church reconciling man to God the world would have perished long ago. I live in and on the Bible for long hours every day. The Bible is the source of every good thought and impulse I have. In the Bible God Himself, the Creator of everything from nothing, speaks to me and to the world directly, about Himself, about ourselves, and about His will for the course of events and for the consummation of history. And believe me, not a day passes without my crying from the bottom of my heart, "Come, Lord Jesus!" I know He is coming with Glory to judge the living and the dead, but in my impatience I sometimes cannot wait, and I find myself in my infirmity crying with David, "How long, Lord?" And I know His Kingdom shall have no end.
—from a speech by Charles Malik, former ambassador from Lebanon to the U.S., and also formerly president of the United Nations General Assembly.

He Came, He Shall Come, He Comes

John Stott

"Coming" is a verb with quite a distinctive Christian flavor when God in Christ is its subject. It reminds us that our Christian religion is grounded upon the divine initiative, upon God "coming" after us in our need, not upon our reaching after Him. He "came

into the world to save sinners;" that is the heart of Christmas. "Behold, He *cometh* with clouds;" that is the message of Advent. But between these two historical comings, past and future, we are not to think of Him as altogether absent. "I will not leave you comfortless; I will *come* to you," He promised, alluding to His presence through the Holy Spirit within and among His people. He came. He shall come. He comes. These three tenses of the verb "to come" are a brief summary of the Christian religion, and combine the elements of historical fact and personal experience. We must be careful at Advent and Christmas not to become too engrossed with His coming to the crib and his coming on the clouds, that we forget His coming today, so urgently needed to endue the Church with power for its task.

Incarnation

George W. Truett

Christ is the power of God in His own person. Historic, apostolic, supernatural Christianity stands or falls with the person of Christ. Fearlessly we take our stand just here, and declare that human nature did not and could not produce Christ. If human nature could produce one Christ, why has it not in the two thousand years that followed the Savior of Galilee—why has it not produced another His equal?

The answer is that the task is entirely too stupendous for poor human nature to accomplish, for Christ was both God and man in one personality—the God-man. Never did hyphen mean what it means here. The God-man—it both joins and divides; it marks distinction and yet unity. Christ was really man as though He were not God, and really God as though He were not man—the God-man. Here stands out vast the doctrine of the incarnation. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself."

High and Holy, Meek and Lowly

Ephraem of Syria (300 - 379 A.D.)

Child of Bethlehem, what contrasts you embrace! No one has ever been so *humble*; no one has ever wielded such *power*. We stand in awe of your *holiness*, and yet we are bathed in your *love*.

And where shall we look for you? You are in high heaven, in the glory of the Godhead. Yet those who searched for you on earth found you in a tiny baby at Mary's breast. We come in hushed reverence to find you as God, and you welcome us as man. We come unthinkingly to find you as man, and are blinded by the light of your Godhead....

Never was there a king like you! Instead of royal isolation, you made yourself available to everyone who needed you. Instead of high security, you made yourself vulnerable to those who hated you.

It is we who need you, above anything in the world. You give yourself to us with such total generosity, that it might almost seem that you need us. There never was a king like this before!

THE EXCELLENCE OF CHRIST

Paul Fromer

Jesus Christ is the center of Biblical Christianity. He is the reason we are Christians. His glory has captured us.

But what do we mean by His glory? The New Testament alone refers to it over 100 times directly, with at least that many more allusions. Yet like loyalty or beauty it has subjective overtones that defy description.

However as a rule of thumb we can say that a synonym for "glory" is the word "excellence." When we read of the glory of Christ, we should think of His excellence, and this term will sometimes be substituted for it in this article.

Let's consider some of the main things the Bible says about the glory of Christ.

2 *Corinthians* 4:3-4 "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of *the gospel of the glory of Christ*, who is the likeness of God."

What phrases come to your mind when you think of the content of the gospel? The sinfulness of man, justification by faith, eternal life, redemption, belief in Christ? These are all Biblical but there is one I seldom hear mentioned. It is "the glory of Christ." Paul says that the gospel concerns the glory of Christ.

These are days of confusion concerning the content of the gospel. Some say that the gospel concerns "the four facts every man should know": all have sinned, the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life, so receive Him. It is true that this is part of the theological backbone of the gospel but many non-Christians have been confused due to the final phrase "receive Him." Rather the Christian should say "believe it" if all he has presented is theology.

In presenting the gospel we must present theology, but the words of Ruth Paxson are still true, "The gospel involves *something* to be believed and *someone* to be received." Do we place all our emphasis on the first half? The Bible is both theological and personal. The gospel concerns the glory of Christ. We must present Him as glorious if we wish the non-Christian to receive Him.

Until we present someone more excellent than the unbeliever yet knows, why should he abandon his present satisfactions, even though they are slight? When you present the gospel do you present the "glory of Christ?" Why not resolve to do so? Part of His excellence surely concerns the kind of man He was. Do you include this? As a corollary to this verse, would it be fair to say that the one who has never beheld the glory of Christ is not a Christian? The verse seems to imply that the sign of release from Satan is the light of the glory of Christ.

John 1:14. When the disciple John wanted to sum up in a single phrase his three years with Christ, he attempted a difficult task, but he does it in four words, "We beheld his glory." Can you sum up last week with Christ in the same way? To John, the center of life was Christ's excellence.

2 Corinthians 3:18. In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul has pointed our attention to an incident in Moses' life recounted in Exodus 33. Each day Moses went to the tent of meeting where God spoke with him "as a man speaks to his friend." When Moses left the tent his face shone from its exposure to God's presence, so that no man could look at him. To hide this brilliance he placed a veil over his face. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul points to the special privilege of Christians who "with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." Notice the result when we regularly behold His glory: We are being changed into His likeness. The phrase "from one degree of glory to another" suggests a progressive step by step change. The agent who works all this out in us in God the Holy Spirit, according to the last part of the verse.

Do you want to become like Christ? Do you want deliverance from repeated sins? These things will happen progressively as you behold the glory of Christ.

This fact should be of great comfort to those of us who lack the motivation to be holy, Christ-like people. It is for us that the Bible is a positive book. The Bible accents the positive—it talks about the greatness of our God, and motivates us to a high and holy desire to be like Him. This is not to suggest that the Bible eliminates the negative, saying nothing about what is wrong, but its primary emphasis is not in that direction. In Ephesians 1-3 Paul portrays the excellence of Christ and then in chapters 4-6 calls for response. In Colossians 1-2 he again speaks of the excellence of Christ and then in chapters 3-4 calls for response. First the Bible declares, then it calls for response. Our tendency is to harp on response and fail to provide motivation. Let's emphasize the glory of Christ and then call for response. The difference will be remarkable. Obedience will come from the heart that has been drawn out in adoration at the majesty of our Christ.

Consider two people. One travels with a crowd that smokes. So he smokes. The other travels with a crowd that is against smoking. So he doesn't smoke. One smokes and the other doesn't. But both may commit the same sin, submitting to the will of men rather than the will of God. Why do they do this? Because they have not yet caught a sufficient glimpse of the glory of Christ. If they had, they would be motivated by Him and the fickle will of the crowd would fade into insignificance.

John 17:24. The importance of beholding Christ's glory was emphasized not only by John and Paul, but by Christ Himself. With His earthly life reduced to a few more hours, Christ's prayer in John 17 drives straight to those crucial needs that His disciples will have in a short time. "Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may they be with me where I am, to behold my glory..."

All of us look forward with some sense of anticipation to heaven. But what satisfaction do we expect to find there? According to Christ it is the satisfaction of beholding His glory. Does that sound boring?

Christ's last wish was that the disciples might behold His glory in heaven. He seemed to think that this was their highest privilege and satisfaction—something worth doing for eternity. Does it not follow that we should enjoy a portion of that same satisfaction here on earth? Ephesians 1:17 says, "we . . . have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of His glory." The frequent sight of His glory should become the heart of our lives.

Of what does Christ's glory consist? It consists of the excellence of His person and the excellence of His work. His glory, if shown through a prism, would result in a spectrum of colors. Some of them would correspond to the attributes of His person, and some to the excellence of His various works. His glory resembles the sparkle of a diamond, consisting of separate flashes of beauty which blend together into splendor. Even if He had never undertaken the salvation of men, He would be glorious.

His moral excellence is shown in a story in Scripture. An officer was commissioned by the Jewish authorities to arrest Christ. He proceeded as far as the edge of the group surrounding the Lord, but could get no farther. In his eyes his authority seemed puny compared with that which proceeded from the excellent Christ he saw. In reporting his failure to his superiors, he simply said, "No man ever spoke like this."

The excellence of Christ's work consists of His creation of the world, His condescension in becoming the God-Man, His death for our sins, and His subsequent exaltation at the right hand of the Father. Consider His condescension. One of the most striking aspects of this is that, though He created and sustains the universe, He voluntarily placed Himself in submission to it, becoming hungry, tired, lonely, just as created beings did. He set aside the independent use of His attributes as God and lived as the son-in-submission-to-the-Father. This was He who from eternity had been a consuming fire against sin. In Exodus 33 He refused to go to Canaan in the midst of the people "lest he consume them in the way" for their sin. Yet in John 4 He even asked a prostitute for a drink of water.

In His death He showed His glory by going one step beyond association with sinners. There He identified Himself with our sin and bore the full wrath of God for our uncleanness. He was even cut off from fellowship with the Father for a time. Then it was finished and He arose as the first-born from the dead to be the head of the church and to ascend into heaven, where He was glorified by the angels and began to intercede for us.

HOW TO SEE HIS EXCELLENCE

How may we behold His glory? First we must *contemplate Christ in Scripture*. "Break thou the bread of life, dear Lord to me/as thou didst break the loaves beside the sea./ Behind the sacred

page we seek *thee*, Lord." The greatest value of the Bible is simply this—it tells us about Christ.

This is not a contemplative age, so it is hard to dwell on Christ in Scripture. Recently three adults and a five-year-old boy were traveling in a car. There came a lull in the conversation that must have lasted two or three minutes. Suddenly the little boy burst out, "Why don't we talk?" He inadvertently stated the principle by which our culture operates. We will have to fight against the current to regain the lost art of contemplation. But only as we contemplate Christ in Scripture shall we behold His glory.

Christ Himself told a parable to the effect that a man finding a treasure in a field sold all his possessions to buy that field. The field can be considered the Scripture, and the treasure, the glory of Christ. Seek it above everything else. Do not let yourself lose God in the midst of the wonders of His Word. *Seek Him.*

A second suggestion for beholding the glory of Christ comes from John 17:24. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." The dying of the grain of wheat refers to the *giving up of our rights*. So long as we insist on our rights, we shall see little of the glory of Christ. This is the paradox. Until we see His glory, we shall not be motivated to give up our rights, and until we give up our rights we shall not see His glory.

Speaking practically it seems that in Scripture we catch flashes of His glory that are seldom repeated unless we respond, further glimpses of His glory lead us farther on. God makes the first move; the next is ours.

RESULTS OF BEHOLDING THE GLORY

According to 2 Corinthians 4:4,5 the first great result of seeing Christ's glory is *salvation*. When we see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, we fall upon our faces and cry out "Jesus Christ is Lord."

The next great result is *holiness*. After Paul has presented the glory of the person and work of Christ in Colossians 1-2 he says, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1). In Ephesians 4:1 Paul, having told of Christ's glory in three chapters, begs us "to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called." The Christian life flows forth only as we behold the glory of Christ.

One particular characteristic of the Christian life emphasized in the New Testament is *peace*. In each of Paul's thirteen letters he salutes his readers with the desire that they receive grace and peace. In twelve of these salutations he points out that peace comes from Christ. Why do we lack peace? John Owens, whom God used to show me much of the substance of this article, says that our lack of peace is due to "an over-valuation of temporal things." Just how important is it that a tire went flat? or that a friend was abrupt with us? or that we didn't get that pay raise? When we persistently behold Christ's glory, temporal things will assume their proper position, and Christ in His magnificence will bring peace to our hearts.

Another result is *joy*. In Psalm 42:11, David says, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul . . . Hope in God!" During the life of Hudson Taylor a rebellion broke out in China and a number of the missionaries of the China Inland Mission lost their lives. Late at night Taylor was heard singing the song "Jesus, I am resting, resting in the joy of what Thou art." There was little environmental joy for him. Circumstances were a mess, but he found joy apart from circumstances, in the glory of Christ.

A final result of beholding the glory of Christ is seen in John 17:24. Christ is pleased. He who prayed that we might be with Him in heaven to behold His glory was expressing His heart's desire for us. Surely we should count it the highest privilege to please Him by beholding His glory here on earth. And one day we will be with Him in heaven, because we have beheld His glory here on earth.

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A SON

Loren Wilkinson

"...I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel... And unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children..."

• • •

I have come again to the tomb of my son—to the low stone mound on the seaward looking hill. Since his death the trees about the grave have withered, bloomed, and died again, but the day of his dying is still too near.

I remember the faces of my sons that morning: one proud, like a beast is proud in his rage, and one as calm as the face of the lambs that played at my feet in the Beginning.

On that morning of brightness they descended again to the fields. Later I followed, taking them food. As I came near to the place of the noon meal I heard a shout, and felt a great pain, and for a moment the sun was pale and the sky became thin. Then my eldest came running past me. He looked once into my face: his eyes were full of guilt and grief, and his hands were bloody. He ran towards the wilderness, and was gone.

I climbed the little hill and found my other son, dead against the altar he had built. On his face was love, and his blood mingled with the blood of the fresh sacrifice. I wept, and my husband came, and we buried him.

Where now, O God, is the hope of peace? Twice I have lain in the pain of bearing; two sons have grown in my womb and walked on the earth. But none has crushed the Evil; one is dead, and lies under stone, and one is cursed and wanders in the desert. The evil one grows, and the shadow spreads in my soul. There is no hope. What strength is there in the fruit of my

womb, in the strong sons who were promised? They too have fallen. The evil grows, and the emptiness, and I am tired.

Night comes. My husband is alone, and I will go to him. I will leave our dead son to the weight of the stone, leave our dead hope in the tomb on the hill. We could have chosen no more holy place. The wind strokes the bare trees and they move, and sing, and almost speak. The wind is from the west, from the sea in the west, and the fragrance on the wind is a memory of the Beginning.

Beyond what seas, beyond what stars is a garden beyond evil? The garden is lost, and the glory, and my sons and my hope.

But I will still hope, and pray for yet another son... Yet what son of mine can stand against The Evil One—what fruit of my womb can live beyond death? To conquer the serpent will take greater strength than comes from my flesh. No, till one as strong as God shall come, there shall be no victory, and no rest. But should I hope for such a victory, and rest in the hope of such a miracle?

You stars, will you yet see a child born—from my daughters, or my daughter's daughters, who will stand against evil, and triumph?

* * *

"...And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God..."

Supernatural, Then And Now

John R. W. Stott

The campaign to "put Christ back into Christmas," with which every Christian must sympathize and agree, immediately raises this question: What sort of a Christ shall we restore to Christmas? Many modern theologians in England, in America, and on the Continent, are telling us that we can only keep the picturesque Christmas story if we are willing to concede that the Incarnation is a "myth." That is to say, we can no longer accept it (we are being told) as historically or literally true. It contains a spiritual truth, to be sure, but the story which enshrines it is a legend and the virgin birth frankly incredible.

In opposition to such popular but empty chatter, we need to assert in clear confident tones that we believe "the old, old story." What we say in the Apostles' Creed we mean: "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." Borrowing an expression from St. Paul, we would ask: "why is it thought incredible by any of you" that the world's Savior should be born of a virgin? *From first to last Christianity is a supernatural religion. Christ's life began with a virgin birth: our Christian life begins with a new birth. Both are frankly supernatural. That is, they involve an interruption of the course of nature. Both are attributed in Scripture to the sovereign activity of the Holy Spirit. Those who have been*

born of the Spirit today find no great difficulty in believing that Christ Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit years ago. Similarly, it is really no more miraculous that the Son of God once dwelt in a virgin's womb than it is that He now dwells in our hearts by faith. What should occupy our attention is not the supposed impossibility of it, but its marvellous condescension. Of this we sing in the *Magnificat*. Have you ever thought how extraordinary it is that we should take upon our lips a hymn sung by the virgin Mary when she learned that she was to bear God's Son? How can *we* possibly sing *her* words? Only because her experience, which was utterly unique in one sense, is in another sense repeated in every Christian believer. When Christ is born in our hearts, we too can sing with humble astonishment "He who is mighty has done great things for me."

Bread and Water—Light and Life

E. L. Jorgenson

As they journeyed from Egypt to Canaan the redeemed of Israel enjoyed their Redeemer's providence. They ate divinely-given food, "He gave them bread out of heaven to eat:" they drank divinely given water, "He clave rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink abundantly as out of the depths:" they were also led and lighted by the divine pillar, "In the day-time also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire." And this was typical. In three successive chapters of John—sixth, seventh and eighth—Jesus declares Himself the true source of the Bread, the Water and the Light of life.

THE BREAD OF GOD

Now the crowds are gathering about Him at Capernaum, hinting that He should feed them again. He tells them to give less attention to the food which is of such little account, and to make sure of that which is of so much account. Then step by step He approaches His "hard saying," "The bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven;" "I am the bread of life;" "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven. The bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world;" "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves:" "He that eateth this bread shall live forever." The Jews brought out their usual question, "How," and strove about it. Many of the disciples went back, and thus the Savior blazed His way between the crowds as He ever does with the two-edged sword of the Word of God. But there were some who knew how to cling to Jesus despite the perplexing things He would sometimes say and do, and to them He explained the "hard saying." No, He did not drive us to the doctrine of transubstantiation; for He says, "It is the spirit that giveth life: the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life." There we have the explanation. The bread of life is supplied by the words of Jesus. Need we wonder then that there are Christians everywhere who are starving to death, so little do they "handle the Word of Life;" so little used are their Bibles.

The feast is spread before them, but neither will they come to the table nor eat. And so they grow lean and hungry-looking, and starve the "inner man," all for the lack of reading the words of Jesus. For verily all that is needed to disbelieve is to leave the Bible alone.

THE WATER OF LIFE

The next scene is in Jerusalem. You have heard the preacher on the last day of protracted meeting, as he grew eager and more earnest, lest the people should depart unsaved. O, how eager and burdened the Savior felt on that last great day of the feast! And now He steps out before the thirsty throng and proclaims Himself the smitten Rock from which eternal springs are flowing—the on-flowing, ever-flowing, over-flowing fountain of living water. Here, if any man thirst, he may drink and never thirst again. As He said to the outcast woman, "Everyone that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." There is the first result of drinking: satisfaction for yourself. But then comes the second result of drinking: "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive." We see then that the words of Jesus supply the *bread* of life; and the Holy Spirit within the believer supplies the *water* of life. Not a mere brook either, nor a creek, nor yet a river alone—but *rivers* of waters of life. Brother, sister, friend, do you know something of such a life? Have you yourself drunk to your soul's satisfaction? And have you then become unto others a fountain of life? Like desert traveler, men are thirsting, dying; and like caravans in Sahara, they haste after the mirage before them never to overtake it: or else they drink brackish, stagnant water from the wells of this world, and "thirst again." They drink at this fountain and that; they go to the dance and the theater, the gaming-table and the race-track, the saloon and the brothel, because they think that these will satisfy—but they come away only to "thirst again." Like alcoholic liquors, the waters in the wells of the world can satiate, but they can never satisfy the thirst they themselves create. And you—God has set you as a spring, in the center of a circle that no one else can reach: and if rivers of living water are not flowing from within you to them, you have need to drink yourself, and for their sakes.

THE LIGHT THAT NEVER FAILS

Again the scene is set in Jerusalem. On either side of the temple court stands the huge golden candelabra, which during the feast of tabernacles would be burning at night, lighting the court: and, from the eminence of Zion, piercing even the shadows of Olivet. In such a setting the Savior delivered the saying, "I am the light of the world." There He stood, the whole world's shining Sun! Veiled indeed in mortal clay was He, as Gideon's lamps were hidden in the pitchers; yet destined, when once the vessel should be broken at the cross, to pierce the deepest darkness and to send the shadows skulking to the wall. "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me

shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life." It is a great, broad, sweeping claim. It is big enough to put the man who makes it in with the lunatics or deceivers, unless He is just what He professes to be. But His influence on succeeding generations denies that He was either lunatic or deceiver; for lunatics get no following, and no deceiver's name could ever become the very synonym of truth and veracity. So far as I have read, no infidel has ever dared to challenge His statement. "I am the light of the world;" though they may strip Him of His deity, as the soldiers stripped Him of His garments, they have been compelled to say with them, "This was a righteous man." God or man, divine or human, true or false, Jesus has been the light of the world. All other lights have faded before Him. If such a person be not God, we need not seek for any.

But if we have not always behaved, my brethren, as if we believed Him the light of the world, but more as if we believed Him the light of some city, only some county, country, or at the most, of some lone continent, and that our own. Let us henceforth, by praying and by preaching, by giving and by going, make men know that Jesus is the light of *the world*. Not that we can bring all men to the light; some love darkness rather than light; but we can bring the light to every man. And at last by His personal presence He will light the world and earth with the knowledge of God as waters have covered the sea. And may God haste the day!

HIMSELF

A. B. Simpson

Once it was the blessing, Now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling, Now it is His Word;
Once His gifts I wanted, Now the Giver own;
Once I sought for healing, Now Himself alone.

Once 'twas painful trying, Now 'tis perfect trust;
Once a half salvation, Now the uttermost;
Once 'twas ceaseless holding, Now He holds me fast;
Once 'twas constant drifting, Now my anchor's cast.

Once 'twas busy planning, Now 'tis trustful prayer;
Once 'twas anxious caring, Now He has the care;
Once 'twas what I wanted, Now what Jesus says;
Once 'twas constant asking, Now 'tis ceaseless praise.

Once it was my working, His it hence shall be;
Once I tried to use Him, Now He uses me;
Once the power I wanted, Now the Mighty One;
Once for self I labored, Now for Him alone.

Once I hoped in Jesus, Now I know He's mine;
Once my lamps were dying, Now they brightly shine;
Once for death I waited, Now His coming hail,
And my hopes are anchored, Safe within the veil.

King Messiah

King Messiah! Prince of Peace! Mighty Saviour!
Glorious God! Long Thy coming's been delayed,
Though the price of sin is paid. Thy feet, the
Earth, the grave, the heav'nies, have trod in
Victory for me! How long until we see Thee
Face to face, Thou conquering Captain of Thy
Father's ransomed, re-born race? How long before
Thy righteous rule shall bow the earth's dark
Powers; the lamb and the lion gently play, and every
Once-cruel beast of prey drink in with thirst the
Showers of Thy peace, the lifted curse?
Thou Right Arm of the Lord! Thou Servant of Jehovah!
Thy precious blood has bought us. Thy Holy Spirit,
All the days of this our pilgrimage, hath taught us.
Rend the veiled day, when in Thy presence we shall say,
"Our Jesus all the way to Glory now hath brought us!"

—Janet R. Banse

His Right—and Mine

The Son of Man, as Son of God, was Lord
Of all the universe; His legal right —
Equality with God! He was adored
By heaven's hosts. Supreme divine delight
Was His until He looked to earth and there
He saw man, captive of His enemy!
He, therefore, left it all that I might share
Celestial joys with Him eternally.

Of course, my "legal right" is not the same
As His for it is rooted in Man's Sin,
But I must likewise sever all my claim
To rulership, and die, if I would win
The prize: The Risen Life, God's great high call,
And reign with Christ, triumphant over all.

—Helene S. Royster

God Our Fellow Sufferer

Author Unknown

What does the Bible tell us? Something so astonishing that we can hardly believe it, so overwhelming that once we receive it we can never be only spectators here at Calvary again. Let me give it to you in the words of a modern play.

In Guenther Rutenborn's "Sign of Jonah" a group of men and women were discussing the horrors of this generation—Rotterdam, Coventry, Dresden, Hiroshima, Korea, Vietnam, and what followed was that each tries to apportion the blame. Each individual, whatever his nationality, absolves himself completely. He had nothing to do with the evil that has been done. Who then is guilty? With one voice the terrible answer is given: "God is guilty! God is guilty!"—an accusation that often lies unspoken in the human heart which the play brings to the surface. Then listen to the sentence that is passed: "God shall become a human being, a wanderer on earth, deprived of his rights, homeless, hungry, thirsty, and in constant fear of death. He shall be borne to a woman somewhere along a country road, and the moans of the poor shall ring in his ears day and night. He shall be surrounded by the feeble, the sick, the filthy, by people bearing the marks of leprosy. Rotting corpses shall bar his path; He shall know what it means to die. He himself shall die. . . And when at last he dies, he shall be disgraced and ridiculed."

With these words we enter the dimensions of the relevance of the Bible to our contemporary life. What the Bible means is that God in Christ has descended into the world of suffering, of injustice, of guilt, and of mutual accusation, and he simply says: "I'll take the blame!" This is the Gospel: this is atonement; this is reconciliation. It is God meeting us in the darkness where men blame each other; God silencing us with the immensity of His love; God reaching to the depths in order that by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead He may lift us to the heights.

This is how the Bible speaks with freshness and vitality to every generation—to this generation, and to every situation—to our situation today. Jesus Christ is no longer a tragic figure from the past. He is the Savior who has "borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." He is the Lord who, under the load of our sins, came back from the grave with our freedom as his gift. In our Bible we are not reading of a tragic hero of the past. We are meeting with the One who went through death and hell for us and "is the same yesterday, today, and forever!"

Is Jesus the ONLY Way?

John R. W. Stott, England

In trying to prepare for my Asian tour I have been pondering the different cultures within which the pastors of each country are called to proclaim Christ. Egypt, Lebanon, Iran, Afganistan and Pakistan are all part of the great Islamic bloc of the Middle East. Sri Lanka and Burma are Buddhist and India is Hindu, whereas Singapore is strongly secularist, 33% of its citizens stating in a recent census that they have no religion. So I have been reading the Koran, the Bhagavad Gita (the most popular Hindu epic) and some of the Buddhist Scriptures, asking myself afresh where the uniqueness of Christ is to be found.

The Appeal of Syncretism

Dr. W. A. Visser't Hooft, a former general secretary of the World Council of Churches, defines *syncretism* as "the view which holds that there is no unique revelation in history, that there are many different ways to reach the divine reality . . . and that it is necessary to harmonize as much as possible all religious ideas and experiences so as to create one universal religion for mankind." For myself, I doubt if any sensitive Christian has not felt the appeal of syncretism. The shrinkage of our planet as a result of modern communications has given us a strong sense of belonging to one another as human beings; we want to emphasize our common humanity rather than our diversity of beliefs. And the ghastly record of religious conflict, of violence and bloodshed in the name of religion has given us a new distaste for controversy. Can we not sink our differences and unite? Eloquent appeals to do just this have been coming in recent years from India, not least from the great philosopher Dr. Radhakrishnan, India's former President, who wrote of his dream that "Muslim and Christian, Buddhist and Hindu, shall stand together bound by a common devotion."

But Syncretism Won't Do

If Christians feel the attractiveness of syncretism, we also have another and very different concern, which can only be described as "jealousy" for the honour of Christ. When the Lord Jesus is condescendingly included in a catalogue of the world's spiritual leaders, or named as one of the forty prophets recognized by Islam, we are moved to indignation. The Theosophical Society, for example, refer to him as "one in a long list of outstanding spiritual Great Ones, the fine flowers of the human race, who have lived and taught and enobled their fellowmen." No Christian can read such patronizing words without feeling their offensiveness to Jesus. He cannot be called "Jesus the Great," as if he were comparable to "Alexander the Great." *He is not the great; he is the only.* He cannot be compared to others; he is incomparable, unique.

It would be a mistake to suppose that syncretism is the prerogative of Hinduism, however. There are also Christian syncretists, if it is possible to combine these two words. In this country Professor

John Macquarrie is commending a "global ecumenism" because "the time has come for Christianity and the other great world religions to think in terms of sharing a mission to the loveless and the unloved masses of humanity rather than of sending missionaries to convert each other." In his *Not Ashamed*, Canon Douglas Webster has subjected this notion to a trenchant criticism. "If the original Christians had thought like this," he writes, "there would have been no New Testament as we know it, no church, no mission, and no universal Christianity today." Besides, the relativism of this viewpoint "does not take seriously the question of truth."

The Uniqueness of Jesus

Popular, reductionist portraits of Jesus are totally unacceptable to Christians. The uniqueness of Christianity is almost entirely the uniqueness of Christ. If he was indeed the God-man, fully human and fully divine, he has no peer. Hinduism claims many so-called 'incarnations.' But not only is their historicity (to say the least) extremely dubious; the very fact of their plurality shows that none is regarded as the turning-point of history. In fact none is in any sense crucial to Hinduism, whereas to disprove the Incarnation of God in Jesus would destroy Christianity.

If the person of Jesus is unique, so is his work of salvation. And by "salvation" we do not mean "the peace of the people of Vietnam, independence in Angola, justice and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, and release from the captivity of power in the North Atlantic Community," as Professor Jurgen Moltmann tried to redefine it at the *Salvation Today* conference at Bangkok several years ago. For salvation is not, according to Scripture, liberation from political and economic oppression, but deliverance from sin, from the just judgement of God upon it, and from its continuing tyranny in our lives. Where is this to be found but in Jesus? *Buddhism* is concerned with deliverance from suffering rather than from sin, and from all desire which is regarded as the cause of suffering. *Popular Hinduism* is dominated by the pitiless doctrine of *Karma*, which might be interpreted as "retribution in reincarnation." It insists that every man must eat the fruit of his own wrong doing, if not in this life then in an endless succession of future lives. There is no escape from *samsara*, the cycle of rebirths. It is *Islam* which seems to come nearest to the Christian gospel of salvation, for every *sura* (chapter) of the Koran is introduced by the formula "in the name of Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful," and there are many references to Allah's forgiveness. But when we enquire more precisely *who* receives mercy and *who* enters Paradise, we find that Paradise is "the reward of the righteous" and that Allah is merciful to the meritorious. Sometimes in a telltale phrase we read that the righteous "earn salvation," and several times the metaphor of the scales is used to illustrate that our good deeds will be weighed against our bad: "then he whose scales are heavy shall dwell in bliss, but he whose scales are light, the Abyss shall be his home."

It is a relief to turn from these speculations of despair to God's good news that he gave his Son to die for our sins and that on the sole

ground of his sinbearing death salvation is offered as a free gift even to the most undeserving of us all. The Japanese Christian Kagawa summed it up by saying that, although he was grateful for what he owed to Shinto, Buddhism and Confusianism, "yet these three faiths utterly failed to minister to my heart's deepest needs, I was a pilgrim journeying upon a long road that had no turning. I was weary. I was footsore. I wandered through a dark and dismal world where tragedies were thick... Buddhism teaches great compassion... but since the beginning of time who has declared: "this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many unto the remission of sins"?"

Syncretism may have its attractions, but there is no substitute for the one and only gospel of Christ crucified and risen.

VOICES from the FIELDS

Robert Garrett

September, 1991

Rockwood Christian Camp, Zimbabwe

Best camp year ever. We extended the camp sessions to one full week each for the Junior and Senior camps in April and May. First was the Junior camp with 81 campers: 45 girls, 37 boys. Next, we had 75 Seniors: 45 girls, 30 boys. Then, also in May, a one-day camp for ages 6-8 years, 113 of them! In August was the camp for those 18 year old and over with 62 campers: 33 girls, 29 boys. A SECOND Senior camp was also held in August with only 29 campers: 13 girls, 16 boys. A number of these boys and girls afterwards made decisions for Christ and were baptized in their home congregations.

"National Youth" The Harare area churches have formed a joint youth group which meets regularly for Bible studies and fellowship. They have formed a large choir and their singing is a real joy to listen to. They have a program of visiting the congregations in Harare and out in the country areas bringing an encouraging testimony in song. I believe the Bible Camp work here at Rockwood since 1985 has borne much good fruit.

More Good Fruit—Teachers. This year we used four young men to teach in the camps who are former campers beginning back in 1985. In fact they still continue to be campers as they attend the young single adult session for those 18 years and over.

Kuwadzana. A new high-density housing suburb of Harare. There is a growing congregation there which at present is meeting in the front yard of Bro. Mupfawe. The yards here are very small. The total size of his stand is only 350 sq. yards. When he has completed his house it will cover most of the stand. He only has a "front yard" now because his house is only half completed. GOD HAS GRANTED us a church site in Kuwadzana. The next thing now is to construct a church hall. The Lord has granted us funds thru sale of our obsolete vehicles which will enable us to purchase the site, fence it, erect rest-rooms and a steel framework with roof where the church can meet. Pray for the success of this project and

for necessary funds to complete the building. I have drawn the building plans and will submit them this week but am told that it can take the city of Harare up to six months to approve plans! We cannot erect anything until the plans have been passed.

Furlough. It is time for us to return to the States to visit among the churches (Acs 14:26-28) and visit family. (16 grandchildren of which there are seven we have not yet seen.) Lord willing we will arrive in Louisville, December 13 and plan to return to Zimbabwe not later than November, 1992. Bro. Victor Broaddus has kindly consented to act as our chief booking agent to arrange our schedule of visits among the churches where we hope to "report all that God has done through us..."

Hilda Friedley. Our dearly loved sister in the Lord, who for many years faithfully served as our treasurer, has been called home by her Lord whom she loved and faithfully served. Our hearts are sad because we cannot visit with her. But where she is now is "far better." Truly, she was a dear friend and "another woman who worked very hard in the Lord." (Romans 16:12).

Dan Wilson

October 10, 1991

Pine Grove Academy, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, C. Amer.

(Extracts from a personal letter) I am personally responsible for teaching God's Word to 141 high school students here, 4-5 days weekly. There are those who are models of responsibility and studiousness, but it seems that there are more than an abundance of those who care little or nothing about the Bible. Actually, these students are more driven than your average American school kid because of their position (from high society families) and the fact that most of their parents want to send them to elite American Universities—and for them to get in requires very good grades. The kids on the Honduran plan have a very heavy schedule. We have nine periods a day and the kids are in class almost every period of the week. They have to take four years of science and math, and both boys and girls are required to take home ec. and shop. Bible is not required by the government, of course, but only by Pinares ("Pine Grove"), and so many of the parents tell their kids not to worry much about how well they do in Bible but that they'd better do well in their other subjects. I've really been struggling because of my uncertainty about what to teach or how to teach it. (It's his first year of teaching as well as his first year in Honduras.—editor)

Many of the kids are so good at cheating that we've already had two teachers' meetings to discuss ways to prevent it. Each test will be covered by the teacher and an extra proctor who is not allowed to do anything for 80 minutes but hawkeye the kids!

I guess the kids aren't too different than at Portland Christian. Some of those from solid Christian homes are angelic and others are rebelling. Most Hondurans are from Catholic homes and don't really care or are a little bit hostile towards evangelicalism. Please pray *very much* for me and for the students.

In our new teacher's orientation, back in August, one thing covered was the four stages of culture shock. Stage one is euphoria,

or the tourist stage (symbolized by the camera). Stage two is rejection of the culture, and loneliness (symbolized by the post office!) The third stage is coping with the culture (or else going home) and the fourth is adapting to it and embracing it to a greater or lesser degree. Having been raised in a third-world country and being flexible anyway, I remained in stage one for most of this first quarter, so much longer than most of the other new teachers that I thought I had simply skipped stage two. I was just waiting for my skin to darken and for Spanish words to start flowing naturally. . . but then about two weeks ago I found myself sick of tortillas and wanting to hop in a car and drive to Oxmoor Mall.

All things considered, however, I think I may never tire of this country and its beauty. I have counted at least 12 colors of flowers just around our house, everything from roses to bougainvillea to impatiens to poinsettia. There's one bush that can't decide which color of flower it wants to flaunt, so it has compromised by blooming 14 shades of hot pink with a smattering of electric yellow. And as if that's not enough beauty, the clouds put on a lightning show almost every night over the ridges of the distant hills.

Herman Moldez

Manila, Philippines

(Brother Moldez has been a worker/leader in the Manila church and Central Bible Institute for many years, in addition to engaging in a Christian ministry among university students. Here are some excerpts adapted from a personal letter.)

Our vision is to make CBI's curriculum more relevant so that students are really equipped for their chosen ministry. It is encouraging to note that several recent graduates are now active in pastoral ministry.

We are seeking to revise the curriculum. The 1-year Basic Bible Course will emphasize Christian *discipleship*. The 3-year Associate in Theology course will emphasize *lay ministry*. The 4-year Bachelor of Theology course will emphasize *pastoral ministry*. With so many churches being planted there is a shortage of shepherds for the flocks. We need to develop "tentmaking" ministry models, since many need to be self-supporting.

The whole country has been suffering from drought. Water levels of our dams are in very critical situation. The water level in Manila is decreased tremendously. Many crops have died. Power shortages and brownouts become a way of life again. Pray for rain. In spite of the drop of the price of oil, the pumping price of gas remains high. The government wants to get all the money from the people to pay its deficit. They don't mind if 60% of the minimum daily wage goes for the price of a kilo of pork. Landlords have become very inconsiderate too. They give preference to foreigners, and demand 3 months' payment of rent in advance. What will people do if more than 50% of their income goes to housing?

Should Churches MERGE?

Should Churches CLOSE?

Four Articles

Editor's Introduction: The two questions above need much prayerful thought in many places now. So we present four articles of varying lengths and differing opinions for you to consider. Dennis Kaufman and Carl Kitzmiller's writings are well known to regular readers of W&W. Robert Heid, former editor now with the Lord, wrote his article back in 1982, but conditions he describes sound incredibly current. Denny Boultinghouse edits *Image* magazine, a splendid Churches of Christ publication. His comments are excerpted from a longer article.

When Churches Close Down

W. Robert Heid, 1982

With the shifting population leaving much of the metropolitan area, many of the city schools have found themselves practically out of business. This would not have been necessary except for the simultaneous trend to have larger and more expensive facilities, with busing of practically all of the children. The smaller schools, that used to thrive on three or four hundred children, now are called obsolete, and are killed by consolidation. This we have learned to call educational progress.

But we are finding a similar situation among our churches in the Louisville area, with three of the buildings already sold and another in jeopardy. In many ways the causes seem to be the same. Staunch members have moved to distant neighborhoods, preachers and Sunday school teachers no longer walk the sidewalks of the community, and the tie-in of the local community with the church is all but gone. Vacation Bible schools and visitation programs seem to run into a stone wall. Children's attendance has fallen abruptly, many classes have been combined, and class numbers that used to indicate many different classes available are now only reminders of happier days. Teachers are adversely affected by the decline in interest, and we soon find that we are needing to change the focus of our study to meet the needs of our own troubled programs, rather than feel that joy of unfolding the plan of salvation to those who know it not.

One of the special woes of the churches today, is that our "located preacher system" has put all of this "blame" on the preacher. If he were able to draw crowds and hold up the interest, have an on-going program for the young folks, and give proper attention to the sick and shut-ins, we feel sure things would move forward. Isn't this why we want a full-time minister? We pose such questions as "How can you expect a church to grow without a full-time preacher?" "Do you think that we can make it, without a bus ministry?" "We should have organized a youth club or a youth chorus." It may be a bit difficult to find a man who appeals to the old folks and the young folks at the

same time. And if we find such, he may find us so bound by our traditions that he cannot at all do things in any manner that is novel or experimental. This is not to say that our traditional ways are not good. But it might be prudent to notice that some of our traditions curtail the very zeal and involvement that we so much want to be manifest. As cases in point, "Amens" have gone out of style to such an extent that our younger members would think it strange to hear them. Kneeling during the prayers is mostly unthought-of, and standing during the reading of the Scripture would be judged too tiring. Few words of thanksgiving or of testimony are ever given publicly, and when women make requests for prayer at request time, there are some members who raise their eyebrows. To dare to sing a song or two that is not in the hymnal stifles the spirit of some others, and to have an occasional solo—strange to our ears.

I vote against the consolidated churches the same as I do the consolidated schools. Does a group of five hundred render more praise to the Lord than five groups of one hundred each? Does the Holy Spirit give as much teaching in one sermon to the major group, as He does in the five sermons that the smaller crowds hear? Personally, I had rather have five ministers studying for Sunday sermons than one, five song leaders working rather than one, five presiding at different communion services than one, and five groups of elders leading the five small congregations than one. I say this in order to make my point against consolidation, per se. The five smaller groups will offer at least ten times as many opportunities for young men to learn to preach, which I think is one of the chief responsibilities of any congregation. I pray to God that all of the congregations grow and grow. I would not limit them even to five hundred. But we need to get away from this mentality that if the number of members is small, then we are getting short-changed in our spiritual life, and should start floating from one place to another to find the bill of fare that we feel we deserve.

We might blame the demise of congregations upon the death of certain leaders. But there has always been the death of various leaders. Joshua was not the same as Moses, but God's power continued on. Elisha was not the same as Elijah, yet the mantle of Elijah fell upon him, with the double portion of the Spirit. Solomon was not the man that King David was, yet God was pleased to give him wisdom beyond all others. God can and has enabled any and every consecrated leader, as He chooses to do.

May I make a point for loyalty to a congregation? Why not think of each church as a candlestick (Rev. 1) and that each one has its place in which to shed light? Jesus walks amidst the candlesticks, and it is He that has the right to remove them out of their place. For our part, we ought to love and serve where the Lord leads us, and be sure that any time we move on, it is at the bidding of the Lord.

When Christians in any particular area have banded together for public worship and fulfilling their "great commission" responsibilities, then there ought to be a sense of joint-responsibility before the Lord in the local work. Who would dare to renege when Jesus calls us to serve Him? We see many who will not join hard on to

the local congregation for fear of being given stated duties that would demand regular attendance. We must remember that the Lord knows our hearts and our works, of "what sort they be."

Merger as a Reaction to Societal Change

C. Dennis Kaufman

In nearly every serious conversation about the state of our brotherhood, one is likely to hear questions such as: *Why are the churches having such a hard time growing? Why are so many declining and having to close? What do we do to reverse the trend?*

The answers are varied and multi-faceted, but in this article, I would like to focus on one major societal change in recent decades that may call us to rethink our strategy for church growth.

If a typical person in the 1950's was asked why they chose a particular congregation, the answers may have included such things as convenience in locality, sound doctrine, a family atmosphere, and good leadership. Many of our congregations possessed these qualities, and as a result, grew.

Although these elements are still important to people, there is an added feature that seems to be as crucial, if not moreso, to people in the 90's. This cultural phenomenon is the expectation of a high level of professionalism in all that is done within the church. In the decade ahead, the congregation that can offer a program of expertise without sacrificing its care, warmth and Bible-centeredness, will be the likely one to grow significantly.

It is important that we recognize that for most people coming out of the world, selecting a church home is done in much the same way other decisions are made. One looks for the best. For example, if a person from this generation was going to choose a science fiction movie to watch, would he/she select one made this year or a film produced 30 years ago? The technology and special effects have changed drastically, and there is little doubt as to which movie a younger person would choose.

Some of the things I hear this new generation asking for in the church today are:

- 1) *Superb preaching* - not only doctrinally sound, but practical and well communicated—to the point.
- 2) *Comprehensive teaching program* - teachers are experienced in their field, whether it is Sunday School, children's programs, support groups, or training efforts for Christian service.
- 3) *Inspirational singing* - it is difficult to underestimate the impact of a well organized singing/music ministry within the church.
- 4) *Social network* - people want their whole family to feel as if they fit into the fellowship structure of the church.
- 5) *Adequate facilities* - buildings and grounds that are kept in order on the par of one's home and work settings.

There are congregations out there that are doing an excellent job of providing these elements. Thus, if someone visits one of our congregations where the sermon is average, the SS class dull, the singing draggy, the facilities unkempt, and there are no young people, chances are one in a thousand that this person will be back.

As much as we may rebel at the thought, our culture in the 90's is impressed by things that are extremely well done. We may lament this, and we may think our society shallow for making important spiritual decisions on this basis. But, it does not change the fact that if we want to be relevant, we will have to be sensitive to these obvious facts. This generation has enjoyed color too long to go back to black and white.

I think I can anticipate the way you may be responding to this article. It is here that we bump up against the perplexing "catch - 22" of how to become more professional in our church programming when we cannot get more people into our small church. Herein lies a major problem.

We do have some people in our brotherhood that preach well, teach interestingly, sing beautifully, or provide excellent care for the flock. But, in most congregations there are so few well-trained, gifted individuals that they are spread thin, burnt out, or regularly dreaming of an escape to a place where the burdens are fewer. This is problematic to say the least.

One proactive consideration that I hear discussed occasionally is the idea of merger of some smaller congregations into a larger one. This concept seems to have some merit, and in essence is already being done in a very backward way as churches decline, close, and scatter members to other congregations.

This idea concerning merger might be particularly useful for churches where leaders are sensitive to the "stuckness" described in this article. A typical church in our brotherhood is older, well established, and consists of about 80 members. The preacher speaks four times a week, has numerous other responsibilities, and may be in school or holding down another job. It is difficult to imagine very many of these situations where the preacher can be razor sharp week after week in sermon presentation.

The same scenario exists in our ability to break out in our teaching program. Our congregation of 80 typically drafts teachers for life, giving them no break, little ongoing training and supervision, and it is likely that the teacher has several other responsibilities to try to manage.

My point is that our present structure often produces little room for specialization, and this is where high level expertise usually develops. It is easy for the church to hire or procure a few jacks-of-all-trades, but in this generation to have "masters at none" is to almost insure maintenance at best and decline and closure at worst.

It is my personal opinion that a church of 150 - 200 has a much better chance of breaking the cycle of mediocrity and growing than three smaller churches of 50 - 75. The larger body may be able to afford an associate for the busy minister. A larger pool of people to draw from, may allow the raising of standards for teachers. More

special singing groups are likely to form. All age groups may be better represented, and upkeep on one building is much easier than on two or three.

I realize there are many reasons why mergers would be impracticable. Some congregations are not close to another brotherhood church. Others simply cannot imagine giving up their own personal church that they have been a part of for years. But, for the congregation that is struggling to find a qualified minister, or operating in the shadow of a superchurch, or simply understanding the handwriting on the wall, merger may be an option to begin considering and prayerfully discussing. It is certainly a research study church leaders would do well to make.

Forty years ago, the community church was a near necessity. Societal changes have made it less so, in the light of the fact that many people do not mind driving 20+ miles to be a part of a strong, growing church.

Merging, Cooperating, and Evangelizing a Perishing World

Denny Boultinghouse

Some urban churches need to seriously consider merging with other congregations. When there are three or four small congregations within a few miles of one another, the possibility of merging should be examined. Often these larger churches are better able to minister. They are able to make better use of their staff. And there are less building payments going to the bank. Please don't misunderstand, it is not shameful to be small. But if a merger can produce a larger church which can be more effective in reaching out to the lost, such a merger should be considered. We realize such mergers take effort. But they have been done. Talk to the leaders of congregations that have successfully merged about the benefits.

We must learn to co-operate. When you consider the magnitude of the job before us, we must get all the help we can. We must have a genuine unity among God's people. In all frankness, such issues as the number of communion containers, use of the NIV, women wearing pants to services, men wearing ties to serve the Lord's Supper, choral groups in the assembly, humming, hand clapping, kitchens, family life centers, and many such issues are minuscule when compared to the task before us. If your church is one that focuses upon such issues, your congregation will not have much impact upon the billions of lost people. You may have your reasons (rationalization?), but the fact remains: Billions have never heard the message of the cross, while you major on minors. We must learn how to accept brethren with whom we differ. If we don't, we will never have much of an impact upon the evangelization of the world. If we are serious about reaching the millions in the cities, we must learn how to work *with* one another instead of *against* one another.

—from IMAGE magazine, by permission

Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

Is it ever God's will for a church (or any work for Him) to close its doors? Is not this a confession of failure? Why should any of His works ever fail?

It is difficult to see how we can lay down hard and fast rules in these matters. There are certainly those works which, so far as we can judge, have moved aside from the truth of the Bible and faithfulness to the Lord. He has removed their candlestick, and they have shriveled and died. Any of His works can fail—and we might add, ought to fail—when they move off the foundation. The failure in such cases is not in the Lord but in men. As we look at the religious world about us today, however, we must also realize that there are works disowned by the Lord which have prospered so far as growth, finances, and the continuation of their programs are concerned. He is no longer in them, but they have a flesh-empowered life. We must be careful not to equate growth, prosperity, and humanly impressive things with being in the will of the Lord, for it simply is not always so. The church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:14ff.) was probably the most outwardly impressive of the seven churches of Asia, but she had shut the Lord out of her life and was in grave danger of being spewed out of the Lord's mouth.

Some of the Lord's faithful and useful works may have struggled along for years without much apparent success, but if the people involved had become discouraged and quit, the work of the Lord would have suffered injury. Many a mission work has had a difficult time until the seed finally begins to bear fruit. On the other hand, there is no requirement that, the Lord having begun a work, it must never stop, or, if it does, one of His works has failed. He may have needed it only for a given time and place. Some rural churches have closed simply because people moved away, have better transportation, etc. Sometimes efforts are consolidated with great profit. I have seen churches closed when, in my estimation, there was little else to do. Changing communities, loss of members, too many problems, etc.—all of which seemed to indicate that whatever good had been done in the past, their usefulness was over. The few people involved could count more for the Lord in other efforts. I have also seen churches close when, in my judgment, they should have held on—when people had just grown tired, perhaps affected by the lack of prestige or power or programs. In closing they surrendered convictions and compromised truth for what was often some secular or worldly gain.

The closing of the doors of a work of the Lord does not necessarily mean that work was a failure nor that the funds, efforts, and time put into it are "all down a rat hole," as I heard one recently express it. Many people are serving the Lord today who were converted and learned the word of God in a church no longer in existence. The closing of the old church doors did not wipe out the

spiritual realities in the lives of these people or others like them. Their efforts are now felt in other places and in other works. In nature we see a plant flourish, then fail and die, but in the process it produces seed that will carry on its life. God may sometimes (even often?) use this principle with His spiritual works. John the Baptist, having come on the scene, is not a failure because he did not live a long life, build up progressively larger work, etc. He was destined in the will of God to decrease after a certain time. Paul the apostle, having been directed by the Spirit to a given locality to evangelize, did not conclude that he must never leave that community, as though to do so would be failure. When God is through with a man in a given place he had better move on, and when God is through with a work it is much better for it to die than for us to try to pump artificial life into it, trying to keep it going at any cost. If He is through with it, it has been a failure only if He wished to use it or the people who made it up in a different way, if He was somehow limited by a lack of surrender. Even in such cases, He knows how to achieve a great deal with poor instruments.

All of which does not mean that we give up at the first bump of discouragement from the devil and decide lightly the Lord is through with this or that work. The real need is for discerning the will of the Lord—not always an easy thing to do. I am persuaded that it is His will in many cases for us to stand up in the power of God to formidable problems and hindrances and opposition. In spite of a lot of false propaganda implying that God's work will always be crowned with success in the eyes of men, we know that His work is sometimes slow, discouraging, and requires a lot of faith. And whenever God is doing a work, the devil will be there trying to defeat it. If he succeeds in persuading people who ought to stand to run away, or if he succeeds in persuading people to give up in favor of some bauble he offers, then God's work has indeed failed. And God may allow it within limits, because He will not force us to serve Him against our will.

A word of caution is in order. We don't want to be armchair quarterbacks who boast how we could have succeeded when we have not been in the fray. We don't want to sit off at a distance, unaware of many factors making up a decision and criticize those who have had that responsibility unless it is evident that they deserve such. Sometimes the folks who are a big part of the problem are the ones with the loudest protest when a work is closed.

God and Jonah – God and Me

What God Knows About Us

Florence Olmstead Collins

Recently our five-year-old great-granddaughter, Rachel, and I sat at the kitchen table while she drew a series of pictures on her magic slate. After each drawing she tossed her long blonde hair from her face and, with happy expectation asked, "What's that, Grandma?" Scrutinizing the puzzle of squiggles, angles and curves, I searched my imagination for a title for each work of art. "It's a bird on a nest—or, fireworks exploding—or, a full grocery cart." After each picture was identified, with sparkling enthusiasm Rachel exclaimed, "You're right! It is a bird—or, fireworks—or, a cart!" How wise we would be to accept with such childlike faith God's assessment of us and our deeds.

The only declaritive statement in the book of Jonah concerning God's knowledge of humans is that the people of Ninevah were wicked. If we had only that book we would be forced to deduce his understanding of the human race from his dealings with only the characters in that story.

But God, through the Holy Spirit, has caused many facts about humans to be recorded in the Bible. These traits are found to a greater or lesser degree in each person. Each individual may not be severely tested in all areas. These characteristics are not always readily apparent but will be revealed when areas of one's personality are tried.

Satan knows the most vulnerable spots in each of us and will attack those weaknesses. God's knowledge of us is much better than Satan's—it is complete, for he made us. When he created the human race he called us "very good." He still knows us. Since sin entered our nature (Romans 5:12), he no longer says that mankind is good. Some of the things he says about us are hard to take. With child-like faith we should believe God's words, although they may hurt our pride. Following are some of the things the Bible says about the natural condition of mankind:

Genesis 8:21: Our hearts are evil from our youth.

Psalms 94:11; *1 Corinthians* 3:20: Our thoughts are vain and futile like a single breath.

are filthy and there is not one who does good.
perverse, corrupt and severely, mortally sick.

Jeremiah 10:23: We are incapable of directing our own steps.

These words describe our hopeless, terminal spiritual illness without God. The Lord does not overlook our sinful condition, but provides for us a way out. It is necessary, however, that we admit our need for his rescue, and that we accept his way of escape.

Do you believe these statements of God?

Why does God want such evil creatures for his own? The answer is: only because of his great love. These evil traits of

ours in no way depreciate the inherent value God has placed in each life. We are valuable because he made us in his image. The ultimate proof of our intrinsic preciousness is that God sent his only Son to die in the place of each of us and to give us eternal life. "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)." We would not have known what real love is had not Jesus laid down his life for us (1 John 3:16).

Do you believe these facts?

God didn't choose Israel because of any virtue of theirs, but because he loved them. (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). For the same reason he chooses us; he also chooses us for a purpose—to belong to him and to praise him (1 Peter 2:9). We should choose him. With childlike faith we should believe him when he says that those who trust him can accomplish that purpose.

God's knowledge says that one can become new. How can such sinful creatures, simply by trying, become like God? We cannot! To accomplish this humanly impossible condition, he gives us his own life (1 John 5:12). But first, we must admit our sinfulness and completely identify with Jesus' death on our behalf. Then we will be new and have his Spirit to empower us toward becoming like him (2 Corinthians 5:17). It is God who works in believers and causes them to want to do his will and to act according to his purpose (Philippians 2:13).

Becoming completely his and being the kind of persons who can genuinely honor God is not automatic. We must sincerely determine to be like God, then cooperate with him by laying aside our old nature and putting on our new nature, which is like his (Ephesians 4:22-24). To do so, it is necessary to learn from the Bible what kind of people he wants. A careful reading of Colossians 3:5-25 and Ephesians 4:25-5:11 shows the contrast between the kind of people we are without God and the goals he has set for those who believe in him.

Being God's person is a battle that can be won only by God's power, for the fighting is against the devil. The Lord has furnished our equipment for that battle (Ephesians 6:10-18). If we first submit to God, then resist Satan, God has promised that Satan will flee from us (James 4:7). This statement doesn't mean we will never again be tempted to sin. But when we are tempted, he will provide a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13). If we quit looking at the attraction to sin, and instead look for the escape God provides, we will be more successful in living a good life.

Do you believe it is possible for your life to honor God?

The statements of the Bible concerning the potential of Christians are just as true as the condemning ones describing human nature without faith in Christ. These Christian traits, however, are only a shadow of what those who trust the cross will be after Jesus returns from heaven.

Following are some of God's promises which will be fulfilled at that time:

2 *Corinthians* 5:1 - 4; 15:42 - 44: Believers will receive new bodies.

2 *Corinthians* 5:6 - 8; *Philippians* 1:21 - 24: Believers will be with the Lord.

Luke 20:35 - 36: Believers will never again die.

1 *John* 3:2: Best of all, believers in Christ will be like him.

God loves us just as he loved the adults, children and cattle in Nineveh. He knows us just as he knew the individuals in the book of Jonah. When we repent, trust and obey him, he saves us just as he saved the people of Nineveh. He will be as near to us as we allow him to be. Then we can know and love him better each day.

[This concludes the series on Jonah.]

Families, Use a Calendar!

David Mains

My wife and I are mismatched. We are opposite in almost every way. In fact, we've said to each other that we'd better develop some similarities, so that after our children have gone we'll have some common ties.

Karen is one of those instant-impulse persons. A free spirit who can commit herself totally to short term projects, she becomes restless when they run longer than they are supposed to. She's literary and poetic, feels everything—all of life's glory and pain.

But she never balances her checkbook and refuses to run the household on a regular system. She will languish physically, then suddenly rise, phoenix-fashion, to do five days' work in 30 minutes, dash off countless articles, whip together a dinner for 40—simply because she feels like it. She is rarely predictable.

I like order. I am a list maker. I know exactly what the next week holds. I never miss appointments, love to plan ahead, faithfully mark anniversaries, and remember to send cards on special days. I'm a disciplinarian. I am consistent and generally predictable. Let's face it. I'm dull, always wondering whether it's garbage day or not.

To further complicate things, we have four children, each with his or her own distinct, strong personality. We have two full-time ministries, mine in Christian broadcasting and Karen's in writing. Top it all off with a dog and a cat, fish and a hermit crab, not to speak of house repairs, yard responsibilities, church activities, car schedules, and travel itineraries—does some of this sound familiar?

The miracle of God's work in our lives is that we do experience harmony. But it has not been achieved without a great deal of hard work, a submission to one another's callings and goals, and some special tools. One of them sounds like a very simple thing, but it works. It is the family calendar.

Families today are in a crunch: school schedules vie against work schedules, work schedules vie against church schedules—and all these vie against the needs of the family for time with each other.

"But I didn't know we were planning that!" can sound strangely like a battle cry. "Why didn't you tell me you were planning to go to that meeting!" can be dangerous words.

Our calendar, faithfully kept, keeps us from bumping into each other—and it also makes certain that we schedule family time. We are extremely careful about over-booking our calendar; we insist on free space. We don't take pride in seeing that everyday of the week has things scribbled onto it. Sometimes our daughter will hear her mother or me say, "No, you can't babysit tonight. You've already worked too much as it is.

And I get after Karen for crowding one writing deadline against another until not only she, but all the rest of us are breathless just watching her fingers pound the computer's keys. I catch it, too, when I take on too many speaking engagements and the family gets shortchanged.

To us, a jam-packed calendar is a sign of a lack of discipline, of not having established firm priorities, of being unable to say a healthy "No!"

We schedule family times on our calendar just like going to see the doctor. If we don't write them in, other things will take their place. A night with my family is just as important as a speaking engagement. If it is blocked out, I won't fill it up as if it were an unscheduled evening.

My challenge: Start a family calendar. Add the church activities that concern you: youth meetings, choir practices, men's and women's meetings. Fill in your other commitments and special events. Block out evenings for families. Guard all open spaces carefully. Each member of the family needs private moments.

Obviously we are sold on calendaring. It's enabling Karen and me to function as a team, instead of pulling off in our own directions and getting nowhere as a family. We have eliminated some of those tense moments that our former careless scheduling produced. We're not all the way there yet, by any means, but we're working hard at it, smoothing out those rough spots that develop in the day-to-day relationships of any family.

David Mains is the director of The Chapel of the Air. Article used by permission of David C. Cook Publishing Co.

News and Notes

Editor Announces New Reporter for News and Notes

We are delighted that Jack Blaes has agreed to be our News and Notes editor. He will collect news from church bulletins you mail us. (Actually you will make his job easier if you have a church reporter write out the most important news from your congregation and send it to us every two or three months. Second best is if you mail bulletins to us. Worst is if you don't tell us any news at all! Too many churches fit into that category. Please help Brother Jack.)

Brother Jack is no stranger to W&W readers, having written a Viewing the News column for years. He also has preached for various churches and taught and administered at Portland Christian School for years. He presently is an elder at the Highland Church of Christ.

Thanks for your help, Brother Jack.

Ladies, Plan Now for Then!

The 1992 Ladies Inspiration Day is already scheduled for April 25. It will be held in eastern Louisville. (It rotates between Indiana, east Louisville, west Louisville, and central Kentucky.) This is a highlight of the year, so set aside April 25, sisters.

Missionary Speakers Increase World Vision

The Portland Church in Louisville has taken advantage of available missionaries on furlough, and set up the following schedule: Nov. James/Karen Ashley from the Solomon Islands, Dec. Robert/Joy Garrett from Zimbabwe, Late Dec. Dan Wilson from Honduras, Jan. Mark/Candy Garrett, going to Senegal, Africa in '92. Later they hope to have Earl/Ragena Mullins and also David/Colleen Brown who plan to be in the U.S. in early '92. When possible they have not only a missionary sermon but also presentations of the work during Sunday school classes and after a fellowship meal too. The wives, too, have valuable testimonies to share, not just the husbands.

Learn About the Philippines Work

Earl Mullins, Sr. and Ragena arrived back on Nov. 8 after a year's mission in Mindanao. They are available to

visit churches and tell about the opportunities and problems in that important and needy land. They were sponsored by Words of Life. It is not yet clear what future service the Lord has for them. You may contact them at (812) 246-4330 or 1607 E. Oak Street, New Albany, IN 47150.

Louisville Thanksgiving Day Meeting

Five hundred and three people from various Louisville area churches met on Thanksgiving for a service of gratitude and praise. Earl Mullins, Sr., who returned from the Philippines only a few weeks earlier, spoke. The Portland Christian High School chorus sang several songs, and an offering of \$5,771 was given for PCS. Though the attendance was the lowest in recent years, the offering was the second highest since 1984.

A Good Example

The church at Turkey Creek, La. sent a "care package" to the Maple Manor Children's Home in Sellersburg, Ind. recently. It contained towels, wash cloths, tooth brushes, shampoo, soap, pencils, notebooks and other items.

Turkey Creek also had a special Sunday which they called a Family Day of Worship. Following morning worship they had lunch together. Then they went to a local park for a time of fun and relaxation. Their evening meeting was changed from the usual place and time to the park at three o'clock. It was reported that it was a grand success. Bro. Glenn Baber ministers at Turkey Creek.

From A.J. Istre, Jennings, La.

We are beginning a series of lessons on how a Christian should handle the money God entrusts to him. It is one of several classes held on Wednesday nights. Douglas Barberousse, investment broker and fine Christian, teaches it. He and my eldest son, Jerry, have worked up a seminar on this subject and would make themselves available to any Christian group interested in it. Although I have retired from the pulpit in Jennings, I am still preaching and teaching; radio work, classes, fill-ins, especially with our smaller churches.

Buechel Church, Louisville

Brother Earl Mullins, Jr. announced his resignation as pulpit minister at Buechel Church. He and Duane Smith have been co-ministers there for over a year, and the church has experienced much growth. Bro. Earl is also a full-time lawyer, and he feels that he cannot continue to carry both loads.

From the Pastor's Desk, Buechel

Yesterday I attended the funeral of a dear saint of God, Faith Grimes. Faith passed away suddenly, with no warning that anything like this would happen. But along with all the sadness that follows an event like this, there was joy too. I also believe that there are lessons to be learned from the death of any of our loved ones. What were some lessons to be learned from Faith?

1.) Faith's last act was to do something for a neighbor. She was taking care of some matters at one of her neighbor's homes, just being a Christian to this neighbor. What will be the last thing we will be involved with before our Maker calls us?

2.) Faith gave herself to her family and to the work of the church. She was a wonderful "elder's wife" and was truly a worthy woman. At her funeral, Paul Kitzmiller said that he could not imagine what the work at Hamburg Church of Christ would be like without her. Will our efforts be truly missed when we are gone?

3.) Faith's salvation was sure. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." (2 Peter 1:10) It certainly gives the family a great deal of

assurance when they know where their loved one is. What about you?

—Duane Smith

More News from Louisiana

I attended the preacher's/leaders' meeting at Cypress Creek today. I think there were 14 present. Had a great session of prayer. What a blessing. Enclosed is the article you requested plus a copy of notes for my message at the fellowship at Glenmora.

—Antoine Valdetero, Crowley, La.

Strangest Letter W&W Ever Got

To whom this concerns: I have authored a selection of religious poems. If you are interested, send a self-addressed envelope with a check for \$5,000.

—Anna Fantasia

Tell City, Ind. Bro. Jerry Carmichael, Minister.

Recently Brother Allen arranged a special presentation for the Adult class of the video "Israel, God's Chosen Land."

Bro. Ray Naugle was speaker at Tell City's Fall Revival.

Bro. Bill Braunecker gave the Lord the use of his skill, time and energy by doing some painting in the Sunday School wing, and Bro. Jim Basham did some repair work on the church van. Good example of stewardship.

While Jerry was ministering in Johnson City, TN, Bro. Randy Coultas supplied the pulpit at Tell City. The young people, under the direction of Bro. Mike Elaman conducted Mid-week services. The congregation paid off their debt on the parsonage remodeling from several years ago. They are praising the Lord for this blessing.

GOOD BOOKS MAKE GOOD GIFTS

Here are some books we highly recommend you give to your Christian friends. Your preacher, elders, and Sunday School teachers would appreciate them—and learn a lot.

A NEW SPIRIT, by Carl Ketcherside; 41 pages, paperback, \$3.50

Excerpts from this stimulating author's writing over the years, compiled by Lloyd Boyll. The book explores 16 subjects such as interpretation, sectarianism, creeds, differences, Christians among the sects, conformity, brotherhood, etc.

DISCOVERING OUR ROOTS: THE ANCESTRY OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST, by Leonard Allen & Richard Hughes; 160 pages, paperback, \$12.25.

This fascinating book explores the origins of the Stone-Campbell movement. It asks, "Where did we come from? How did we get this way? Why do we read the Bible as we do? What has been the heart of our movement?" And it asks further, "What can we learn from those who have viewed restoration of N-T Christianity in ways quite different from our own?"

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